

Saint John News

Proclaiming and Practicing the Love of Christ

May 2026

From the desk of ... Pastor Scheck

Easter Exiles

“Pastor, how does this apply to our lives?” It’s an honest question, and I understand why it gets asked so often. We believe that Scripture is true, and since it is true it ought to help us understand our lives. But as with many questions we face, there’s a problem lurking in what it assumes.

Theologian Hans Frei argued that this question gets things backwards. It assumes “our lives” (our goals, our fears, our assumptions, our problems) are the primary thing, and the Scriptures are meaningful only if they help us with life in the “real world.” He argued that the better way was to follow the ancient church and assume that the story of Scripture is the real world, and our lives are meaningful only when they find their place in God’s story.

The Scripture behind our rGroup series theme, Easter Exiles, is a great example of this. Peter begins his letter by greeting his readers as “Elect Exiles of the Dispersion” These are not

just theological labels. They are types, models taken from the story of Scripture. By greeting his readers this way, he is inviting them to apply their lives to the Scripture: to know themselves and their circumstances as characters in the primary story of the real world, the story of the God of Israel.

Elect – Chosen. Just like Abraham. Just like Israel. Peter invites all his readers to know that the most important thing about who they are is that God called them. God gave them new birth by Christ’s resurrection. God made them holy by his Spirit. So now, whether they are Jew or Greek, slave or free, they are members of God’s chosen people, Israel. They therefore share in its inheritance, and its struggles.

Who are you, then, in real life? A member of God’s elect people Israel in Christ Jesus. How does this change the way you see your identity?

Exiles, captives, aliens, non-natives. Just like the people of Israel when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, and took them to live under pagan power, pagan gods, and pagan goals.

Peter invites us, wherever we might live, to recognize that the powers and politics everyone else calls “real life” are temporary, fleeting, and futile. When Peter wrote this letter, mighty Babylon of old was a memory, and a new “Babylon” had replaced them (see 1 Peter 5:13). But in the story of God,

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From the desk of Pastor Scheck ...continued

it doesn't matter what power you are living under, whether it's Babylon, Rome, the UN or the USA.

God's elect people are strangers, exiles, in every place, under every power, because we are awaiting the appearing or revealing of our King, Jesus Christ

Who is your King, then, in *real life*? Not the Constitution. Not a President. Not an emperor. You are an Exile, temporarily held under powers that are doomed to pass away. Your true citizenship is with Him who is waiting in Heaven (3:22). How does that change the way you see who is in charge?

The Dispersion – the Diaspora. Scattered seeds. Just like the rest of the Israelites outside the Holy land (see Isaiah 49:6 and John 7:35). As

long as our King is “kept in heaven” (1 Peter 1:4), we will be “not from around here”. We will always feel a bit like strangers and weirdos, always like we're not quite fitting in. Peter is inviting us to recognize that we are never at home until our King returns, however “at home” we may or may not feel. He's inviting us to embrace the tension and awkwardness this creates as a natural part of who we are. As one ancient Christian, Diognetus, put it, “For [Christians], any foreign country is a homeland, and any homeland is a foreign country.”

Where are you, then, in *real life*? You are scattered with the people of God, in every time and place, separated from the King in whose presence alone you are at home.

So, what's the big deal here? If you cannot yet see the power of understanding your world within the story of the bible, just take these labels to your nearest TV or cellphone. Watch the celebrity demigods of American religion parading the latest identities and remind yourself, “I'm chosen by God in Christ.” Watch the kings and nations around you vie for power and control and say, “I'm an exile awaiting my King.” Watch the commercials use all the symbols of small town America to sell you stuff you don't need and say: “I'm in the Dispersion, awaiting the coming of my true Homeland.”

That's the *real world* you're in, because Christ is Risen.

From the desk of....



Confirmation Sunday

By Tim Oberdieck

Sunday, April 25th, was Confirmation Sunday! Twenty-four confirmands completed their two-year study of Luther's Small Catechism and proudly stepped forth to affirm their faith. Family and friends

gathered on the night of the preceding Wednesday to hear all twenty-four confirmands read their statement of faith, then again on Sunday to celebrate the faith they received in their baptism, and to support them as they

step into high school and our Godparents ministry. Please join us in praying for each of these students by name as they continue forward in faith!



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!

