

VOL. 52, NO. 5

The Messenger

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH 1900 Wales Road NE., Massillon, Ohio 44646

Office: 330-837-4645

Email: stjohnmassillon@gmail.com

MAY, 2025

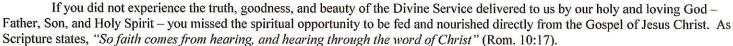
# From Pastor Telloni . . . May Focus

What a beautiful Easter celebration we experienced at our two services on April 20<sup>th</sup> as we rejoiced over the victorious and saving resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ after His suffering and death on the cross, atoning for our sins and winning for us new and eternal life. The chancel was decorated with lilies and tulips and hyacinths and the glorious hymns filled the air with praise and exultation from organ and choir and congregants – all preparatory for the Scripture readings and the proclamation that was entitled, "It's True – An Empty Tomb!"

The second service began with the Baptism of an 18-year-old young man who confessed his faith and then received the water and Word of Baptism, sealing him into Christ's Church, a superb illustration of the truth spoken by St. Paul, "having been buried with [Christ] in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead (Col. 2:12).

Of course, Jesus invited His people to approach His Table to receive His true saving body and blood in the bread and wine for forgiveness and renewed faith and sure peace in the best Easter Banquet of the day.

If you missed these services, perhaps you worshiped with us by viewing the recording on our Website or Facebook Page or visited out-of-town relatives and worshiped in their churches.



On a similar note, we earlier passed through the "Forty Days of Lent," devoting our time together to nurture our faith life as we journeyed with Jesus to the cross. Now we are sort of going through the "Forty Days of Easter Leading to the Ascension of Our Lord." In these special days we will encounter the risen Lord Jesus as He teaches and encourages and leads His people forward in their new life in Him in being faithful members of His Church and witnesses to the community and world.

When I prepare a sermon, I am specifically and prayerfully thinking about each one of YOU. Yes, YOU! Christ has called me as His servant to speak His holy and wholesome Word of the Gospel to YOU to fortify your faith and life in Him so that YOU will follow YOUR Shepherd in all aspects of your daily lives.

Pray for me to do so effectively, and I will pray that YOU will hear the true Word of God in what is proclaimed when we fellowship before His altar and pulpit and Table! May these "Forty Days of Easter" be a blessing to YOU! In His Name,





astor ofhi



As most of you know by now, we will be privileged to welcome Charles Upole as a vicar (student intern) who will serve our congregation for approximately one-and-a-half to two years. Since he has a full-time job in Cleveland, he will be with us on a part-time basis, basically on weekends and one or two evenings during the week. He has done online seminary work for the last ten years, and has a couple more classes to take before his graduation. Charles and his wife Kristi and their family live in Hinckley, Ohio, and are currently members of Fairlawn Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Fairlawn, OH. Lord-willing, he will begin his internship in June or July.

We are hoping to have an Installation during the Divine Service on Sunday, June 1, followed by a potluck luncheon in the Fellowship Hall. More specific

information is forthcoming. Let us continue to pray for the Upole family and be ready to welcome them to St. John in the near future.

## STEWARDSHIP CORNER KEEP THE MISSION MOVING:

A CALL TO PROVIDE FOR THE CHURCH BY CONTINUED GIVING



This past January "Portals of Prayer" had a devotion titled "Providing for the Church" based on 1 Corinthians 9:1-12. While the emphasis was to take care of those who minister and work for the church, it also encouraged us to support one another in the proclamation of the Gospel and making of disciples. Paul speaks to us in verse 11 "If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it

too much if we reap material things from you?" This is more than just a question. It is a gentle reminder that ministries require resources. If our desire is to keep the doors of the church open; to teach, reach, and serve all those in need, then your support is needed.

Every gift, no matter the size, helps us to keep the light of Christ shining in our community and sustains our mission to "Restore Broken People to Life in Christ." Our year-to-date envelope offerings have decreased this year and hinder our efforts to do anything but basic essential building repairs. Your continued generosity and support help us to keep the light of Christ shining in our community. May your thankfulness and trust in the Lord be reflected in your Stewardship!

- Board of Stewardship - Luther Russert, Chairman

# GRATITUDE

I'd like to extend a note of gratitude and appreciation on many levels.

Thanks and sincere special recognition to the congregation of St.

John for allowing and trying to understand efforts to plant a church when it might have seemed an illogical thing to try to do. I know it was not easy, but you were gracious. I believe that God will bless us. After all, God is good all the time and all the time God is good.



Words are not adequate to express my thankfulness to Pastor Carpenter who showed grace and humility when we were both often overwhelmed. The Lord somehow gave him the strength to stand smack dab in between maintenance and innovation, and between the individual needs of others (my own included) and the moving of "chess pieces" for God's will. He stood as a shining example of Jesus to me.

