

# The Parish Voice

St. Thomas Lutheran Church — Streetsboro, Ohio

July 2021

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*For freedom Christ has set you free,*” St. Paul wrote to the Galatians. *“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free,”* Jesus promised His disciples. It would appear that freedom is something of a big deal in our Christian faith.

Americans seem to have a vested interest in freedom — at least we talk a lot about it when our national holiday, Independence Day, pops up on the calendar. It appears to me that Paul and Jesus are talking about something different than what we so gloriously hail as we wave our flags and watch the fireworks: the freedom (make that freedoms) accorded us in such documents as the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States.

Most of what our documents talk about are rights, not freedoms. Rights are not free, as we admit every Memorial Day when we recall the very steep price many have paid so that these rights may remain intact. Rights are protected by laws, and our system is designed to ensure that laws apply equally to all the rights of all the citizens (do we get it right all this time? No, but that is the intent).

The Scriptures are addressing true freedom. Sin enslaves us. The Law holds us captive. The devil would rob us of our freedom. It is against such slavery that Jesus and Paul declare freedom.

Jesus was especially focused on the freedom that is based on truth: the truth that God wants us to have everything He designed for us in His creative actions. Our sinfulness, to which we are in bondage and which has distorted God’s creation and our enjoyment of it, is grounded in the Big Lie — the one Satan used to entice Eve: *“You don’t need God. You can BE God.”*

Jesus came to announce the Good News that God and God alone can release us from this bondage, and did so in the death and resurrection of Jesus. That is the freeing truth Jesus both declared and accomplished.

Paul had a different tack. He knew that we sinners would constantly try to earn God’s favor (or at least escape any punishment) — because that is what “religion” has always encouraged humans to do! *“Keep your nose clean, and God will like you.”* Paul would like to know why we allow ourselves repeatedly to get sucked into that way of thinking.

Because the Good News has always been that God has never held any assessment of us other than that He loves us. The entire message of the Bible — Old and New Testaments — is the narrative of God reaching out to win back the human creatures who had rebelled against Him, attempted to replace Him, and walked off in pursuit of their own agendas.

That rebellion was made possible by the capacity God created within us to choose freely how to respond to Him. We call this “free will” and it was truly free. God did not dictate what we must do; He always has provided for our ability to choose what we choose to choose.

But with choices come consequences. When Adam and Eve chose selfishly, they faced consequences — expulsion from the Garden of Eden, hard toil, labor pains.

Our choices result in consequences, as well. We are free to choose whatever we wanted to eat, drink, ingest, digest, taste, experience, and enjoy. Those choices result in consequences we may rather not face; but, as one pundit said, “You cannot sow wild oats and then pray for crop failure.”

Within the range of free choices we may make, God presents us always with a “best” — the choice that will lead us to, and keep us on, the path to Him. We may choose otherwise, indeed we may choose the “worst” . . . at which point God always lays before us a new “best” that can get us back on track. What we freely choose will be conditioned by what we allow to influence us. If the world, our own desires, our greed, our lust for power (or just plain lust), the designs of the evil one, apathy, boredom (I can go on *ad nauseam*) — if that is what we allow to guide our life choices, we will find it very difficult to get where God wants us to be. If we center in on Jesus, what He taught us and modeled for us, our choosing will be much better aligned with God’s desires for us.

Either way, we are free to choose — and deal with the consequences. We should know that one of those consequences will never be that God forsakes us, gives up on us, or wills to do us harm. No matter how foolish, wayward, unhelpful, uninformed, or selfish our choices, in Christ we are assured of God’s love.

That is the core truth that sets us free.

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## Our Worship This Month

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### July 4 — Pentecost VI

Sermon: “*How’s Your Stiff Neck?*”

Texts: Ezekiel 2:1-5; Psalm 123; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13

Jesus is rejected by His hometown; Ezekiel is sent to people who would resist his message. How do we handle offense?



### July 11 — Pentecost VII

Sermon: “*Why Is This Story Included?*”

Texts: Amos 7:7-15; Psalm 85; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

The account of the death of John the Baptist by beheading is gruesome. Why is it included in the “Good News”?