Maureen Policky 5/9
 Esther Langness 5/21
 Sandra Pomerence 5/29



St. John Youth Stations of the Cross

By Tim Oberdieck

Over the course of the year, Godparent groups have gathered together for Large Group once a month. Events have varied from pumpkin carving, to a thanksgiving servant event, to the renowned Godparent Olympics. While most events are designed exclusively for students in our Godparent groups, the April event was open to the entire congregation. As part of Holy Week, Director of Christian Education (DCE) practicum student, Luke Lawrenz, partnered with church staff and Godparent leaders to prepare and lead the Stations of the Cross.

Attendees journeyed through 14 stations interspersed throughout the sanctuary as they read through a series of meditation questions and Biblical accounts of Christ's Passion. A bulletin guide was prepared for each attendee to follow as they went to each station. The event was an opportunity for the youth who participated to learn and reflect more deeply on the Easter story and for congregation members to actively participate in Holy Week.



Stations of the Cross



After Graduation, Lawrenz will be serving his Director of Christian Education internship at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Warner Robins, GA. Please join us in praying for him as he wraps up his time at Concordia and is sent to serve!



*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."
1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)*

Youth Confirmands April 2026

Tessa Caldwell
Kieran Einspahr
Jonah Geidel
Zoe Genter
Leo Haley
Dietrich Hannemann
Annya Hass
Samuel Hibbard
Lewis Johnsen
Hannah Jurchen
Naomi Jurchen
Trista Klintworth



Drayden Krohe
Amelia McCracken
Mallory Miller
Shepherd Nix
Adelyn Olson
Trevin Opfer
Hunter Parr
Micah Pinkall
Landon Samuels
Landen Schaefer
Cedric Scheck
Sawyer Wollenburg

8th Grade Performs Annual Theater Production

By Katherine Steffen

On the evening of Friday, April 17, 2026, the St. John gymnasium was packed with parents, grandparents, friends and students eager to watch the annual eighth grade drama production. This year's title was "Murder at the Dude Ranch".

The eighth grade play has a long tradition, dating back several decades. Students look forward to it each year and consider it a "rite of passage" upon completing their time at St. John. Part of the fun includes not revealing the title of the play too far in advance.



Eighth graders get to keep the secret until just a few weeks before the performance, while younger students anxiously await the unveiling.

The play is directed by seventh grade teacher Rachel Jank. "Part of the learning process is helping the kids grow in self-confidence and try things they wouldn't normally initiate on their own" said

Jank. "Not everyone has an immediate comfort with public speaking and acting on a stage, but every eighth grader has to participate." Jank shared that afterwards the students provide written feedback on their experience and they are always overwhelmingly positive. Students wrote "I surprised myself by being able to do this", and "I realized I can do more than I thought I could."



The eighth-graders work hard for weeks leading up to the performance to learn their lines and practice their acting skills. They work with teachers and parents to make costumes, find props, create sets, figure out sound and lighting. “This is a community effort – so many people help make this experience successful, parents, teachers, staff – it could not happen without everyone’s help.” Jank said.



They learn how to present not just to each other, but to several group audiences. The play is performed for parents as a dress-rehearsal, another time to all the students at St. John, and for the final performance to the public.

If you missed it this year, be sure to mark your calendar for next spring!

Show and Tell at the CDC

By Lisa Aring

Our Mission: Show and Tell the Love of Jesus

At the Child Development Center (CDC), our mission statement is simple yet meaningful: "Show and Tell the Love of Jesus." We are dedicated to living out this mission every day, throughout the entire year. Our commitment is evident in the fact that we rarely close our doors, ensuring continuous support and care for our community.

Raising Awareness About Our Center

During our recent National Lutheran School Association (NLSA) Accreditation, we discovered that many people are not familiar

with our center and the services we offer. In response, during April we hosted an open house, which was a wonderful opportunity to visit and learn more about what we do. We are also available for scheduled tours or visits at any time.

If you would like to stop in and learn more about what happens at the CDC, you can call our office to schedule a time, 402-643-3122. You will have the chance to explore our newly renovated playground, enjoy the indoor playground, and visit our classrooms. Each space reflects our dedication to early

childhood ministry and the well-being of the children we serve.

Gratitude for Church Support

We are sincerely grateful for the ongoing support our church provides to the Early Childhood ministry. It is through this partnership that we can fulfill our mission and make a positive impact in the lives of children and families.



Vacation Bible School Volunteers

VBS needs eight more volunteers to be group leaders!

