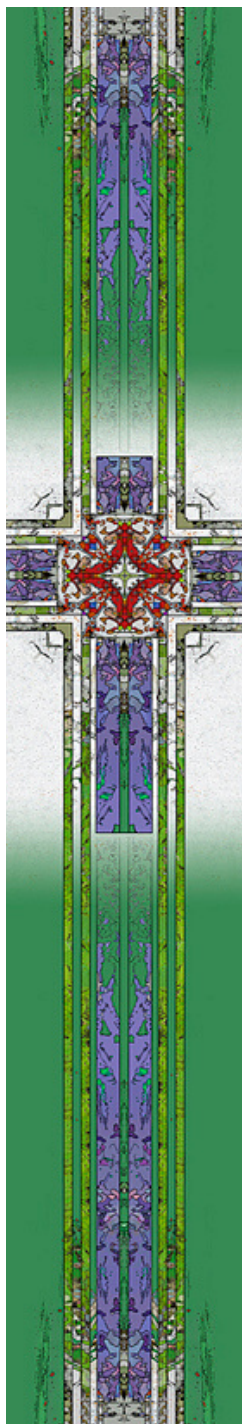


Saint John News

Proclaiming and Practicing the Love of Christ

October 2026

From the desk of ... Pastor Scheck



Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Psalm 133:1

With these words Dietrich Bonhoeffer begins his classic reflection on Christian community, *Life Together*. His thesis is simple but profound: “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.” Unfolding this seemingly simple claim in three points, Bonhoeffer portrays the beauty of Christian community.

In the first place, to be a Christian is to live by the justifying word of the Gospel, to no longer seek salvation in yourself or works, but in the promise of Christ. But here’s the rub. Christ doesn’t speak that word from heaven, or in your feelings, or in nature. Jesus put that Gospel word in the mouth of your fellow believer. As long as we need His Word, we by (His) design need each other. “The Christ in one’s own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of the brother;

one’s own heart is uncertain, his brother’s [word] is sure.” Thus the goal of all Christian community is to meet each other as bearers of that word of salvation. Jesus didn’t just tell us to hang out. He set up salvation in such a way that our need for Him is satisfied only by a fellow believer.

This might bring us together, but it wouldn’t help us get along. The second point Bonhoeffer makes is that we can only approach each other *through* Jesus. Ordinary human communities are always dominated by our egos, interests, and obsessions. We like folks who scratch our egos and serve our projects of self-justification. But Christ’s justifying word has opened the way to the Father and thereby opened the path to one another. By freeing us from our egos, Christ himself now stands between all of us. Only by approaching one another *through* him can we hope to truly know one another at all.

Finally, all Christian community is practice for

eternity. Our God is eternal community, the unity in diversity of Father, Son and Spirit. Just so his plan for us, his Image Bearers, is to be eternally bound together with one another in Christ. “He who looks upon his brother should know that he will be eternally united with him in Jesus Christ.” Christian community is literally practice for the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. It’s a Costco sample of the eternal feast God made us to enjoy when He will be all in all. So we might as well start learning to like it now.

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From the desk of ... continued

It's fair to say, though, that this is not most people's experience of church, especially large churches like St. John. In a big service, the crowd is scary and it's tempting to sneak in and sneak out.

We've got many valuable ministries, but the multitude of asks can make Christian community seem like an endless chore. Getting our communal ducks in a row takes time, teamwork, and sometimes involves conflict. In all this busy, it's easy to see how Bonhoeffer's portrait of Christian community might get lost. Making sure that doesn't happen is the purpose of rGroups. This October rGroups, our sermon-based small group ministry, will launch their second year with seventeen groups. The first sermon will be Sunday, October 11th. Each group will gather weekly for six weeks to get to know one another around the Word. The format is simple: Hear the sermon. Read the scriptures. Gather to discuss and pray. We've built it for flexibility. There are groups most weeknights and even on Sunday mornings. Our sermons this Fall will take a look at many of those customs, habits, and things

we do and ask the simple question: "Why?" and see how all our worthwhile customs must go back to Jesus. (See the article on our Fall rGroup Theme for more information about the sermon theme.)

It's true, it's another ask on your time. Yet like all such asks, it's ultimately an offer. Are there aspects of your faith life you'd like to cultivate? Have you wanted to get more comfortable talking about the faith with your spouse, kids, or family? Have you wanted to build the habit of reading scripture and praying more regularly? Have you wanted to get to know some folks at church? All good things take time, but it's time worth investing if they're things you truly need.

