



inTouch

Engaging and re-engaging members & friends of St. John's

God's Remarkable Love for Each Generation

WRITTEN BY ROGER HELLMAN

Youth ministries have been spurred on throughout our first 150 years at St. John's with remarkable leadership and the ministry has always been second to none. Undeniably, the leadership for the past twenty years with Rob Gieraltowski, Steve Terry, and many adult volunteers has been remarkable. Our current team of leaders, Amy Rademacher and Emily Lewis, is excited to carry on the tradition.

Visiting with these two dedicated women on a cold sunny day in January, there were two burning questions on my mind that I brought to our discussion—did God call you to work with the youth of our church and is our church promoting youth ministry as it always has so that St. John's youth ministry can thrive in the world today?

In regards to the first question, I can attest that Amy Rademacher and Emily Lewis have answered God's call to serve our youth! I can share a few instances and some remarkable circumstances to confirm this; however, it would be best for you to hear it directly from them. Please take time to get to know each of these ladies on their mission for Christ and in benefit for God's children. Their stories are unique—from diverse backgrounds with compelling and interesting experiences. They will share stories of people that have made such significant impacts on their lives; however, what's most important to God's church today, is that they are dedicated, called, and glorifying God by serving in such important work! They complement each other to coordinate a wholesome youth



“St. John's youth ministry works so well on a trickle down support system with adults invested in youth and youth invested in youth.

The encouragement among peers is a wonderful thing to witness.”

—Amy Rademacher

ministry program in ways that I recognize, and you will also as you become involved with it, as the work of the Holy Spirit.

Let's consider the second question regarding our church's commitment to youth ministry. As we remembered and celebrated Jesus' baptism, our Epiphany season started with each of us making commitments and promises to our newest member, Silas Duffield. Pastor David reminded Silas and each of us that we are beloved children of God, “buried therefore with Jesus by Baptism

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In our discussion, Amy passionately stated that this group of kids, due to the pandemic, have missed out on so much and now, they are hungry for opportunity. There are unlimited ways and so many opportunities at our church for youth and adults to be involved in this ministry?

Consider all the ways for involvement:

Stepping Stones

- Holy Communion
- My Bible
- Confirmation
- Graduation

Learning/Growth Opportunities

- Joy Zone
- Thrive
- Chaos
- Ignite
- Vacation Bible School

Worship Opportunities

- Choirs and Bands
- Worship Support

Service Projects

- Lutheran World Relief
- ELC-Zambia
- Card writing
- Midwest Food Bank
- Safe Harbor
- Center for Hope
- Giving Tree
- Work Camp

Fellowship Opportunities

- Game Night
- Holiday Parties
- Bonfire
- Movie Night

Fundraising Events

- Chicken Dinner
- Bake Sale
- Garage Sale



The Power of the Internet

WRITTEN BY JIM DUMOUCHEL

On Palm Sunday, I was in the Fort Meyers airport waiting for my flight back to Bloomington/Normal. I had spent the last five days visiting my sister-in-law and her husband in Naples. The airport was crowded. After all, it was the end of Spring Break!

After clearing Security, I was jostled and pushed and nudged as everyone was trying to get to their departure gates. Finally, being cut off for what seemed the umpteenth time, I'd had enough. I decided to go into the next food and beverage place for a break. After an adult beverage and a nice talk with a group from Minneapolis, I continued on to my gate. Next problem: where to sit. Gates 7, 8, and 9 shared a common waiting area, and it was MOBBED. I found a place to sit. What a relief!!

I was frazzled and needed to calm down. Then I remembered that it was Palm Sunday and that I couldn't go to church. I was dismayed because Palm Sunday is an important day and the beginning of Holy Week. As I sat there contemplating my situation,

I remembered that St. John's records their services. The airport had free internet. I signed on. Went to St. John's home page. Clicked on WATCH and found the morning's contemporary service and began to watch/listen. Thankfully I have BlueTooth hearing aids and was able to view the service in private.

As the commotion and frantic activity around me continued, I heard the relaxing Palm Sunday service while in my own little world. It helped me calm down watching the waving of the palm branches and Pastor David's sermon.