As a group leader you are assigned an age group to bring around to the various sessions. You do not have to teach anything, just lead your group from one class to the next, make sure no one gets lost, and help keep kids from being too disorderly. It's a great way to engage

with kids and see how God is working through VBS.

Thank you to everyone who has already signed up to volunteer. VBS relies on many, many people to volunteer their time. Thank you for supporting this ministry!

Please pray about this and if God is leading you to help – please sign up!

**VBS is scheduled June 1-5
from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.**



[Register here!](#)

Election of Church Officers and Board Members

Saturday, May 16, 5 - 7:30 p.m., school library

Sunday, May 17, 8 a.m.- 1 p.m., school library

St. John communicant members, 18-years-old and over, are eligible to vote. For those unable to vote in church on May 16 or 17, an absentee ballot may be obtained from the church office on May 13, and returned by noon on Friday, May 15.

SAMPLE BALLOT FOR ST. JOHN LUTHERAN ELECTION OF CHURCH OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS (2026-27)

CHAIR

(Elect 1)

Ryan Foor

CONGREGATIONAL SECRETARY

(Elect 1)

Lorraine Groth

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

(Elect 2 members for a 3-year term)

Sarah Matthias

Susan Mehl

Julie Rusnak

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

(Elect 1 member for a 1-year term)

Mike Mettenbrink

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN LIFE –

Youth Position

(Elect 1 member for a 1-year term)

Nolan Brashear

Evie Schroeder

BOARD OF EDUCATION

(Elect 3)

Barry Eitzmann

Josie Oberdieck

Allison Wortmann

BOARD OF ELDERS

(Elect 4)

Bruce Bostelman

Gabe Haley

Ron Jeppeson

David Leising

Dave Wallace

Sunday School Wrap Up

The Sunday School program concluded for the year with it's final session on Sunday, May 3, 2026.

The end of the year was marked with a lunch

celebration with hot dogs and hamburgers in the Fellowship Hall.

Sunday School classes are for children age 2 through 12th grade. A big thank you

to all the teachers and helpers who volunteered their time this year to teach our youngest generation about Jesus and guide them in their faith formation.

Current St. John Board Members (2025-2026)

Year terms end is indicated after members' names.

Congregation Chair

Jeremy Geidel (MOB) (26)

Congregation Vice-Chair

Jill Johnson (MOB) (27)

Congregation Secretary

Lorraine Groth (MOB) (26)

Treasurer

Matthew Carley (MOB) (27)

Board of Christian Life (8)

(3 members for a 3-year term)

Paul Holtorf (28)

Roger Potratz (28)

Steve Rathje (28) (Vice-Chair)

(3 members for a 2-year term)

Debbie Brutlag (27) (Chair - MOB)

Ben Limback (27)

Vacancy (27)

(2 members for a 1-year term)

Susan Mehl (26) (Secretary)

Jim Mol (26)

CHAIR OF BOARD (MOB)

Advisory: Deaconess,
Youth Dir., Chair

Board of Christian Life – Youth Position

(1) Jackson Einspahr (26)

Board of Education (9)

Hans Eickmeier (26)

Marla Johnson (26)

Kristine Luebbe (26)

Holly Dorathy (27)

Nolan Harms (27)

Kari Samuels (27)

Anita Foor (28) (Chair - MOB)

Amanda Geidel (28)

Dan Uden (28) (Vice-Chair)

CHAIR OF BOARD (MOB)

Advisory: School Principal;
CDC Director; Assoc. Pastor; Chair

Board of Elders (12)

Ryan Foor (26) (Secretary)

David Leising (26)

John Mehl (26) (Vice-Chair)

Drew Olson (26)

Mark Geidel (27)

Jonathan Jank (27)

Dale Samuels (27)

Marv Siefert (27)

Kurth Brashear (28) (Chair - MOB)

Brady Johnson (28)

Greg Miller (28)

Tim Schroeder (28)

CHAIR OF BOARD (MOB)

Advisory: Pastors & Deaconess;
Music Dir.; Chair

Ministry Operations Board – At-Large (2) *(1 member for a 3-year term)*

Brian Albright (28)

(1 member for a 2-year term)

Andy Langewisch (27)

Debbie Brutlag, Board of Christian Life
Chair Anita Foor, Board of Education Chair
Kurth Brashear, Board of Elders Chair

Jeremy Geidel, Chair

Jill Johnson, Vice-Chair

Lorraine Groth, Secretary

Matthew Carley, Treasurer

Advisory: Sr. Pastor, Bus. Manager

Foundation (9)

Monica Braun

Dan Ellis

Joel Helmer

Clark Kolterman (27)

Bob Urban (27)

Vacancy (27)

Niki Nelson

Jack Russell

Curt Sherman

Advisory: Bus. Man. & Treas.

