

## Congregational Council Meeting - May 15, 2023 - Abbreviated Minutes

**Members Present:** Pastor Rachel Connelly, Vicar Emily Whitlow, Jan Long, Grace Schmeelcke, Scot Williams, Greg Harris, John Hewell, Cathy Plowden, Jeremy Chapman, Bill Pickard, Lynn Pode and Stephanie Champion. **Absent:** Sandra Pruitt

**Meeting called to order** at 6:00pm.

**Devotion/Dwelling in the Word** by Lynn, using the scripture from Galatians 6:1-10.

**Prayer Requests** taken and Pastor Rachel led members in prayer.

**April Meeting Minutes:** Motion to approve the minutes; by Cathy, second by Grace. Minutes approved

**Strategic Plan Update:** Greg reported that three of the four committees have met for at least the first meeting. Youth and Young Families group has yet to meet but is working on finding a mutually acceptable date. The **Biggerstaff Committee** met by Zoom on May 3rd to review the buildable property and the options we may want to explore based on our goals. A second firm will meet with the committee on May 17th, also by Zoom. The **Accessibility Committee** had their first meeting on May 3rd. They plan to meet again on May 31st. The **Eldercare Committee** had their first meeting on April 30th when they discussed situations where eldercare is currently needed. They plan to create a survey of current needs of our Senior Saints and Elders to go out with Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Chef's deliveries.

**Pastor's Report:** Stewardship for All Seasons program will have Jan Long and Mark McLean as part of the lead team, with a Zoom meeting scheduled for May 23rd. Melissa Rasley, our new Administrative Assistant, has been with us one month and is doing well. New intern, Olga Maria Cruz, and Pastor will attend an internship orientation May 30-31st.

**Vicar's Report:** Vicar Emily reported her internship project of Lay Eucharistic Ministry has started and is going well. Vicar Emily will teach confirmation class this coming Sunday. Her last Sunday is August 13th.

**Treasurer's Report:** Income YTD has exceeded expenses by \$4,693. For the first four months, total income is under budget by \$11,630. This is due to contributions being under budget. General Fund checking account balance is \$60,222.

**Faith Formation:** Grace reported current classes are going well. A new class will be added in the fall for adults focusing on discussing issues and questions of faith.

**Outreach:** John summarized the report on Issaquena's Last Ride event. Thrivent funds used to purchase the supplies, breakfast foods and drinks. The money we make will be donated to the backpack lunches of Oconee County. We anticipate it will be approximately \$1,000.

**Property:** Scot Williams updated that the sprinkler system is fixed but still needs to be reconnected to the alarm system. City is to fix the slab on front sidewalk.

**Biggerstaff:** Stephanie Champion reported that the rental season has started and they are still dealing with a few plumbing issues. There is a need to hire someone to handle the rental opening and closing duties, we are still currently using volunteers.

**Worship and Music:** The handbell choir will be cleaning out their old storage room and as of June 6th, will be moving the bell storage to the stage area in the former preschool building.

**Old Business:** The Preschool task force will meet, in the near future, with the Youth and Family Strategic Planning Committee to look at the feasibility of reopening the preschool.

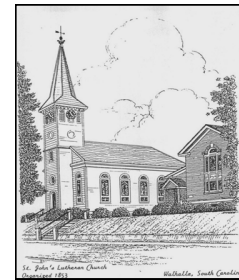
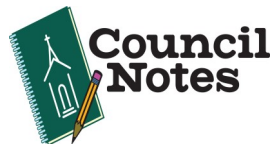
**New Business:** Greg announced we were notified that St. John's has received an offer of \$12,000. to purchase the trailer home currently out at Biggerstaff. A motion was made by Cathy to accept this offer and second by Bill. [Note: congregation has to vote to sell this church property, after this Council Meeting the Congregational Meeting date was set for June 4th]. New members will join the church at the 11am service on May 28th.

**Next Council Meeting is July 17, 2023 at 6:00pm**

Meeting Closed by praying the Lord's Prayer.

Adjourned at 7:25pm

Lynn Pode, Congregational Council Secretary



# THE CHIMES — JUNE 2023

St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA

Mission: Embraces a changing world in Christ's love and service.

PLEASE NOTE: Office Hours: Monday—Friday 8:30am-1:00pm

Email: stjohnluther@gmail.com  
Website: www.stjohnswalhalla.org  
864-638-6363

Biggerstaff Christian Retreat  
biggerstaffretreat@gmail.com

## LAZY DAYS OF SUMMER . . . ? NOT AT ST JOHN'S!!



Dear Friends:

**Summer is upon us** and while the season does take on a different feel from the school year and program activities, St. John's congregation continues to be active and involved in congregation life and in ministry!