To the Church Plant Team (consisting of Dan and Brian; Aaron; Pastor Jon, Shannon, Xander, Elliana, Arielle, and Caspian; Dan and Kay; Jason, Lena, Charlotte, Anders, Grahm, and Olivia; my dear husband, Frank) thank you for your willingness to come together, for you hard work and openness, for your thoughts, ideas, and perseverance. But most of all, thank you for trying to love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.

Although the church plant is on hold indefinitely, the good we experienced and learned came from the Lord.

Thank You for Serving at the Pregnancy and Support Center in Canton: Special thanks to Elliana Carpenter and Charlotte Kompara for serving dinner to the Moms at the Pregnancy and Parenting Center. Appreciation and thanks to Shannon Carpenter and Lena Carpenter for helping with food preparation and transport. Thanks to Frank Pershing for being a general helper.

And last but not least, thanks to Jason Kompara and Pastor Carpenter for cooking, serving, transporting and hanging out with the Dads.

This was a wonderful service opportunity held on February 22, 2025 with blessings for all!

- Blessings in Christ, Mary Kay Pershing Chairperson, Board of Outreach

# ASCENSION DAY

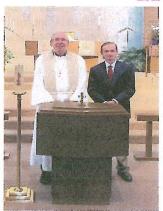
### THE FESTIVAL OF JESUS' ASCENSION INTO

HEAVEN will be observed on Thursday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m., with a Divine Service of Word and Sacrament. The Adult Choir will also sing a special anthem. A feature of this major festival is the

extinguishing of the Christ Candle after the reading of the Holy Gospel, symbolizes the Lord's

physical departure and His special presence among His people, especially through Word and Sacrament.

### **BAPTISM**



Liam Michael Kralovic of Canal Fulton, was sealed in his Christian faith by the Holy Spirit through the water and Word of Holy Baptism on Easter Sunday! He is currently attending the Life With God along with his mother, Jacqueline. May Liam be blessed as he confesses his faith in Christ today and receives the blessings of Baptism!

# MONDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS

will continue to meet every week at 10:00 am in Rooms 112-113. **Topic:** "The Three Love Letters of St. John the Apostle: Looking Back to Prepare for the Future!" Pastor Telloni is the discussion leader for 1, 2, and 3 John.





### THE MARTHA SOCIETY



will meet for lunch on Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, at 11 a.m. for fellowship at Pete's Restaurant, 4223 Tuscarawas Street West, Canton. *All ladies are invited*. Questions, See Deb Stoscker.

### SPECIAL BOARD OF ELDERS MEETING

will be held on Wednesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 am in Rooms 112-113. All elders are urged to attend.



### THE ST. JOHN QUILTERS



will meet on Wednesday, May 14th, from 9:30 am - 2:30 pm. *Bring a lunch!* If you like to quilt and are willing to serve others in need, see Janet Dyer. *Donations of monetary gifts for shipping and supplies are always welcomed!* The group will

break for summer and resume in September.

### VBS TEACHER/VOLUNTEER



meeting will be held on Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup> immediately after the Divine Service in Room #104. - Co-Leaders, Deb Stocker and Lauri Houston

### THE MOBILE SNACK COMMITTEE

delivered 17 snacks to our shut-ins. Thank you to our

kitchen help: Jan Feller & Karen Mobberly and to our drivers: Dennis Lillich; Gene Stocker; Rose Sedjo & Deb Stocker. If you would like to volunteer your time or talents, please see Rosemary Sedjo or Deb Stocker. We will deliver snacks to our shutins on Wednesday, May 28th.



### The AARP OF JACKSON TOWNSHIP

(American Association of Retired Persons)



hold their monthly luncheons on the third Thursday of the month here in St. John's Fellowship Hall, followed by interesting programs. This community group is looking for new members. If interested, contact the church office (330-837-4645).

### THANK YOU'S TO

Dan Rohr & Greg Sturm for repairing the front cover of the outdoor sign which fell off during the recent rain and wind storm and for placing a second Fellowship Hall Usage sign on the front lawn.



our Boy Scouts for placing our Easter Eggs on the lawn near the front entrance! Good job!

...........

those who helped decorate the sanctuary during Holy Week: Gloria Pavelzik, Rosemary Sedjo, Greg, Ivan, Sofia, Zach, Aubrey, Dylan, and Diana Sturm, and Dan Rohr. Kudos for a wonderful job!

# SELC Hispanic Church Plant, St. Louis, MO. Rev. Miguel Torneire

It is with great joy that I share with the SELC District community, an activity I did as part of the Hispanic Church Planting in St. Louis, MO. It has been almost five months since I have started in this new adventure as a church planter and praise and thank God, I have a group of 20 people that meets regularly around "to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42).

Since we were in Holy Week, I planned a Via Crucis (also known as the Stations of the Cross) with the group, to meditate on the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Twenty-one people from Nicaragua, the United States, Venezuela, Honduras, Mexico, Brazil, Haiti, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic participated in this meditation.