St. John Board of Education

By Anita Foor

2025-2026 Board of Education Chair

As the St. John Board of Education prepares for the 2025-2026 school year to come to a close, we extend our gratitude to many. Thank you to our ...

- families who choose and support Christian education through both our Child Development Center (CDC) and school;
- school counselor, the teachers and aides in both buildings for the work you do each day to provide high-quality education and to develop students' relationships with Jesus and the world;
- administrators who lead and support our building faculty and staff members.
- whole-ministry staff who support the CDC and school efforts in a variety of ways.
- congregation members who volunteer in, promote enrollment at, and support financially our CDC and school.

The experience that happens each day in our buildings is not possible without the partnership of each stakeholder group that plays a role. Each year, spring provides our school an opportunity to appreciate the present, reflect back, and look to the future.

Presently, we join our school principal and CDC director in promoting access to the education made available in our buildings. As we celebrate a successful school year, we look forward to welcoming students again in the fall. There are openings for the school year in a variety of age and grade levels. Please consider families you know who may benefit from the educational services of our school and CDC and help them get connected.

As we look to the future, we prepare to welcome our new CDC director, Tom Koffarnus, on July 1 when his call at St. John will begin. More information will be shared about welcoming

him as the date approaches.

We also thank all of our CDC faculty and staff and Summer Horizons volunteers who will provide enriching and growth-filled summer educational programming and our returning faculty and staff members as well as the families who will make the 2026-2027 academic year another great one.

In this spring season, may each of us find meaningful ways to be present, reflect with gratitude on the past, and look forward with great anticipation the ways in which God asks us to serve those around us with the gifts we have.





“Here am I, Send Me!” (Isaiah 6:8)

by Ron Bork

Two of our St. John members are celebrating an exciting milestone as they complete their studies at Concordia University and prepare to step into full-time church work this fall.

Bethany Gebhardt recently completed her student teaching in 3rd grade at York Elementary and in 2nd grade at Christ the King in Memphis, Tennessee. In the coming school year, she will begin teaching 3rd grade at St. John in Ocala, Florida.

Abigail Baack plans to continue serving at her

DCE internship congregation, St. John’s Lutheran in Orchard Park, New York.

While the call process is still being finalized, the direction is clear. Abigail will focus primarily on youth ministry—teaching, planning events, and building meaningful relationships—while also supporting the life of the church through administrative work such as recruiting and training volunteers, assisting with large events, and sharing weekly devotions.

We give thanks for these young women as they begin their ministries.

Called by the Lord, they have answered with willing hearts. We pray that their work will be a blessing to the students and youth they serve.

We also ask that God would continue to raise up laborers for His harvest—that others, both young and not so young, would hear His call and be led into full-time church work

Ron Bork
SAS Congregational Representative

Official Acts

BAPTISMS

March 28, 2026, Miller Charles Koranda, son of Jared T. and Jordan T (Clement) Koranda

April 5, 2026, Jack Ouray Adamek, son of Garrett J. and Taylor S. (Buckley) Adamek

April 11, 2026, Colter Joseph Fryc, son of Cody R. and Savannah J. (Baldassano) Fryc

April 26, 2026, Palmer Marie Roberts, daughter of Jake E. and Makenna K. (Volzke) Roberts

FUNERALS/ COMMITTALS

April 4, 2026, Esther Eileen Jurchen at the age of 83 years, 11 months and 13 days

April 28, 2026, Joyce Marilyn Heinicke at the age of 96 years, 5 months and 11 days



APRIL 2026 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH (4-23-26):

Brock Olson

TRANSFERS OUT:

Taylor Coulson to Trinity Lutheran Church, Fremont, NE

Christina (Tina) Kirk and Louise Kirk-Schellenbach to St. Paul Lutheran Church, Utica, NE

St. John supports the Helge family, Ben, Becca and Viktor, who serve as missionaries in the Czech Republic. In their recent newsletter they shared about Lingua Franca and the Gospel for Children. Here is an excerpt from their newsletter about the work they are doing to teach English

Mission Moment

The Helges in Czech Republic

We've probably all been there: you travelled outside of your home country for business, vacation. To visit a friend, and find yourself not knowing the local language. Yet, really, it isn't a big problem as you speak English. At least my assumption is so as you're reading this newsletter.