**Our summer 9am worship at Biggerstaff** is a wonderful outreach to our community and great place to invite friends and acquaintances who enjoy the outdoors or who may not be as familiar with Lutheran liturgy. We have had a number of folks who were introduced to St. John's because of Biggerstaff and we want to keep growing that outreach! We are also registering children for our Lutheroad Daycamp July 10-14 at Biggerstaff and this is another great opportunity to reach out to friends with children or grandchildren or folks in your neighborhood!

**This week I spent time at Lutheran Southern Seminary in Columbia in an Internship Orientation with our new "vicar", Olga-Maria Cruz.** She will be coming among us in late August to serve her year of internship at St. John's. A short introduction of Olga-Maria is on the next page of this newsletter. Also, she will be attending the 11am worship this Sunday!

**Vicar Emily's last Sunday for worship at St. John's will be August 14.** While we are excited to welcome a new intern, we will also be sad to see Vicar Emily leave us. She has become an integral part of our life and ministry at St. John's over the last 9 months. Also, I want to share congratulations with Vicar Emily and her fiancé Frank, on their recent engagement!

**The SC Synod will gather for its annual Assembly June 8-10 in Columbia** under the theme "I See Jesus." Throughout the assembly, we will be hearing stories from across our Synod and synodical partners about where God is at work and where we see Jesus in those around us. Voting members from St. John's to the Assembly are: Greg Harris, Jan Long, Cathy Plowden, and Pastor Rachel. Vicar Emily will also attend.

**Strategic Planning and Stewardship for All Seasons** teams are meeting, discerning, and planning as we continue to be guided by God's Holy Spirit to lean more fully into our mission that *Embraces a changing world in Christ's love and service.*

**We have a Congregational Meeting this Sunday, June 4 at 10:30am in the fellowship hall.** The purpose of the meeting is to receive and vote on a recommendation from the St. John's Congregation Council and the Biggerstaff Board to accept an offer on the mobile home at Biggerstaff. Our constitution requires congregation approval on the disposal of church property. A quorum of 60 active voting members is needed to move forward with the vote. We will also have a brief update on our Strategic Planning work.



**The sympathy and prayers of the congregation are extended to Joan Lewis and her family in the death of Dave Lewis on May 20.** Dave was a much beloved member and leader at St. John's serving on congregation council, chair of the property committee, Biggerstaff committee chair, participating in mission trips, and active in many other areas across the church and community. He was as Joan called him "her right hand" in her work as our Spiritual Gifts/Volunteer Coordinator.

**A Memorial Service is planned for Friday, June 30 at 2:00pm at St. John's** with military honors in the courtyard and a reception and visitation time in the fellowship hall following. Please keep Joan, Dave's children, and extended family and all those grieving during this time of loss.

In Christ's Peace and Love,

*Pastor Rachel Connelly*



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT ST. JOHN'S

- Cook part of a meal and/or deliver on Thursdays between 10:30 and 12 noon.
- Prepare a meal or part of a meal on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month.
- Serve as a Lector, Greeter or 11am Communion Usher.
- Transport our senior members who need rides to doctor appointments, etc.

Contact Joan Lewis at 864-710-1756 or joanlewisc@aol.com if you're interested.

Grace and Peace to you, friends!

'Tis the season! Of graduations, celebrations, and warmer weather. It seems that summer is already upon us with these come-and-go thunderstorms and 80-degree days. This month of June is already panning out to be a busy one: with Synod Assembly coming up, WELCA Convention, various Strategic Planning meetings, Biggerstaff rentals...the list goes on! Summer is an interesting time. It's a time that often means a little bit more relaxation but for many, but for others, the work does not stop.

As a student, I often visualize my year on a school calendar. So typically, after the spring semester ends, I look back on how my year has gone. This year so far has been full of immense learning, growth, challenges, joy, grief, and community. I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn as a part of this community and look forward to the last couple of months I have here at St. John's. While this time is busy, I hope that we'll all continue to make time for ourselves, one another, and time spent in conversation with God. With all of God's creation in full bloom, it's a good time to connect with God through nature! May the Spirit of God be with you always.

Blessings! *Vicar Emily Whitlow*

P.S. Thank you all for the well wishes and congratulations on mine and Frank's recent engagement! We are excited for this next part of our life together and greatly appreciate the support you all have shown us.