So, what's the point of this story? It is to remind us that the internet, with all its craziness, can be a refuge for God's word to give us hope and grace. Thankfully, St. John's has embraced technology, giving us another opportunity to worship our Lord. So, remember the next time you need a little (or big) boost, you can go to St. John's website, click WATCH, and view past services. Blessings and Grace be with you all.

God's Remarkable Love *continued*

into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too may walk in the newness of life!" (Romans 6:4)

The promises that were made to Silas on that day in January are intended for him but are not unique to him. They are for every baptized member of our church! Our children are precious and they are members of our family here at St. John's. We desire the best for their lives, and our commitment to them is sincere. In discussion with older, longer-term members, the emphasis on our youth ministries is remarkable!

Who among us does not need to be reminded daily that we are beloved, children of our Heavenly Father/Mother? How better can we sustain our youth in today's world than to include them in our family circle?

Whether you address God as Father or Mother, the important point is that you have an intimate relationship with our loving and compassionate God. That is what I want for all of God's family and I especially desire that for our youth. God has always provided our church with exactly what is needed in our time; God cares for each of us and will lead us into our next 150 years with the same assurance. The next edition of *inTouch*

will highlight dreams and exciting opportunities for our youth ministries in the next 150 years.

I invite you to take part in this dreaming process. As you read this, pray for and consider our youth ministries. If you were creating a curriculum for our youth, what do you consider essential? E-mail Amy, Emily, or myself with your thoughts and dreams. What an honor, privilege, and responsibility we have to our St. John's family.

St. John's Membership

Birth-5years: 42
1st-8th Grade: 187
9th-12th Grade: 99

MISSION IMPACT

WRITTEN BY JIM DUMOUCHEL

Center for Hope

2023 Lenten Collection for Center for Hope was very successful thanks to the members of St. John's. We collected more than 21,600 items including 3,905 diapers, 228 rolls of paper towels, 683 rolls of toilet paper, and 16,504 baby wipes. The items have been delivered to Center for Hope and some have been distributed to those in need in our community. See the picture below of the collection table during Lent.

Midwest Food Bank

In February St. John's staff went to the Midwest Food Bank for a staff retreat. They had lunch and volunteered for the rest of the day. The day was rewarding for both the staff and the food bank.

Red Cross Blood Drive

A Red Cross Blood drive was held in January, and 39 units were collected. This number is slightly less than what we usually collect.

Individual Mission Outreach

Large or small mission outreach is grace given to others, and we are directed to do so by our Lord Jesus Christ. One need not look far to help those in need. A good example is a group of St. John's ladies who meet at Panera. They discovered that the waitress who regularly waits on them needed a blanket. The ladies picked up a blanket kit from the Chapel, made it, and surprised the waitress with it. They received tears of joy and a big thanks from the waitress. Have you performed a individual mission outreach?



Dear Mary & Martha

WRITTEN BY JIM DUMOUCHEL

Mary: Martha, I heard some members talking about a columbarium. Do you know what it is?

Martha: A columbarium is a structure or room with niches for the respectful storage of funeral urns, holding cremated remains of the deceased. They have existed for thousands of years and are experiencing a resurgence in popularity because they're environmentally- and budget-friendly final resting place.

Mary: Does St. John's have a columbarium?

Martha: Yes! St. John's open-air columbarium is easily accessed through the West entrance and the Parish Life Center. It is surrounded by the building and can be viewed via the hallway next to the church offices. It's a calm, peaceful setting where one feels the comforting arms of God. Niches are in a free standing cross and along the South wall. There is seating available for prayer and meditation.

Mary: The St. John's Columbarium sounds like a very peaceful place, but I wonder if one is cremated will they be able to get into Heaven?

Martha: According to the ELCA's website, "Lutheran theology and tradition do not favor any particular form of burial. God's ability to give resurrected bodies to those who bear the name of Christ cannot be stymied by any human action, including organ donation or cremation."

Mary: That's good to know. Is the Columbarium available to all members?

