St. John's Lutheran School
Alumni News

Newsletter 20

The Principal's Perspective

The 2023 portion of the school year has come and gone. It has been a time of learning for students, staff, teachers, and especially me. We have accomplished some of our goals of returning to pre-covid activities and hope to fulfill many more during the 2024 portion of the school year.

Our enrollment has slightly increased since we returned to school in January due to students joining our preschool program. This is a blessing and an opportunity to reach even more children with the message of Christ Crucified.

The month of December went by quickly as we held many Christmas services. Our 3rd through 5th grade students started the Advent Season off with their service "A.D.V.E.N.T." on November 29th. The Kindergarten through 2nd grade spread the message via "Good News" on December 7th. Our 6th through 8th grade students were actors and readers in the "Road to Bethlehem" service on December 13th. The final service sharing the birth of Jesus came from our Daycare and Preschool students with a service entitled "Love Came Down." We were so delighted to welcome guests back to these services and enjoyed the ambiance of fellowship that came with it and the opportunity for the children to so proudly share the miracle of Christ's birth.

The return of the Fall Festival and Wurstmarkt were more fellowship opportunities offered here at school. The Fall Festival was overwhelmingly successful, and all were happy to see it continue. We wished farewell to one of the longtime leaders of this event, Heather Voss, and we look to replace her in the upcoming year; talk to the school office if interested. The Wurstmarkt saw more in-person dining which helped people connect with one another. These events were a blessing, and we can't wait to offer more.



The Warming Tree.

Speaking of blessings, we all are very blessed to have everything the Lord has entrusted to us. We have been blessed in this way and are working to be a blessing to others in our community. This has been done in part as the 2nd grade collected diapers for the Life Network of Southern Illinois in January. And our school, as a whole, decorated a "Warming Tree" in the lobby near our school entrance. The coats, scarves, hats, gloves, socks, and blankets went to support students in need of these items. Thank you to Sara and Leslie for beginning this tradition at St. John's Lutheran. Finally, the students in Junior High have been a blessing of friendship and fun as they traveled to Garden Place on four dates in November and December to play "Farkle" with the residents. Both students and residents enjoyed the events, and we look forward to more opportunities like this in the future.



Students Emily Farmer and Brian Liefer playing Farkle with St. John's member Margaret Hanebutt.

As we returned to school in January, we hit the ground running and had Lutheran Schools week January 21 - 28. As always, there was fun, fellowship, and outreach with dress up days and Christ Our Savior Lutheran High School visiting, as well as collecting donations of hygiene products that will support those in need. Further into February, we will look to celebrate Heart Challenge formerly known as Jump Rope or Hoops for Heart. The class jump will be exciting as always. Then as we move farther into spring, the musical will again take place.

Finally, I have to give thanks for all the staff, teachers, and volunteers that have helped this year to run so smoothly. They are the greatest and help this school to be so wonderful and shine so brightly. When you see one of them, please thank them for the extra time, energy, and expertise they bring to St. John's Lutheran School. We could not be what we are without them. Praise and glory be to God for Him bringing them to St. John's.



May the Lord bless and strengthen you,
Justin Palm

School Happenings



Students Cason Birch and Liam Kilpatrick playing Farkle with St. John's member Carl Zschiegner.



Students Mallory Arbieter, Lilly Meyer and Jack Sachtleben playing Farkel with St. John's members Omer Liefer, and Vernon Muench.



The school sponsored 13 LCFS children with gifts. Pictured is the 4th grade class helping load gifts to be delivered.



The 5th grade class enjoyed making Christmas tree cinnamon rolls with Joyce Carnahan.



Fifth grade teacher Amanda Ruhmann was awarded a Citizenship Education Award from the Red Bud VFW.



Students Karleigh Liefer and Brooke Wolter were winners in the Patriots Pen competition sponsored by the VFW Auxiliary.

The Pastor's Perspective: Rev. Mark Nebel

I write this as students have returned to classes for the first day after their two-week Christmas break. Teachers have refreshed the look of their classrooms. Custodians have cleaned, shined, and scrubbed the building. Report cards for the second quarter will go home tomorrow. All looks good to start the second half of this school year.

I vividly remember as a child sitting in church one Sunday (early service and up in front) with my dad holding the offering envelope in his hand (I even remember the amount written on the outside of the envelope. Being on the Finance Committee, that was one of his pet-peeves. Dad said it was easier for the money-counters if the amount was written there.) Anyhow, he said to me, "Mark, we support

this congregation because you are getting your education here." Whether or not this was his way of putting me on notice, it made an impression on me. I realized that my parents had skin in this game, so I had better buckle down, straighten up, fly right, study hard, and get good grades. And I did.

Now, I have been the pastor of a congregation with a Lutheran day school for over 27 years. It is a united ministry, the support of which has been the mission here at St. John's for 165 years. It is the understanding that we who benefited from the generosity of others' offerings when our children were in school would, in turn, continue to support the congregation after our children graduated so that by our offerings other families could benefit from the school as we had. How wonderful when this happens within our family of faith!