From the  
Vicar



## Introducing...

### SEMINARY INTERN FOR 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR—Olga-Maria Cruz

Olga-Maria Cruz (she/her/ella) is excited to be coming to St. John's as our intern for the 2023-2024 school year. Olga-Maria holds a B.A. in English, the Master of Divinity in Theology, the Ph.D in Ethics, and is currently taking courses toward a Certificate of Lutheran Studies at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. She is an emerging author whose poems have appeared in journals including *Bellevue Literary Review*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Pen & Brush*, and *Poetry East*, among others. Her chapbook of poems, *A Philosopher Speaks of Rivers*, was published by Finishing Line Press of Cincinnati. Some of her writings and sermons can be found at [olgamariacruz.com](http://olgamariacruz.com)

Olga-Maria currently serves as the Lutheran campus minister to Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina, and is a candidate for ordination in the South Carolina Synod of the ELCA. Before coming to Winthrop, Olga-Maria served as Episcopal Campus Missioner at Saint Leo University in Florida. Prior to that, she taught for twelve years in four departments at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. Olga-Maria is the curator of OpenMindfull, a website of mindfulness resources, and a co-host of the weekly podcast, Faith Along the Way. She is looking forward to connecting with, learning from, and serving our congregation in the year to come.

Dear Friends,

The choir will take a short break during the month of July from singing our usual anthems and we will have special music from smaller groups during that time. Starting in June, the choir will begin working on the music for a concert to celebrate the 20th year of having the beautiful Casavant pipe organ in our church. It is also the 170th year of the church. I wonder if our ancestors ever thought that we would still be here worshipping as they did 170 years after the church began. That is a wonderful thing for us to celebrate, too! Mark your calendars for 5 PM on Sunday, September 17th to come and listen and bring a friend or two along! We will have the choir, along with the organ, bells and other instruments, playing new musical works that will be premiered during the concert."

Carla Padgett  
Director of Music  
864.561.0822



### WELCA REPORT June 10th--Saturday, 9:15-10:30 a.m., St John's WELCA Meeting--All women are



invited to help assemble 50 personal care kits for Lutheran World Relief. These kits and the ones assembled by Gloria Shealy Circle will be taken to a gathering center in Columbia, then to Maryland for shipment around the world. *All women of St. John's are members of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.*

**June 23-24--SC WELCA Convention--Zion Lutheran Church, Lexington, SC**  
Our own President Risse Snelgrove will preside, and Pastor Rachel and Vicar Emily will serve as co-chaplains. Voting delegates are Lynn Pode and Tina Barrett, and Jan Long will be a visitor. Our Joy Offerings, Local Project Offering, and Hygiene Kits for Tanzania (place in box in the sacristy by Sunday, June 18) will be taken to the Convention. Please pray for those attending the convention and the business that will be conducted to do the Lord's work.

### KNITTERS & CROCHETERS

Would you like to learn how to knit or crochet? Do you need help to revive your skills? One-on-one teaching is available. The group meets on Wednesday June 14th and 28th at 10am in the Fellowship Hall. Come join us!

Questions? Call or text Barbara at (864) 723-3376



Gloria Shealy Circle



### THE GLORIA SHEALY CIRCLE

The Gloria Shealy Circle will once again be collecting school supplies for their summer project. Please bring any donations to the church and place them in the marked box for this next to the gathering space table. Needs include pens, pencils, pencil holders, binders, notebook paper, spiral notebooks, rulers, index cards, crayons, colored pencils, highlighters, 3 prong folders, glue sticks, scissors, binder dividers. These items will be collected through the **first week in August**. We want to thank the congregation for supporting the Gloria Shealy Circle with this project to help the students of Oconee County with these needs.

### THE SURVIVORS GROUP



Survivors Group

The Survivors group will have lunch at Biggerstaff on Monday June 5 at noon. We will have a speaker from Senior Solutions. We invite anyone interested to attend; the lunch is provided. If you plan on attending, please let Shonda Mahler know by phone 864-944-7773 or email at [Smlake14@yahoo.com](mailto:Smlake14@yahoo.com)  
Then on Thursday June 29, we will go to the Mountain View Steak and Seafood restaurant in Walhalla. An email will go out with time and any further details.

### HEALTH UPDATE

Just wanted to let my team know:

Have seen all my doctors and they are all pleased with my progress. Just have a little more healing from the radiation burns and then later we will see about the next step, the reconstruction.

Thank you all so very much for all of your support, love and prayers these months. Don't know what I would have done without you!

Love you forever, *Frieda Cobb* ❤️

During an annual inspection of our sprinkler system for the sanctuary, it was discovered that a valve needed to be replaced for the system to work. The cost for this was \$6960. Since this was not a budgeted item, we had to use money from our Capital Contingencies fund to pay the invoice. Unfortunately, there was only \$4646 in that fund, so we now have deficit of \$2314.

God's "sprinkler system" that saves us through baptism is free. Man's sprinkler system to save our church from fire is not. If you would like to make a contribution towards this cost, it would be greatly appreciated. Just mark your check "Capital Contingencies".

-Thank you. Mark McLean, Finance Committee