Globally, English is the lingua franca. For many people to know English means better pay, access to knowledge and information, wider networking, clear communication when traveling, and the list goes on. I use English every day, even in the Czech Republic, not so much because I need to communicate, but because other foreigners need to or Czechs simply want to speak in English.

We use English to connect with all ages at the K4 Community Center and Church Plant. For some people, the opportunity to speak English draws them to various activities. Parents want the best for their kids and send them to practice English with me and other native speakers. The opportunity to practice a world language is still highly valued.

So, here's my pitch to you, come to the Czech Republic to use your gift of the English language given by God to share the Gospel, connect children and families to local churches, and to be a part of someone's lingua franca journey. Pray about it, then join an English Bible Camp (EBC) team. Signup as an individual or grab some people from your congregation who desire to serve with God's church abroad and be changed as the ones serving.



Every camp is a little different, but the goal is the same: while learning English, playing games, singing songs, making crafts, eating meals, and spending time together, children learn about Jesus and the life we have through His death and resurrection.

Czech EBCs are July 8-20, 2026. There are just a few openings left for this summer. To inquire directly, email Erin Alter (erin.alter@lcms.org). Maybe plan now for next summer?

Dear Jesus, provide your church this summer with all the volunteers it needs to carry out English Bible Camps in the Czech Republic. Give faith to those who hear your Gospel message. Encourage your church through new friendships. Help us all to know You better. May we answer when You call with, "Here I am. Send me." In Your holy precious name I pray. Amen.

In Christ, Ben, Becca, and Viktor

Aaron Carlson

Vicar (third year student)

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
3315 11th Ave, Kearney, NE 68845
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acarlson@hclk.org

29 April 2026

Saint John Lutheran Church
919 N Columbia Ave, Seward, NE 68434-1557

Dear family at St. John,

I can't believe how fast the year has gone! I'm writing to you the day after Call Day, and it feels as though it was only a few months ago that I received the call to come to Holy Cross in Kearney. Now, we've just found out who will be taking my place in August.

It's hard getting to know so many people—developing relationships and routines in a community—only to be uprooted and moved again. There is definitely a grieving process as we begin the “long goodbyes.”

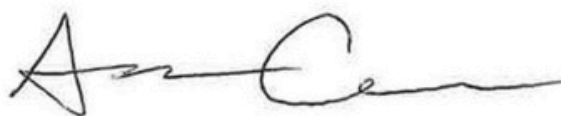
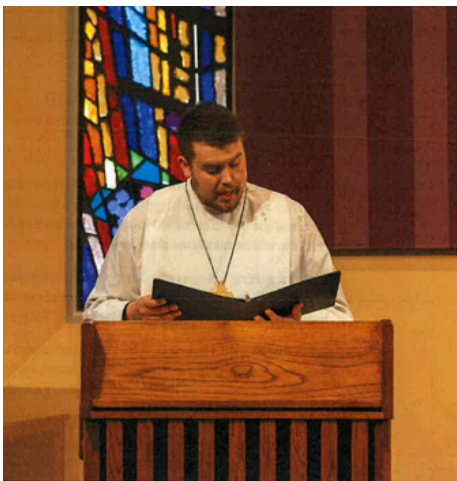
All of that is good, however—if this year had been a terrible fit, we wouldn't be able to get out of here fast enough. Holy Cross has been such a blessing to me as I continue my formation as a pastor.

In these final few months, there are still several things I'm looking forward to. I've joined the church's Summer League men's softball team (against my own better judgment). I have no natural athletic ability, but I think the camaraderie and experience will be something I look back on fondly for years to come.

We are beginning VBS in June (about a month from now), along with a seven-week sermon series titled “*Marks of Maturity: Growing in the Gospel*,” which starts the following week. I will have the opportunity to preach during that series on my own sending Sunday (07/28, if you'd be interested in logging on to the YouTube livestream that day or afterward), which should be an interesting experience.

The next time I write to you, it will be well into the fall semester. I'll be back on campus in St. Louis, with classes underway. May the Lord continue to form me during this final stretch of vicarage and seminary education.

In Christ,



The Ministry of St. John Lutheran Church

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**Deadline for the
June newsletter
is May 25, 5 p.m**

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