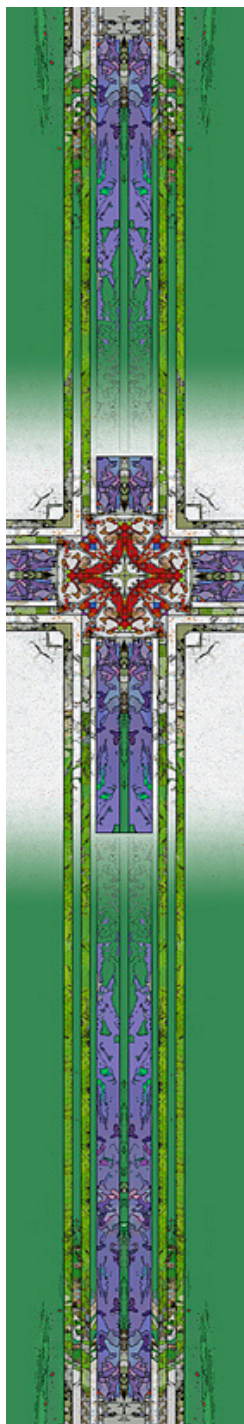


Saint John News

Proclaiming and Practicing the Love of Christ

June 2026

From the desk of ... Pastor Bruick



According to my physique, I am sure that you could possibly guess that I was not a track athlete. Though I used to jog and still love a great walk or hike, I am not a runner, a vaulter, a jumper, a thrower, let alone a hurdler. Speaking of hurdlers, if there are any hurdlers or former hurdlers reading this, I have a question for you: How do you do that? How do you run straight towards an obstacle and make it over? I love watching hurdlers do what they do, but for me, it is mind-boggling.

This past year at our partner in ministry, Concordia University, senior Adrianna Rodencal from Lincoln, Nebraska, set one record after another in the hurdles. Whether the 60-meter, 100-meter, or 400-meter hurdles, Adrianna approached hurdle after hurdle in her stride, crossed over them and continued on, quite often setting new records in doing so.

How does she do that? How does any hurdler do that? According to my Google

search, being successful as a hurdler is all about the takeoff, the lead leg, the trail leg, and the landing.

I also learned that a hurdler does not jump over a barrier; they sprint through it by minimizing airtime and maintaining forward momentum. The technique relies on a precise combination of a lead leg to clear the hurdle, a trail leg to maintain stride, and an aggressive forward body lean.

Why am I, a non-track athlete, talking about hurdles? Because of a stanza in a favorite hymn of mine: “O Church, Arise” by Keith and Kristyn Getty. They wrote in the fourth stanza:

*So Spirit, come, put strength in every stride
Give grace for every hurdle
That we may run with faith to win the prize
Of a servant good and faithful.
As saints of old still line the way
Retelling triumphs of His grace,
We hear their calls and hunger for the day
When, with Christ, we stand in glory.*

What a great description of the life of the Lord’s Church!

The church today, on the track, so to speak, facing one hurdle after another. Those who have gone before us, standing along the side, serving as our encouragers. Then there is the collective yearning to cross the finish line where we will stand with Jesus at His return.

The encouragers – the Church Triumphant, the saints of old who have gone before us. The Lord uses them to remind us, the Church Militant, of His grace and the triumphs that His grace has brought into their lives as they faced one hurdle after another in their journey of faith.

In Hebrews 11, we read of one saint after another who

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From the desk of ... continued

lived by faith, served God, and faced hurdle after hurdle by God's grace. These fellow Christ Followers were hurdlers, by faith, trusting that our gracious Lord would be faithful to them in the calling that He placed before them.

In Revelation 7, we read of the saints who are presently standing around the throne of God Almighty and the victorious Lamb, Jesus Christ. As they stand around the throne of our living Lord, these hurdlers are giving God praise for bringing them over the hurdles of great tribulation and for making their lives pure through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus.

