St. John's Lutheran School
Alumni News

Newsletter 8

Greetings!

The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation was celebrated officially on October 31, 2017. Many German officials and dignitaries as well as pastors and theologians attended the worship service at the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, that day. Here in the United States, Reformation services were held on the weekend or on the actual date. While I was unable to attend the service at the Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, I was able to watch the live stream. What a joyous celebration to be part of the remembrance of the Reformation. The remembrance does and did not end on October 31. We are celebrating the whole year our heritage as Lutheran Christians. Our theme for this school year is Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone, Christ Alone. Each and every day we remember our Baptism and recite Bible verses chosen for the year using our theme. The students and adults have the opportunity to learn and recite these passages day after day. Dr. Martin Luther lived by the study of God's Word, and we have the tools to do this also through the Bible, which he translated into German, the Catechism, prayers, and hymns which he wrote. We give thanks to God for his work given to us. We pray that the year will continue to draw us ever closer to knowing and living as His children, children of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We pray our whole life will be one of prayer and praise to God.

The students had a great opportunity to step back in history in October as Katie Luther, aka Barbara Kay, came to school to talk about her life. She visited all the classrooms and shared her experiences with the students. All students and parents will have another opportunity to experience the Reformation as we will have a Reformation Walk on January 30, 2018. The evening, which will begin at 6 pm, will have activities and stations for all ages to enjoy. Katie Luther will once again visit with us that evening as a special guest. We look forward to this special evening to gather as His children.



Our Reformation Tree is planted at school! On November 2, 2017, we were able to dedicate a tree as our Reformation Tree (pictured at left). The students, faculty, and guests gathered around the tree to pray and sing songs in dedication to the Reformation. A total of five trees were planted on our newly relocated playground. One tree was given in memory of Mr. Ronald Snyder and the other four were given by Kalin and Kathy Liefer and Bruce and Deitt Schneider in celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. We pray the trees will grow and provide shade for our students for many years to come.

God's continued blessings to you, Deitt Schneider

A Visit With An Alumnus: Omer Liefer

Greetings from another alumnus of St. John's Lutheran School, Omer Liefer. I was a student at St. John's for eight years of elementary school, starting in the first grade in 1936. All of those years were spent in the two-story brick school that was located on the corner of South 6th Street and Route 3. All eight grades were taught in two rooms on the first floor. Grades one through four were taught in the south room by Mr. Summerfeldt and upper grades by Mr. Pearson in the north room.

With one teacher instructing four grades, there was a lot of free time while the other classes were being taught. There was no library and very little other reading material, so that free time was spent listening to other grades' lessons, preparing for assignments for the next day, or just daydreaming. I seldom took homework home with me. Why carry books on that long walk home, when there was more than ample time to complete it in school?

Oh yes, the long walks to and from school. School buses were unheard of until about 1946. Everyone walked to and from school. Kids living in town walked, at most, a mile. Country kids, in some cases, walked about 5 miles to and from school. In my situation, the distance was about 3.1 miles each way, and as the joke goes, "it was uphill both ways." About a year after World War II ended, the first buses appeared. The bus fleet consisted of two buses transporting kids

(Continued from front page) from three elementary schools and the high school. Depending on where you lived along the route, you would spend a lot of time on the bus, frequently up to an hour or more, but it was better than walking.

When I started school, there was no cafeteria or lunch program. Unless you lived very close to school and could walk home at noon, "brown bagging it" was normal. At some point while I was in the lower grades, the lunch program was started with Mrs. Hess Heuman as the head cook. She was a good cook, and her lunches definitely beat bringing your own lunch.



Omer and Neva Liefer. Neva was a teacher at St. John's beginning in 1948. She taught 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades.

The school day started at 8 a.m. and ended at 4 p.m. We had a 15 minute recess about 10 a.m., an hour lunch period, and another 15 minute recess about 2:30 p.m. During these breaks, it was free play. There was no playground equipment so the upper grades played ball. Upper grade boys played baseball, and the girls played softball; boys and girls were not allowed to play together. Boys were not allowed to play with a regular baseball, the concern being that someone might get hurt by getting hit with a hard ball. So we played with a string ball about the same size as a baseball but lighter. A string ball wouldn't last long; then we had to buy our own replacement. It cost about ten cents. We would arrange for games against the public school and the Catholic school. The problem was that the Catholic school team was not allowed on our diamond, and the Lutheran school team was not allowed on theirs; so, we had to play each other on the public school diamond. Things have changed since then, but back then, we had fun anyway.