We have a school here because we have a congregation that supports this school. This is a heavy financial responsibility. Thank you to all those who are doing this for the benefit of our school families! Without the support of our congregation, there would be no school here. We certainly look forward to a future of providing children with a quality Christian education. We will be able to do as we also have the support of those who receive and enjoy the benefit of our congregation's day school ministry.

On another note, our school's oldest living alumna recently passed away. Lorine (Koester) Reinhardt (*pictured below*) was in the class of 1942. She was the widow of Earl Reinhardt. Their children attended St. John's for elementary school. It was my privilege to conduct the funeral service for this wonderful Christian lady. The text she chose for the message is John 14:2, (Jesus said) "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." The following is a portion of the sermon:



"Lorine recognized and appreciated the many blessings God gave her. She was not one to complain about anything. Lorine always had a smile; and when she was in a really good mood, that smile was accompanied by a chuckle. Even when it seemed that Lorine was on the edge of maybe starting to think about complaining, she still smiled.

The setting of this passage from John 14 is Jesus with His 12 disciples in Jerusalem to celebrate the yearly Passover festival. They don't know it, but He does, later that night Jesus will be arrested and put on trial before the Jewish Supreme Court. The next morning Jesus will be sentenced to execution on a cross by the Roman governor; by three o'clock that afternoon, He will be dead. His suffering and death as the Son of God living in our human flesh is the innocent, perfect, and complete sacrifice that takes away our sin.

In that setting, Jesus shares these wonderful words, "In My Father's house." Lorine grew up in a father's house. That began in Evansville; then after 1st grade her parents bought a farm outside of Red Bud. It was their earthly house; St. John's was their spiritual home. Lorine finished grade school and studied confirmation here. She married Earl here. They baptized and educated their children here. They were together in worship and the receiving of the Lord's Supper here.

When I came to St. John's, Lorine was a regular volunteer in our church office. She recorded Holy Communion participation on our member cards. In 2009, we began recording this on the computer. That's when Lorine retired from that job. Her own card shows faithfulness in receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper.

This gift of God to her was a preview of the promise of our passage, "many mansions." What must those words of Jesus have sounded like to a young Red Bud farm girl? What mansions did she ever see around here? A mansion would have been a large house she saw on a picture postcard or in an occasional moving picture show. What a wonderful hope this promise of Jesus gave to Lorine that she would have a home with Him in such a place.

But for that to happen, Jesus had work to do. "I go," says Jesus. That going means arrest, condemnation, and crucifixion. While all of that seems to be happening to Him, He is in control and in charge of the process. In theology, we call this His "passive obedience." When it comes to His arrest, suffering and death, Jesus goes where His Father's mission for our salvation takes Him.

Having gotten there, Jesus now prepares a place. His mission is fulfilled by His resurrection and ascension into heaven. Jesus promises a prepared place that is "for you." His heavenly mansion has infinite amount of room and an eternal amount of time. But this gift is for each one of us, for us personally and individually as we receive faith in Him. This is the work of the Holy Spirit through God's Word and Sacraments.

Such faith was the Holy Spirit's gift to Lorine given to her early in life through Holy Baptism, then taught to her through the Holy Bible, then nourished within her through the Lord's Supper. She spent time throughout her life in her Father's house. Here that means gathered with fellow believers for worship. Now that Father's gift is fulfilled, that Father's promise is personal and present. That Father's house is heaven. Lorine now sees and enjoys that many-mansioned life with our Lord."



Pastor Mark Alan Nebel

A Visit With Alumna: Rebecca Cooper

As Time Goes By

I am Rebecca Ann Cooper, and I'd like to share the intergenerational journey of Christian education at St. John's Lutheran Grade School within my family. The story begins with my Grammy, Lois Jane Ratz, an alumna who graduated years before her daughter, my mother Carolyn Florence (Ratz) Cooper, and her granddaughter, Angela Marie Cooper.



Our family legacy at St. John's spans over 60 years, with Lois graduating in 1941, Carolyn in 1969, Angela in 1995, and myself in 2001. Throughout these years, the consistent thread has been the unwavering quality of Christian education provided by St. John's.

Lois, born to Otto and Florence (Gremp) Ackermann, grew up in Red Bud and married Oliver L. Ratz, Jr. in 1948. Their union resulted in two children, William Henry Ratz and my mother, Carolyn Florence Ratz. Oliver's parents were Oliver Louis and Olga Marie (Schrieber) Ratz, Sr.

Angela and I spent a lot of our childhood visiting our Grandparents. Since they lived in Red Bud, it was hard for them to hide from us. Angela practically moved in with them the day Rick and Carolyn brought me home from the hospital.



Lois with Angela and Rebecca

Carolyn, who married Richard Charles Cooper in 1979, played an instrumental role in ensuring we made the most of our education at St. John's. As a room mother, she actively supported our grade school years, undertaking various projects for teachers, such as creating monthly calendars for Mrs. Rachel Miller. Carolyn also contributed to the library with Mrs. Louise Liefer and provided support at Vacation Bible School during summers.