In the book of Acts and throughout the Epistles, one can read of one hurdle after another that the early church faced: conflict, false teaching; erring brothers and sisters; shortage of resources; and the list goes on. As they faced those hurdles, what was it that got them over them? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Paul speaks of the power of that grace that brought him across the hurdle of the thorn in his flesh. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:8-10: “⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it [the hurdle of the thorn in the

flesh] away from me. ⁹But He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Now you as an individual, have faced and will continue to face a variety of hurdles that are a challenge in your walk, your race of faith. The same is true for the Body of Christ, the Holy Christian Church throughout the world – hurdle after hurdle. You know what yours are individually. And we, as a congregation, have experienced many in the past and are made aware of new ones regularly. One of the hurdles that is in front of us today, just as it is in many congregations and Christian ministries, is the managing of funding to sustain the ministry that we feel called to carry out in the name of Jesus.

So, as we face the hurdles in our race of faith individually and collectively as the Lord's church, what is it that we need to cross over them

and get to the finish line? Thankfully, we do not need the talent of the Concordia hurdler for there are very few of us that would qualify. Instead, the hymn writers remind us of what we need: *So Spirit, come, put strength in every stride, give grace for every hurdle.*

We need the power of the Holy Spirit that strengthens us in our faith, guides us in living out of our faith, and provides God's gift of wisdom and unity. We also need the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that brings to us His forgiveness for our past and strength for the future as we run the race of faith for which He has already won the prize of salvation for us.

So, let us join our voices and sing. Let us trust in the Lord of the Church to provide His gifts of grace, wisdom, unity, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us join our hearts, as a team of hurdlers *that we may run with faith to win the prize, of servants good and faithful.*

Finally, I give thanks to God for the lead ministry staff of the church, school, and Child Development Center, along with our lay leaders who have invested much time over the past month in addressing this hurdle.

I also give thanks to God for the Body of Christ in this place that has responded with increased offerings, prayers, increased offerings, prayers, and the giving of helpful suggestions and insights to address this hurdle.

It is our goal to provide to the congregation in July a multi-year plan that addresses this hurdle so that St. John can sustain and maintain vital, Gospel-centered, life-changing ministry through the congregation,

school, and Child Development Center. We are in this together!

*A fellow hurdler for Jesus,
Pastor Bruick*

Official Acts

BAPTISMS

May 9, 2026, Cam Andrew Barnes, son of Trey A. and Taylor M. (Johnson) Barnes

May 10, 2026, Isla Mae Glandt, daughter of Cayden D. and Alyssa M. (Cochnar) Glandt

May 17, 2026, Moses James Moll, son of Zachary W. and Susie M. (Jones) Moll

FUNERALS/COMMITTALS

May 2, 2026, Jeffery Trovar McDonald the age of 59 years, 3 months and 15 days (non-member)

May 11, 2026, Raymond Ralph Paul "Ray" Huebschman at the age of 89 years, 9 months and 23 days

May 16, 2026, Marilee Mae Hendrickson at the age of 90 years, 1 months and 10 days

MAY 2026 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH (4-23-26):

Brock Olson

TRANSFER IN:

Daniel Hannemann

TRANSFERS OUT:

1. Kandyce Blackwell to Word of Life Lutheran Church, Lincoln, NE

2. Ashley Blackwell to Word of Life Lutheran Church, Lincoln, NE

3. Anna Johnson to Bethany Lutheran Church, Overland Park, KS

4. (M/M) Austin & Kelsey Sayer and Callie, Zoey and Abby to The Rock Lutheran Church, Seward, NE

Monthly Anniversaries

In each newsletter we list the members of the church, school, and Child Development Center whose start date was in the current month.

Take time to pray and thank God for these workers!

Jessica Brashear 6/1

Gretchen Pollak 6/1

Nathan Scheck 6/12

Elizabeth Aring 6/29



Silver Foxes Gather for June Event

By Katherine Steffen

The Silver Foxes gathered for their monthly event on June 1. The gathering included the traditional potluck style dinner and fried chicken provided by Marlys Lehr and Thrivent. The group heard from Tiffany (Smith) Timba who shared about her time working with Lutheran Bible Translators in Tanzania. 72 people were in attendance.

The Silver Foxes is a fellowship ministry for older St. John members. An event is hosted most months of the year on the first Monday at 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Each gathering includes a potluck meal and an activity or speaker.



Bringing food is optional - so do not be deterred from coming if you don't have a potluck item! The events are designed to offer community and fellowship.

July is an off month so the next gathering will be the first Monday in August and will feature a trivia session led by Pastor Rempfer. The September gathering will include homemade ice cream, pool noodle volleyball and card games. All older members are invited and encouraged to join the fun and fellowship.

“Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you” (Isaiah 46:4 NIV).



Vacation Bible School 2026

June 1-5 178 children



Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School 2026



Vacation Bible School



Looking at Ministry

By Lisa Aring

As I wind down my “official ministry” and figure out what I will do when I really grow up, I remember the highlights of the three churches that I have served—Marengo, IL, Jacksonville, IL, and here at St. John, Seward. One of the common threads throughout all the ministries was that the operating budget could be the hardest to handle—the most stressful and frustrating.

When I began my career as an administrator, I found as much training as I could about the financial process and those aspects of the funding of a Lutheran School. I found one common statement in the training. Ministry must be the focus! Repeatedly, trainers told us, “Money follows ministry.” It does make sense.

Over the past 39 years, when I have seen the budget as the primary focus, a downtrend continued. When people have been touched with new opportunities, are excited about ministry, and needs have been met (spiritually)—

that downward trend has turned around. I also have seen that when members don’t work together as a team in ministry, the devil works hard to divide, making the grass look greener on the other side so people leave, weakening the whole community or ministry effort. Also, the devil doesn’t like it when Christians build new buildings, and he works hard against the church that builds.

Each of us has different strengths. Are we using them to better the ministry at St. John? Do we listen to other’s ideas and work as a team? Are we caring for individual members? Jesus is here at St. John. Are we focusing on Him? The ministry of St. John Lutheran Church, School and CDC has much potential. I see wonderful things that happen daily as children leave St. John Child Development Center. Some families must stop and discuss our “chapel board” each time they leave. Some have said that older siblings are not happy because they can’t learn about Jesus in their school! These adults are

learning about Jesus from a 2-year-old who attends our center!

Some members may be tired of striving for that ministry, but when we face our Savior—will we say we kept on working to reach the people with the good news, or we gave up because we were too tired and sick of the financial issues? I pray that we keep on focusing on ministry that touches people with Jesus.

Have my years of ministry been easy? Not at all. Have they been rewarding? They have been very rewarding! They have been worth it all! And now I must find out where my strengths fit next!

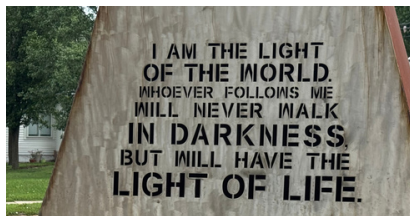
“For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.” Hebrews 6:10

Heartfelt Annual Remembrance Service Held on May 24

By Pastor Rempfer

Heartfelt! What a fitting name for the Children's Memorial right across the street from our church building. Begun in 2002 as a circle of hope and support for grieving parents, it expanded and developed into the construction of the Memorial in 2015. At the Memorial parents and families can have the name of a child etched on one of the three brick walls. There are currently 317 names, representing 11 states and 1 foreign country.

Heartfelt! What a fitting word to describe the atmosphere at the Annual Remembrance Event held each Memorial Day Weekend. This year's event was no exception. Parents, siblings and extended family



members gathered by the bricks of children sharing hugs and tears and smiles that come from remembering. As attendees mingled with one another, you could sense this was indeed a caring support group for those familiar with grief. Parents and family members who added a brick in the past year shared their heartfelt stories with the group, a healing moment for them to share their grief, and a reminder for those of us who listened that there are always those around us who need our prayers and our compassion.

Heartfelt! As the guest speaker at the Remembrance Event this year, I let those in attendance know that our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the ultimate in showing heartfelt sympathy. Luke 7:12-13 relates that when Jesus came upon a funeral procession of a widow whose only son had just died that "His heart went out to her." His response of personal divine compassion to that widow is the same one he continues to show to all who grieve. We are blessed to receive and to share this gift.