So that's the invite. Registration opens Oct. 5. If you haven't been a part of an rGroup before, now's the time to get signed up. If you tried one out last year and it didn't gel, choose another. If Fall Term won't work, block off some time for the Epiphany (Jan-Feb) and Easter (April-May) terms. If you were a part of one last year and think you'd like to facilitate a group in the future, come talk to me

(Nathan.scheck@stjohnseward.org). This is a ministry for the whole congregation, and our hope is that as we all hear the sermons, read the Word, and gather in groups, we'll each come to see the beautiful blessing of Christian community Bonhoeffer described: Christians gathering through Jesus and in Jesus to meet one another as bearers of His Gospel.

As Bonhoeffer described: Christians gathering through Jesus and in Jesus, to meet one another as bearers of His Gospel.



Campaign and Building Informational Meetings: October 1, 3 and 4

by Adrienne Geidel

Members of the congregation are invited to attend one of three upcoming one-hour informational meetings about the Capital Campaign. Representatives from the Ministry Operations Board, Building Committee, and Campaign Chairs will share updates on the building design, campaign and funding, and possible next steps.

Meetings will be held **Thursday, October 1 at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, October 3 at 10:00 a.m., or Sunday, October 4 at 1:00 p.m., all in the Fellowship Hall.**

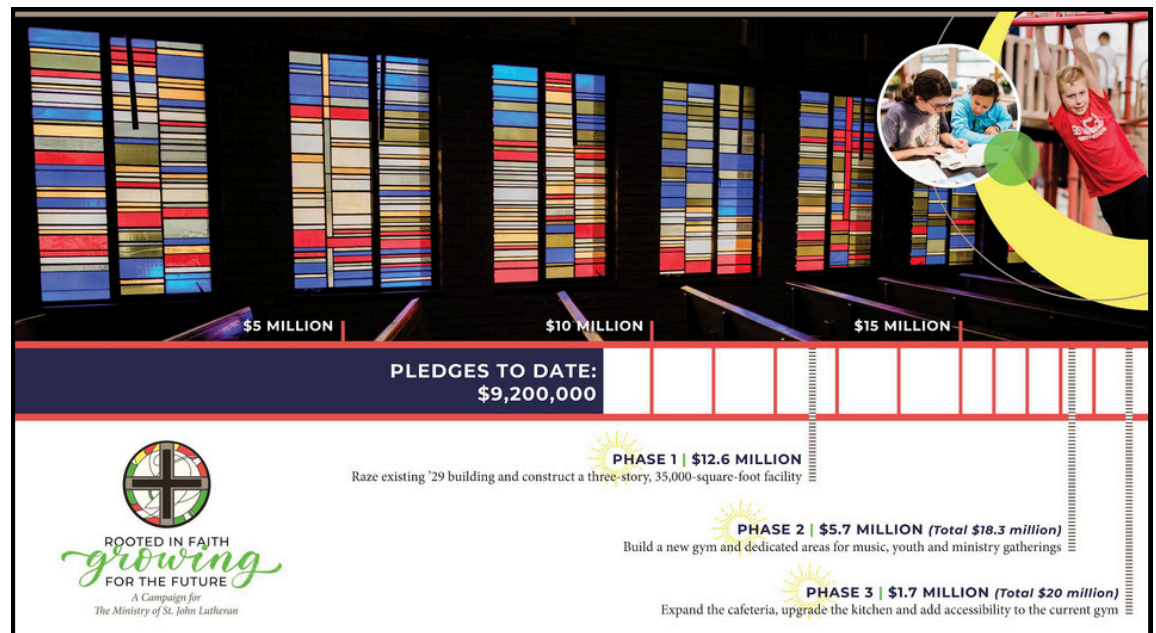
As the Building Committee continues to work with our architects and general contractor to refine the plans and better understand the scope and cost of the project, the capital campaign chairs are planning for our role in fundraising.

Sampson Construction has provided updated cost estimates based on the developing plans. This information is helping the Building Committee and Ministry Operations Board understand the project's financial requirements as well as set goals for the Campaign Chairs.

As previously communicated, any decision to proceed with construction will ultimately come before a Voting Assembly for consideration of the finalized plans and financial readiness. We hope you will join us for one of the informational meetings to learn, pray and give thanks to God for His provision and for the opportunity to consider how this project can best serve St. John's ministry for generations to come.