A notable transformation occurred when girls' sports programs were introduced at St. John's, marking a positive change that Carolyn, Angela, and I all appreciate. While Carolyn could be a cheerleader in the '60s, opportunities for girls' sports teams emerged by the time Angela and I attended.



Rebecca, in 1st grade, with 1st and 2nd grade and teacher Rachel Miller.

Carolyn graduated from Red Bud High School in 1973 and from Greenville University in 1977. After college, Carolyn worked at Edward Jones & Co. in the compliance department. She now works as the financial officer of Randolph County Abstract, LLC, in Chester.

Angela and I both graduated from Red Bud High School and William Woods University, embarking on different paths afterward.

Angela moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, and worked in various roles in prestigious hotels. She worked at the Venetian Hotel as a Wedding Planner, Caesars Palace in Hotel Management, and at the Cosmopolitan as Director of Concierge. She has now relocated to Seattle to contribute to the opening of a new InterContinental Hotel in Bellevue, Washington.

I went to Memphis University School of Law and was lucky enough to have Allison Colbert Tribo (another Alumna) as my roommate for three years.



From left: Rick, Angela, Rebecca, Olive, Tom, and Carolyn.

I returned to Red Bud and was hired by Red Bud Industries (Kalin & Kathy Liefer). I am thankful for the experience Kalin and Kathy gave me, but it turned out working with my father, Rick, was the perfect fit. I joined my father's law firm, which eventually expanded to Cooper, Gilbreth, and Doyle in Red Bud and in Waterloo, Illinois. After moving back to Red Bud, I was lucky enough to meet and later marry Tom Westcott. We were introduced by my cousin, Jonathan Ratz (another St. John's Alumnus). So, I make sure Jonathan gets a very nice Christmas present every year.

On October 4, 2021, a new generation of family joy began with the arrival of Olive Jane Westcott, my daughter. Olive, calling Carolyn "Grammy" and Angela "LaLa," has brought new excitement and joy to our family. We Facetime with Angela on the phone regularly, and it is very entertaining. Grammy sees Olive every day, and the disappointment on Olive's face when Grammy leaves is adorable. Olive really enjoys having Grammy around.

When reflecting on our family's history across the generations (Lois to Carolyn; Carolyn to Angela and me; and now, Mom, Angela and myself to Olive), I am filled with gratitude. As Olive prepares to attend St. John's Grade School in a few years, I hope to be there for her, just as Mom was for Angela and me, with the assurance that Grammy will continue to lend her support as she always has. The legacy of our family at St. John's is a source of joy and thankfulness.



Pictured from left; Rebecca, Carolyn, Olive, and Angela.







Olga Ratz, grandmother to Carolyn, made a baptismal gown for her son Oliver. The gown has been passed down and worn by Carolyn (pictured far left), Angela (pictured middle), and Rebecca (pictured far right).

but seek first the
Kingdom of God
& His righteousness
and all these things will be added to you
Matthew 6:33

Confirmation Pictures of the Ratz and Cooper Family



1941 Confirmation Class: Left to Right 1st Row: Irene Voss, Eileen Guebert, Lois Ackermann, Alice Guebert, Edna Junge, Norma Hanebutt, Lucille Gregson. 2nd Row: Arthur Loesche, Erich Wetzel, Mr. A. L. Persson, Rev. Karl Eisele, Norman Schnepel, Richard Guebert. 3rd Row: Wilfred Liefer, Oliver Kueker, Raymond Guebert, Robert Van Dach.



1969 Confirmation Class: Left to Right 1st Row: John Loesche, William Guebert, Susan Seders, Bonnie Nurnberger, Alan Guebert, Carolyn Ratz, David Renner, Marvin Voges, Mr. Ron Snyder. 2nd Row: Randall Liefer, Brian Koch, Debra Liefer, Deborah Kunkel, Rev. Robert Holstein, Gwendolyn Guebert, Shelly Deterding, Steven Ackermann, Douglas Althoff.



1995 Confirmation Class: Left to Right 1st Row: Ellen Turner, Nathan Miller, Erin Hick, Angela Cooper, Kent Henderson, Ginger Neff. 2nd Row: Chad Erdman, Rosalie Wiatr, Nicholas Voges, Rachel Koester, James Ratz, Rachel Hanebutt, Tracey Guebert, Adam Stellhorn. 3rd Row: Christie Kassing, Brandon Mayberry, Jill Guebert, Heather Moeller, Darren Liefer. 4th Row: Mr. Ron Snyder, Rev. Donald Schultz, Travis Krick, Lani Tindall, Scott Liefer, Erin Burgdorf, Matthew Liefer, Vicar Peter Hentfling.



2001 Confirmation Class: Left to Right 1st Row: Rebecca Junge, Jamie Cox, Ryan Stamm, Bethany Guebert. 2nd Row: Alison Colbert, Rebecca Cooper, Zac Carnahan, Corey Minnemann, Jennifer Hartman, Ashley Wirth. 3rd Row: Rev. Rory Seeger, Owen Koester, Catherine Glasscock, Nicholas Grohmann, Jessica Mueth.