Omer Liefer and his siblings in order of birth: Walter Liefer Class of 1934, Leroy Liefer Class of 1936, Bernadine Liefer Erber Class of 1939, Wilfred Liefer Class of 1941, Omer Liefer Class of 1944, Orville Liefer Class of 1946, Wilma Liefer (never married) - Class of 1947, Ralph Liefer Class of 1948, and Loretta "Lori" Liefer Rubermeyer Class of 1951.

As you just read about how life was in my young years, high school was a big change. It meant growing up and I enjoyed it. World War II ended in 1945, and life started to return to normal. My class graduated from high school in 1948. During that time, there was an extreme shortage of teachers. Some of my classmates went to college for the summer quarter. When the fall school year started, some were hired as teachers after one quarter of preparation. My wife, Neva Luebkemann Liefer, was one of them. In the fall of 1948, she became the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade teacher at St. John's Lutheran School. During this time, she taught numerous members of our present congregation. We were married in 1954 after I had joined the Air Force. I spent another 18 years in the Air Force, and we moved around the country a lot, always becoming members of the nearest Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. I also spent two unaccompanied tours of duty overseas, one in Korea and one in Vietnam.



Omer and Neva with their children, Randy, Kim, and David.

While serving these overseas tours of duty, Neva and our three children moved back to Red Bud. Randy, Kim, and David attended St. John's Lutheran School. Randy and David were confirmed at St. John's Lutheran School and Kim was confirmed at St. John's Lutheran in Peru, Indiana. All three finished high school in Red Bud. Randy then went to the Air Force Academy and later taught at the Academy. He is now retired; he and his family live in Colorado. Kim went to Eastern Illinois University and received a degree in education. She taught at the secondary level for many years. She and her family live in Massachusetts. David graduated from the University of Missouri-Rolla with an engineering degree. He is employed in the St. Louis area and lives with his family in Wentzville, Missouri. We have eight grandchildren and four great grandchildren. God has richly blessed us.

A Visit With An Alumnus: Jonathan Schultz

I was not looking forward to moving day in August 1981, or the days and years that were to follow. Dad turned our world upside down when he told us that he was accepting a Call to serve as pastor of St. John's, and we would be moving from our lovely country parsonage on 14 acres to a town called "Red Bud," leaving our friends behind. I was convinced that it was the absolute worst decision for his 8th grade son.



Jonathan Schultz and his wife, Sue, with their children Thomas (22), Mollie (18) and Abbie (15) .

But then on moving day, some really nice St. John's men showed up at the parsonage in Altamont in beer trucks and helped load all our worldly possessions for the two hour trip down to Red Bud. When we arrived, many more really nice people showed up to not only help unload the trucks but also help make the parsonage at 803 S. Main feel like home. I remember meeting Mary Snyder (on crutches), Pam Guebert, Jacquie Rahn, Stephanie Althoff, Chris Luttman, and others of my soon to be classmates in the first hours I arrived. It was not long afterwards, I started to realize the people of St. John's and Red Bud weren't so bad and this might work out after all.

In addition to my parents and me, my younger brothers, Joel (7th grade) and Jeremy (4th grade), and my older siblings, Martin and Rachel, moved with us (however, they headed back to Concordia, River Forest soon after we moved in). As the days turned into weeks, I quickly realized that St. John's church and school were comprised of a great group of people in a wonderful small town. What a privilege it was to spend my last year of grade school at St. John's where I had Mr. Snyder as my teacher and got to know so many great people that have remained my friends to this day.

Our family always appreciated the strong support for Lutheran education and church worker preparation that has been a hallmark of St. John's. My three brothers were all generously supported by St. John's during their pastoral education, and all were ordained at St. John's. Rachel and I also went to Concordia, River Forest and graduated with nursing and business degrees, respectively. In fact, four out of our five spouses also graduated from Concordia, River Forest and all of them are church workers as well.

Instead of going to the Seminary, I enrolled in the Loyola University School of Law after graduating from college. Sue and I got married in December 1990, and she taught at Lutheran schools in the Chicago suburbs. Upon graduation from Loyola, I practiced law at a downtown Chicago law firm until God presented Sue and I with the opportunity in 1996 to move to Quetzaltenango, Guatemala with our then 1-½ year-old son, to serve as volunteer missionaries with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We were blessed with the prayers and financial support of many from St. John's during this time.



Schultz family picture from 1999. Pastor and Mary served St. John's Lutheran from 1981 through 2000. Jonathan was from the class of 1982, Joel was from the class of 1983, and Jeremy was from the class of 1986. Martin and Rachel were out of grade school when the family moved to Red Bud.