St John Board Members for 2026-2027

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Ryan Foor (MOB) (28)

Congregation Vice-Chair

Jill Johnson (MOB)(27)

Congregation Secretary

Lorraine Groth(MOB)(28)

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Matthew Carley (MOB) (27)

Board of Christian Life (8)

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Ben Limback (27)

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Paul Holtorf (28)

Roger Potratz (28)

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Board of Christian Life–Youth Position

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Board of Education (9)

Holly Dorathy (27)

Nolan Harms (27)

Kari Samuels (27)

Anita Foor (28), Chair for 25-26

Amanda Geidel (28)

Dan Uden (28)

Barry Eitzmann (29)

Josie Oberdieck (29)

Allison Wortmann (29)

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Marv Siefert (27)

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Tim Schroeder (28)

Gabe Haley (29)

Ron Jeppeson (29)

David Leising (29)

Dave Wallace (29)

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Chair

Ministry Operations Board (MOB)

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Jill Johnson, Vice-Chair

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Matthew Carley, Treasurer

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Foundation (9)

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Dan Ellis

Joel Helmer

Clark Kolterman

Bob Urban

Vacancy

Niki Nelson

Jack Russell

Curt Sherman

Advisory: Bus.Man. & Treas.
& some board reps



Reflect ... Rejuvenate

by Ron Bork

We've spent time as members at St. John in rGroups to Receive, Relate, and Respond. This month I'm adding two other "r's" to the group ... Reflect and Rejuvenate.

Teaching is unlike many vocations in that our annual "rhythm" includes a summer that some think is "time off" from teaching. In away it is because we don't have students in our classrooms on a daily basis - no lessons to plan or present, no assignments to make or grade, no recess, no regular faculty meetings. But instead we can spend our time reflecting and rejuvenating. For me, I was in Lutheran education for 46 years, some of the "rejuvenating" included summers to take graduate classes toward a masters and time to improve my skills as a teacher and administrator.

It also included an intense three years to begin, work on, and complete my doctorate. Those summers rejuvenated me.

So what about now?

We, you and I both, can and should reflect on opportunities we have had to talk with our young people about vocation choices.

Have we taken the opportunity to tell a young person that we believe they could be "set apart to serve" as a teacher or pastor or youth director/DCE or deaconess or church music director? When we do that we are planting a seed that may grow into something special. Maybe it won't, but we've planted the seed.

Growing up on a farm I knew that not every seed we planted was going to grow the way we hoped or intended, but we plant the seeds anyway.

The same can be said about the "seeds" we plant in our conversations with young people and also conversations with those who may be interested in a second career. We don't know the final results, but we plant the seeds anyway. I encourage you to reflect on those you know who may be a good fit for full-time church work. Talk to them. Your encouragement and prayers might rejuvenate them for future ministry and service in the church. I can speak from personal experience, lots of it, that ministry in the church is life-changing. It was for me and it will continue to be for others.

Blessings on your summer as you reflect and rejuvenate.

Ron Bork
SAS Congregational
Representative
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"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
— Philippians 1:6

From Ethan & Amanda Hutton's (Familia Hutton) recent email update:

Taller. It's a word we use a lot here: taller (workshop).

When one of our ministry vehicles needs repair, it goes to the taller — the auto mechanic shop.

It's common for someone to need a ride because their car is in the taller. We even have friends whose car has been there for more than three months!

The Hutton ministry

vehicle has had a rough year, spending good amounts of time in the taller.

Here, workshops and trainings are also called talleres (workshops).

The Hutton's continued ...

Lately, that word has taken on a deeper meaning for us. In many ways, all of us are living in the taller. God is always at work — repairing what is broken, strengthening what is weak, and shaping us into people who reflect His love more clearly. God is daily working at our core to remove the old and to shape and mold us into the new creation He has in store for us. Sometimes the process

takes longer than we expect. Sometimes we feel sidelined, stretched, or uncertain about the timeline. Even in the waiting, meaningful work is happening beneath the surface. The work of the Holy Spirit. We are grateful that God is patient with us — a faithful craftsman who does not abandon His work halfway through.

Thank you for walking with us in this season — for praying, giving, and

encouraging us while we are in the taller. We trust that God is not only working in this ministry, but also in each of us, forming something beautiful in His time. As LightHouse continues to grow, we sense that we are in a bit of a “taller” season ourselves—being shaped for what’s next. We look forward to sharing more as things come together. Stay tuned for near future updates!



The Hutton's will be back in the U.S. June 24-August 26 and based in Seward. The first weekend in August they will be sharing at St. John about their life and ministry in Costa Rica.

If you'd like to help support them in any way during their furlough, please reach out to Julie.Hermann@cune.edu or Ethan.Hutton@missionofchrist.org



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**Deadline for the
July newsletter
is June 25, 5:00 p.m.
Email: newsletter@stjohnseward.org**

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