Campaign Information



Fall Term rGroup Theme: Why?

by Esther Langness

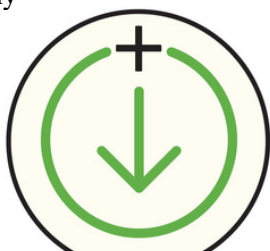
It's amazing how often humans act out of custom. Without thinking we say "Bless you" to someone's sneeze, shake hands at a deal, or take hats off in buildings. We inherit customs from parents, community, or our church. Lutherans really love churchy customs, and we're pretty good at handing them down to our kids. We're less good, though, at making sure our kids understand why we do them. If we never stop to think, to ask why about our churchy customs, we miss out on the opportunity to fully enjoy their purpose. More importantly, we miss out on the chance to share with our kids and with others why

these things are worth doing.

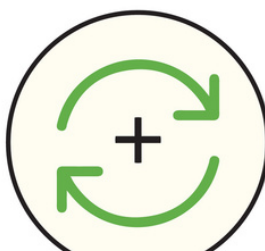
This Fall our rGroup series will pause to ask some basic Whys to some key Christian questions. We'll start with the center: Why Jesus? Any other answer worth giving must come from here. That will lead us to consider Why Scripture? Why build our lives around an ancient set of documents? On Reformation day, we'll tackle Why Creeds?, considering the role that confessions play in our faith life. On All Saints Day, we'll remember those who worship around the throne of the Lamb and ask Why Worship? Then we'll turn to the broader question, Why Church?,

before closing with Why Give? The goal in all of these will be the same: begin with some churchy custom and see how it flows from and to the answer to Why Jesus? When we know this, we'll be better able to celebrate them and better equipped to invite others along.

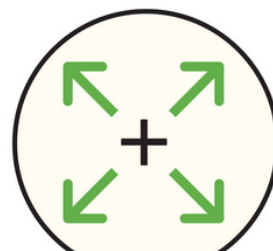
**rGroups return
Sundays
October 11 to
November 15
Sign-up available in
the Narthex
Oct. 4 & 11**



RECEIVE



RELATE



RESPOND

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.

Pastor Scott Bruick



Weekly Chapel Builds Education and Faith

by Barb Mertens

Students at St. John have the opportunity to participate in chapel each week on Wednesday mornings. St. John Lutheran School, like many other Lutheran Schools, holds weekly chapel because we see education and faith as connected rather than separate, and chapel is a key event for our entire school where that connection becomes a shared practice.

Lutheran tradition centers on God's Word being proclaimed and heard. Chapel is typically built around Scripture readings, a short message, prayer, and hymns or songs. Once a week is common for many Lutheran schools because it

is frequent enough to build habit and community. At St. John, students play an active role in chapel services. Fifth graders take turns being acolytes and collecting the offering. Eighth graders read the scripture lessons. Third grade helpers lead the words and actions for saying the Apostles Creed and the 10 Commandments. All grades participate in student-led prayers. Students also help with music whether playing prelude music or leading songs. And throughout the year, each class has a chance to lead chapel with a message and songs.

One favorite part of chapel for students is what we call Chapel Buddies.

Younger students are paired with older students to sit together during chapel. Pairs are assigned at the beginning of the year, and pairs stay together all year long. These relationships are a formative part of students experience at St. John. They help bridge the gap between older and younger students, providing younger students with positive role models and older students with a chance to lead by example. Just ask a kindergartener who their Chapel Buddy is, and you will almost always get a big smile!

Chapel is held each Wednesday at 9:05 a.m. in the sanctuary and is open to all.

Talk Heart2Heart – A great resource for families!

Talk Heart2Heart.org was developed by Region 5 Systems to provide easy to use resources that encourage adults to talk with young people about:

- Alcohol and Drugs: <https://talkheart2heart.org/talk-alcohol-drugs/>
- Mental Health: <https://talkheart2heart.org/talk-mental-health/>
- Risky Behaviors: <https://talkheart2heart.org/talk-risky-behaviors/>

Parents, Youth, and Educators can find even more helpful resources at: <https://talkheart2heart.org>

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine." Isaiah 43:1b

Growing Together in God's Love

by Tom Koffarnus

We are in full swing in our 2026-2027 school year here at the Child Development Center. The classroom routines are well established and the children are busy every day playing, having fun, and learning about God's love for them!

The teachers are getting to know all their children in their classroom this year and vice versa. They work daily to strengthen the teacher-student relationship.

We are very blessed to have strong relationships in our community. For example, we were lucky to have the Concordia Track and Field team (see picture) send over a group of volunteers to help

spread mulch out on our playground. Their hard work and willingness to help out was greatly appreciated. Within an hour and a half this group of athletes and their coaches had two large piles of mulch spread out and ready to be used. The children were excited to have a fresh look to the playground!