As we returned from Guatemala in June 1998, I accepted a position with Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis. For the first four months we were back in the US, we lived with mom and dad in the parsonage again as we looked for a house in St. Louis and again enjoyed small town life and worship at St. John's on a weekly basis before we ultimately purchased a home in South St. Louis County.

Thereafter, we would return to Red Bud frequently to hear dad preach. We'd also always come back for the Spaghetti Dinner playhouses that my mom helped the youth put on as a fundraiser. Of all the ministries that my mom participated in at St. John's, I think it was working with the youth that brought her the greatest joy.

When tragedy struck in 2000 with Dad's accident, the people of St. John's were so loving and supportive of our family. Many people would regularly visit at the hospital in St. Louis. Many more sent cards and flowers during his lengthy hospital stay, including the kids from the school. Although the days following his death remain rather foggy in my mind, the two things that have always stuck with me are the hours that

(Continued from page 3) people waited to visit with our family during the visitation and the fact that so many shared personal stories of how Dad had ministered to them in some incredibly tough times in their lives and counseled them, prayed with them, and comforted them with the Word, giving us a glimpse into how Dad had touched so many lives that we were not even aware of.



Nearly two years ago, Mom started the process of moving to South County so that she could be closer to us in the years ahead. My brother, Martin, had served as pastor at St. Paul's Wood River for over 25 years before being called home by our Savior while preaching an Ascension Service this year. His wife, Ruth, continues to live in the Wood River area and teaches at Trinity, Edwardsville. My sister, Rachel, and her husband, George, live in Columbus, IN, where he serves at St. Peter's Lutheran as a Director of Christian Outreach. My brother, Joel, and his wife, Amy, are both on staff at Beautiful Savior in Olathe, KS, where he is senior pastor, and she is the director of the preschool. My brother, Jeremy, and his wife, Michelle, live nearby in Arnold, MO, where he is senior pastor at St. John's, Arnold. Mom has 17 grandkids, including our Thomas (22), Mollie (18) and Abbie (15) who have all been blessed to attend Christ Community Lutheran School and Lutheran South HS, where I serve as the Chair of the Board.

Looking back, what I once thought was the worst possible thing my father could do to me ended up being one of the best things that ever happened to me. Moving to Red Bud, receiving a great education at St. John's and Red Bud High School, and being surrounded by the great people of this church and town have been instrumental in the person I have become. It has set my life on a different trajectory which has resulted in having many great experiences and being able to serve the Lord in some exciting ways. Now, in my position at CPH as Vice President and Corporate Counsel, I am often in meetings where they discuss the decline of LCMS churches and schools and particularly in rural areas. With a good amount of hometown pride, I always hold up St. John's Red Bud as a shining example of a ministry that is bucking the trends as it invests in Lutheran education and reaches more and more students and their families with the Gospel. I pray that St. John's Lutheran School continues to flourish as it educates the next generation of faithful young men and women with a quality Lutheran education.

The Pastor's Perspective

I saved an article from the May 2017 issue of our church body's monthly magazine, The Lutheran Witness, called "You Had One Job." The author, Rev. Hans Fiene, highlights the importance of parents teaching their children the Christian faith. The following thoughts are condensed quotes from this article:

Generally speaking, kids will care as much about the Gospel as their parents do. There are exceptions to this rule, but usually the average child will exhibit the same level of devotion as his parents. There is Luther's example from the Small Catechism. Youth will not live with piety and faithfulness if those children don't have parents who teach them the Word of God and show them why it is important.

While pastors feed us Christ's salvation, it is parents who show their children that Christ's mercy is something worth hungering for. When parents are in worship every week and when they go home and talk with their children about what they hear in the worship service, children learn that Christ's salvation still matters outside the confines of the sanctuary.

Sunday School and Lutheran day school teachers are great. They faithfully serve God and their neighbor, opening the minds and hearts of Christian youth to the wonders of God's Word, but it falls to the parents to teach their children that these stories are worth remembering. When children see that their parents care more than anyone else that they know the story of Christ's salvation, they will usually develop a lifelong desire to remain students of the Word.



Youth leaders are great. They work hard to develop a Christian community for young people and help them cling to Christ during a difficult time of life. But all that our teenagers do in youth activities are not as beneficial for them as sitting next to their Father as he reads the Bible to them, sings hymns with them, prays with them, and covers them with the armor of God.

Parents, teach your children the Christian faith. Do this with them today, and they will do this for their children (your grandchildren) tomorrow.

In Jesus Name, Pastor Mark Alan Nebel