Martha: Yes, St. John's Columbarium is available to all members and members of other ELCA congregations at the time of the purchase. Applicants can select a niche from those available at the time the application is approved.

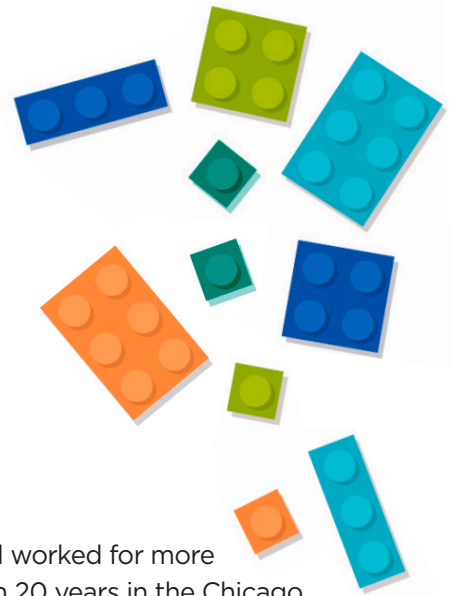
Mary: How do I find out more information about St. John's Columbarium?

Martha: Contact Lisa Myers in the church office, (309) 827-6121 ext. 206, or visit www.stjblm.org/columbarium.





VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Joel Murphy

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH HAINES

Q&A

What was your first job?

Cleaning up pricing debris at my uncle's hardware store.

What is your favorite vacation spot?

I don't really have one, but I enjoy Disney World with the kids.

What is your favorite hobby?

Legos! While I didn't have them as a kid, a friend would get Legos from Sweden. After I was married, I was ill and Diane bought a set. Soon, Lego sets occupied a lot of space in my office!



Above, Joel and Pastor David as train conductors at Rocky Railway Vacation Bible School last summer.

Scan the QR code with your smart phone camera to see some of Joel's aerial shots of the church taken with his drone.



Joel Murphy has only been a member at St. John's for a few years and has really stepped into several roles. He is currently serving his second three-year term on Council and was Council President for part of that time. Joel was highly involved in the campaign to build the new Worship Center, redesign the former Sanctuary into a Gathering area, and update/consolidate staff offices.

Joel grew up about 30 miles west of Chicago. He was brought up Catholic but had lots of Lutheran friends. His mom's family is Swedish, and he had an uncle who was in charge of a parade and big celebrations. Joel met his wife, Diane, through a relative who worked with Diane's sister planning these celebrations. They hit it off immediately, despite having to work through the challenges of a long-distance relationship with Diane living in St. Charles, Illinois. They married 14 months after meeting.

If you see Joel at church, just ask him about his short shorts and long socks; then ask Diane why his VW Thing (it's a vehicle) was such a draw.

Joel and Diane moved to the Bloomington/Normal area from Quincy more than five years ago. They have three grown children. Their oldest son is in Champaign; their second son is a Major in the Marines and currently serving with Royal Canadian Air Force; and their daughter lives in Chicago and works at a law firm.

Joel worked for more than 20 years in the Chicago area with school districts and then took a job in Quincy. As time grew closer for retirement, they settled on Bloomington/Normal, because it's a college town. The firm he was working with decided to open an office in Bloomington to keep him on their team.

Once the couple joined St. John's, they jumped right into service opportunities. He and Diane wanted to get to know the people at St. John's and found volunteering an excellent way to meet people while serving. The building project was a draw for Joel because as a school administrator, part of his job was building improvements. He also enjoys all things tech, so he was instrumental when St. John's started streaming worship services.

Joel continues to work as a project technologist, assisting with designing safety/security systems. He is also designated in crime prevention; certified physical project (CPC); and has also acquired a commercial drone.

Maybe the only job he'd leave all that for is VBS train conductor. He helped with the sets for last year's VBS and pulled his engineer costume out of the closet to co-star with Pastor David. It turns out he was involved in theater during school, and when their kids were in high school, he started helping with set design. He built a 30-foot Cat in the Hat for *Sousical, the Musical*.