The relationships we continue to build are a benefit to the children we serve. From the relationship with Concordia to the relationships with the children and families we serve to the relationship with the members of St. John. All these partnerships are what

makes us able to function the way we do.

If you are looking for a way to get involved with the CDC, I invite you to reach out and we can talk about opportunities from volunteering to working as a substitute. We welcome the opportunity to strengthen the relationships across the St. John and Seward community as we continue to seek others who are also aiming to "Show and Tell the Love of Jesus" to the children and families.



Preparing Hearts and Hymnals for Worship

by Jeanette Niemann

St. John has been blessed by a thoughtful service project to enhance our weekly worship. Member Katy Pauly brought together the idea, resources, funding, and a team of volunteers to create new ribbon inserts for the sanctuary hymnals.



These ribbons will help worshipers easily find their place and prepare themselves for worship.

The team has completed the ribbon inserts and delivered them to the church. Now, our CDC after-school students, under the guidance of Esther Langness, will have the opportunity to serve by carefully placing the new ribbons in each of our hymnals.



We are grateful for the many people who have contributed their time, talents, and resources to this project.

What began as one person's idea has become a wonderful example of how members of our church community work together to support and enhance our worship life.



Meet Andrew, DCE Practicum Student

"Hello, my name is Andrew Castens, and I am a senior DCE student at Concordia University Nebraska. I will serve as your practicum student for this year here at St. John. I am from New Haven, Indiana, but was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana. I went to Concordia Lutheran High School in Fort Wayne, where I played soccer, sang in the choir, and did tech for drama plays.

I am the middle child of my family, which includes my dad, my mom, and 2 sisters. We also included the addition of a brother-in-law to our family a few years ago. I really enjoy journaling, reading Scripture, and hanging out with friends. I like to go on walks while talking to God, so if you see me out and about, it might look like I'm talking to no one, but I'm talking to my

best friend, Jesus. I like checking in on my friends and being super relational. "People need Jesus." This is my purpose for ministry. Everyone needs Jesus. My goal is to point others to Christ and, through this action, remind them that it's not just ministry, *but God's ministry*. I am super excited to be working with everyone at St. John and meeting you! Jesus loves you!



Partnering in Ministry: A Back-to-School Update from the Education Board

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Welcome to the start of a wonderful new school year at St. John! On behalf of the School Board, we want to express our deepest gratitude to the congregation. Your faithful prayers, financial support, and dedication are what allow our Day School and Child Development Center (CDC) to thrive as vital ministries of our church. The back-to-school season has brought incredible energy to our campus, and we are blessed to witness our hallways filled with children learning, playing, and growing in God's Word.

As a board, we are highly focused on stewardly leadership and intentional governance to ensure St. John remains a thriving center for ministry. To support this goal, our board members are invested in an ongoing governance book study—*Guiding Schools to Flourish*—and are conducting a comprehensive review of our policies. We are currently working to merge our existing Board of Education manuals, align them with the Board of Elders and the Ministry Operations Board, and draft clear Outcome Policies.

This rigorous work ensures our decision-making remains deeply rooted, accountable, and focused on institutional relevance, excellence and Christ-centered education for our families.

Concurrently, we look to the future and the possibility of a transformative campus expansion. This exciting project features new classrooms, cafeteria and a student/youth commons designed to be a welcoming gathering space for our students, church families, and community visitors for generations to come.

Because we want to ensure you are fully informed, we invite you to attend one of the upcoming public informational meetings in the Fellowship Hall to receive updates:

- **Thursday, October 1 at 7:00 PM**
- **Saturday, October 3 at 10:00 AM**
- **Sunday, October 4 at 1:00 PM**

Looking Ahead: A New Opportunity for St. John Families

We also want to share a brief preview of an exciting financial opportunity on the horizon that will help

support our families.

Beginning January 1, 2027, the Education Freedom Tax Credit will allow individuals to direct up to \$1,700 of their federal income tax liability to support private K-12 school scholarships through Opportunity Scholarships of Nebraska (OSN). This program provides a dollar-for-dollar tax credit, and taxpayers will be able to designate a portion of their contribution to benefit children at the specific school that matters most to them. Most students will qualify, and we are hopeful these scholarships will become available by the fall of 2027. Please keep an eye out for more details on how you can participate as the implementation date approaches!