### July 18 — Pentecost VIII

Sermon: “*Come Away*”

Texts: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Psalm 78; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Jesus invites the disciples to come away to a quiet place. We could use some of that ourselves.



## July 25 — Pentecost IX

Sermon: *"I Have Been Fed; I Am Being Fed; I Will Be Fed"*

Texts: 2 Kings 4:42-44; Psalm 145; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21

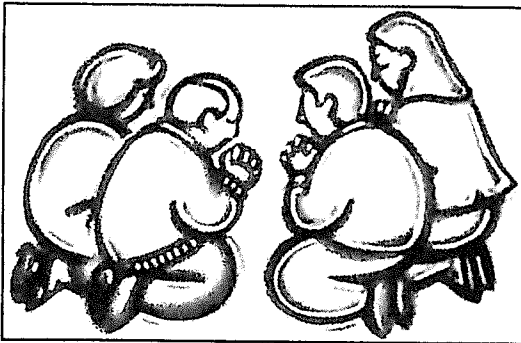
In the miraculous feeding of 5,000, Jesus shows us how only He satisfies all our hungers.

**At the June 27 Church Council meeting, discussions were to be held about how and when we can return to "normal."**

**We have already taken steps in that direction: We opened up the pews by removing any barriers (although we still encourage social distancing). We keep the signs on the doors addressing concern for each other by using masks (especially in consideration those who may not yet have been vaccinated). We no longer feel compelled to mark each person's temperature. Hand sanitizer is still available in the narthex (before, during, and after the pandemic, this is good idea).**

**But now to the future: What about fellowship opportunities? How will we handle communion? Will there be a greeting of peace? Will we still be online? Will our parking lot radio broadcast continue?**

**Answers will soon be coming. The August newsletter will provide the results of the Council deliberations; then we will await your feedback.**



Our congregation could benefit from a more focused attention on prayer. Our mission and ministry must be undergirded with the prayers of God's people. Jesus promised, ". . . *whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*" (Matthew 21:22) He added to that promise, "*I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.*" (John 14:13)

St. James informs us, "*You do not have, because you do not ask.*" (James 4:2). Prayer is the means God has provided to get in touch with His will and to unite our wills, informed and shaped by the Holy Spirit through the Word, to His will.

Therefore, I invite you to commit yourselves individually and collectively to greater and more fervent prayer for our congregation and its mission and ministry. Certainly you can pray in the privacy of your home, and you should. But something special happens when faith is added to faith in the prayers of God's people gathered. **Therefore, beginning Thursday July 8, I invite you to gather every Thursday at 7:00 PM for an hour of prayer for our congregation's ministry and mission.** We will not be focused on the needs on our Prayer List, but centered on the direction and core of our ministry together. Please join us as often as you can.

— Pastor Just

## SERVICE PROJECT

With the children out of school there is a need for food to feed them. Please bring in your food items or monetary donation during the month of July to be given to the Streetsboro Community Food Pantry. Thank you for your support!

If you haven't checked out our church website yet, please do and let Del Groff know how you like it or if there is something you would like to see added. The website is [www.stthomasstreetsboro.com](http://www.stthomasstreetsboro.com)

**New Offering Envelopes** are available on the table in the Narthex.

**Our July-September Portal of Prayers** devotionals are available now. You can find them on the table by the door or ask Steve for one and he will bring it to your car.

**Contact Person:** Please call Pastor Just at 216-789-6688 or Council President Steve Hlava at 330 422-1959 for any emergencies or questions. Pastor Just is in the office on Wednesdays or Thursdays from 8:00-4:00. Please call ahead to make sure he is there.

Since we had to move our council meeting because Father's Day was the third Sunday to June 27<sup>th</sup> there is no financial report. Please look for it in the August newsletter.

### OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL HOLIDAYS FOR JUNE!

1-International Joke Day

4-Independence Day

5-Workaholics Day

6-Fried Chicken Day

7-Macaroni Day

10-Teddy Bear Picnic Day

13-French Fries Day

15-Gummi Worm Day

17-Hot Dog Day and

World Emoji Day

18-Sour Candy Day

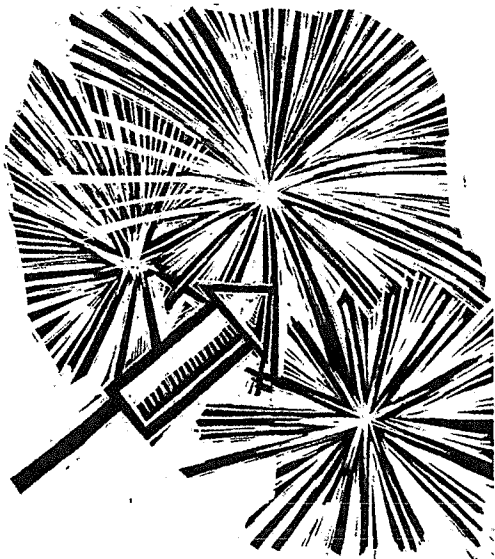
19-Ice Cream Day

20-Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day: A Global day of  
Inclusion and

20-Fortune Cookie Day and Lollipop Day

30-Cheesecake Day

31-Avocado Day



**HAPPY 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY!!**

## REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Bill & Sharon Crile	Jim Doerfler	Carol Earle	Cory Hautmann
Linda Hautmann	Palagia Hlava	Stephanie Johnson	Lorene Kozar
Ken Nicely II	Kenny Nicely III	Kenny Nicely IV	Stephen Nicely
Carol Poston	Heather Poston	Becky Larkins & Holly	
Alice Artman	Rick Artman	Roger Black	Barbara's Daughter
Patty Bowman	John Butterbaugh	Carl	Lana Carnes
Chuck	Anna Cooper	Leona Corban	Scott Corban
Tom Corban	Deb Defer	Jamie Dunn	Bill Earle
Billy Earle Jr.	Sue Ellinwood	George Foerster	Christine Frank
Bridget Gehri	Ken Granville	Anita Hlava	Charles Hovavetz
Debbie Hovanetz	Janice	Jayme	John
Sherry Johnson	Kathi	Suzanne Latham	Laura, Greg & Avis
Lauren	Kristina Lonardo	Tyler Lutz	Dave Lauver
Lori	Frank Manijak	Mary	Samantha Nicely
Inge Osborne	Sandy Platten	Karen Power	Peter Power
Valonte Ragland	Latesha Ragland	Jessica Reker	Riley Roch
John Rutherford	Leslie Slanina	Tim Tolodzieski	Kenneth Udovic
Denny Wood	Carol Yurkschatt	Zack	COVID-19 patients
Linda Valetta and family			

Our shut-ins—please send them a card

New Address

Mrs. Audrey Holland  
Willowood Care Room 1001  
1186 Hancock Rd.  
Brunswick, OH 44212-4582

Carole & Heather Poston  
3096 E. Pioneer  
Aurora, OH 44202

Recently had surgery  
Lorene Kozar  
681 Sweetnut Ct  
Streetsboro, OH 44241

Our College Students—Grace Rohaley, Abigail Ayers, Corey Hautmann and Joanna Nicely  
Our Military member—Troy Roman

## JULY BIRTHDAYS

### Birthdays

10-Steve Crile  
11-Bill Crile  
12-Diane Reynolds  
13-Keith Larkins  
20-Bob Earle  
23-Sharon Crile



## JULY BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

### Baptism Birthdays

2-Diane Lee  
20-Jodi Earle

Happy Anniversary to...  
21-Bob & Carole Earle  
30-Rory & Deb Wolff

**St. Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**P.O. Box 2247**  
**9042 State Route 43**  
**Streetsboro, OH 44241**

**Change Service Requested**

**THE PARISH VOICE NEWSLETTER**

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**Pastor Just office hours—Thursdays 8:00-4:00**

**Cell Phone (216) 789-6688    Email: [doctorjust@gmail.com](mailto:doctorjust@gmail.com)**

**Web Site: [www.stthomasstreetsboro.com](http://www.stthomasstreetsboro.com)**

**SUNDAY SCHEDULE**

**TRADITIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE 10:00 A.M.**

**IN THE CHURCH PARKING LOT ON CHANNEL 96.9 FM**

**LIVE ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE**

**OR PLEASE JOIN US INSIDE**