Thank you, St. John congregation, for your enduring investment in the spiritual and academic lives of our youth. Together, we are building a lasting legacy of faith for the next generation.

Warmest blessings in Christ,
Holly Dorathy
Education Board Chair
St. John Lutheran School



You Belong to Jesus!

by Ron Bork

You belong to Jesus. He loves you and He always will. What a great thing to know and to be sure of. This is the message that we share daily with our children, parents, friends, fellow church members, and especially with people who don't know Jesus. Servants in the church do this, say this, live this. Yes, those in public school vocations - teachers, leaders, workers - can and often do show love to others, but there is a different freedom to do this in a Lutheran, Christian setting. Daily devotions, weekly chapels, Jesus time, prayers before lunchtime, an end-of-day blessing - these times add to the knowledge

that **WE BELONG TO JESUS!**

During my 46 years of full-time teaching and 6 years of subbing in Lutheran schools I had daily opportunities to share this message. What a joy! Young people in my classroom saw this and some chose to follow in my footsteps as teachers and some even as pastors. Now they share that message and joy with others.

Here's my invitation to you to join me and them in sharing the love of Jesus daily in a church work vocation. Ask any of the many church workers we have at St. John if they agree.

If you or someone you know would like to learn more about a church work vocation contact me. I'll talk with you and get you in touch with others who will share their experience with you. Continue also to pray for our young people who are currently serving in churches and schools throughout our Lutheran church and also for our five young people who continue to prepare themselves in our seminaries and universities - Aaron, Jonathan, Tara Tim, and Nolan.

Share the good news!
WE BELONG TO JESUS!

Ron Bork
SAS Congregational
Representative
ronbork48@gmail.com

Mission Moments

Webinar to tackle myths about missionaries

"I can't be an international missionary because. ..."

The answers people give to complete that statement are often based on myths about what they think a missionary is and what one does.

On **Saturday, Oct. 24, 10–11 a.m. (CDT)**, join an online panel of current missionaries and DCE Anne Gonzalez, manager of missionary recruitment for the LCMS Office of International

Mission, as they explore how LCMS missionaries spread the Gospel, plant Lutheran churches and show mercy around the world.

On the webinar, "Missionary Myths: What You Think You Know About Missionaries — and What's Actually True" you'll discover the truth about common misconceptions regarding missionary service, hear firsthand missionary

accounts from actual missionaries, and learn about the many ways God calls His people to participate in international mission work. Whether you're prayerfully considering serving overseas or looking for meaningful ways to support LCMS global mission from where you are, you'll leave encouraged, inspired and equipped to take your next step in God's mission.

Continued on next page

Webinar ... continued

Can't make it live? Register for the webinar, and you'll receive a recording of the event to watch later.

Participants who attend live may submit questions during the event.



(From left) The Rev. Adam Lehman and the Rev. James Neuendorf, LCMS missionaries to the LCMS Latin America and the Caribbean region, walk while making visits in Ponce, Puerto Rico. Lehman will be one of the panelists. (LCMS/Johanna Heidorn) (The Reporter, article posted Sept 24, 2026)

Register at thelc.ms/missionary-myths-webinar

For more information about LCMS International Mission, including the regions it serves and opportunities for getting involved, visit international.lcms.org

Official Acts

BAPTISMS

September 13, 2026, John Mark Stanley, son of Mitch G. and Larissa K. (Geyer) Stanley
 September 13, 2026, Lila Kate Theilen, daughter of Ethan J. and Laura E. (Kaufmann) Theilen
 September 19, 2026, Effie Ann Hackbart, daughter of Carrisa K. Hackbart
 September 20, 2026, Theodore Ford Jacobe, son of Preston M. and Paige E. (Strothkamp) Jacobe
 September 20, 2026, Elyra Lynn Stanek, daughter of Karson C. and Sky J. (Brumm) Stanek
 September 27, 2026, Brooks Michael Reinke, son of Adam J. Reinke and Amanda M. Berg

FUNERALS/COMMITALS

September 3, 2026, Kathleen (Anstine) Peters at the age of 91 years and 24 days

September 2026 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

TRANSFERS IN:

Amanda Berg
 Samuel Firminhac

TRANSFERS OUT:

(M/M) Brian & Penny Meyer to Christ Lincoln, Lincoln, NE

RELEASES

Emily Manley
 Brett Meyer
 (M/M) Jeffrey & Tracey Thompson and Karli
 Don Robson
 Hope Robson



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November newsletter
is October 25, 5:00 p.m.
Email: newsletter@stjohnseward.org**

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