Thank you SELC District and its congregations for your prayers and support. Without it, this church planting in St. Louis among the Hispanics would not be possible.

Rev. Miguel Torneire



# LW)

# MOST RIGHTEOUS GOD, MOST KIND FATHER



GERHARD ON THE GRAVITY OF SIN AND THE MERCY OF GOD

\*\* t's LCMS district convention season and time is at a great premium. Seven down, and 28 to go! This month, I share with you a striking devotion from the great Lutheran scholar Johann Gerhard (1582–1637). He wrote an enormous series of books on Christian doctrine that brim with the Bible and faithful scholarship. The English translations have recently been published by Concordia Publishing House, under the series title Gerhard's Theological Commonplaces. Gerhard (not to be confused with the greatest Lutheran hymnist, Paul Gerhardt) also wrote stunning devotional literature.

Years ago, I translated a little book by Gerhard called *The Daily Exercise of Piety*. CPH published it as *Meditations on Divine Mercy*. Of all the books I've translated and written, none has touched more people more profoundly. The following meditation on the seriousness of sin is strong medicine. God takes your sin very seriously, that it would be forgiven in Christ. The more seriously we take our sin, the more we cling to Christ, our Savior.

## The Severity of Divine Wrath Against Sin Considered in the Passion and Death of Christ

An excerpt from Meditations on Divine Mercy by Johann Gerhard, translated by Matthew C. Harrison (CPH, 2003), p. 50–52. Printed with permission.

O Holy God, just Judge, I see Your Son hanging on the cross, streams of blood flowing freely. I look at Him and, behold, I become weak with terror. Those cruel nails are my sins with which I have pierced His hands and feet. Those horrible thorns are my sins with which I have crowned His holy head, the head worshiped and honored by angelic powers. Those sharply pointed lashes are my sins with which I have scourged His faultless body, the permanent temple of divinity. A terrible beast tore to pieces this heavenly Joseph and stained His robe with blood (GENESIS 37:33). I, a wretched sinner, am that terrible beast because my sins rushed en masse against this Your beloved Son (ISAIAH 53:6).

If this, Your obedient Son, suffers in anguish because of the sins of another, what will be meted out to disobedient and wayward children because of their sins? Truly, the wounds of my soul must be great and deadly if they can only be healed because Your only begotten Son is so wretchedly struck down. Truly, the disease of my soul must be great and deadly if it can only be cured because the heavenly Physician, Life itself, dies on a cross.

I see the torment of my Savior. I hear His wretched wailings on the cross (MATTHEW 27:46). He is tormented because of me. He complains

loudly that His Father has forsaken Him because of my sins. If the weight of another's sins strikes down the all-powerful Son of God, how unbearable will the wrath of God and His inestimable furor be against the unprofitable servant (LUKE 17:10)? O dry and unfruitful wood, sold to the fires of eternal hell, what will be your lot if this is what happens to the green wood (LUKE 23:31)? Christ is the green tree of life. Christ is a vigorous tree, rooted in divinity, part and parcel of humanity, famed for His virtues, possessing leaves of holy words, and yielding the fruit of good works. He is the cedar of modesty and the vine of peace, the palm of patience and the olive of mercy.

But if the fire of divine wrath burned against this green wood, the tree of life, because of the sins of others, how much more will it completely consume the sinner as a dry tree because of unfruitful works? How great and bloody the letters of my sin appear when written on the body of Christ. How striking, O most righteous God, is Your wrath against my iniquity. How tightly I must have been held in captivity because so precious a ransom was given to release me. How great the stains of my sin must have been because streams of blood from the body of Christ flowed to wash them away (LUKE 22:44).

O most righteous God, yet most kind Father, behold how unjustly Your Son suffered for me. Forget how unworthily I, Your wretched servant, have acted. Look to Christ's deep wounds and plunge my sins into the deepest depths of the sea of Your mercy (MICAH 7:19).

Amen.

BLESSED LENTEN JOURNEY.

- Pastor Matthew C. Harrison









# 'Know Christ, Make Him Known'

# At St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Rockton, Ill., the Word is doing everything.

church," said the Rev. Donald Stein, pastor of St. Andrew Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rockton, Ill. "We're just preaching the Word and letting it go."

Now, don't misunderstand. "God's Word is never boring, even if we make it seem that way," Stein continued. "It's like watching a good quarterback. ... He makes it look effortless ... and you'd think: Anybody can do that. God's Word is the same thing: It just looks effortless and easy. It doesn't have to be dressed up, and it's beautiful." Or, in the words of Russ Balsman. elder and member at St. Andrew: "There's nothing new here. It's still Word and Sacrament, [which help] you realize that you're part of something much bigger."

The Word of God is going forth at St. Andrew, and God is giving the growth. Coming out of COVID in

2022, St. Andrew reported a weekly worship attendance of 97. By 2023, attendance had reached 168, and it is still climbing. In the last 2.5 years, St. Andrew has gained 80 new members.

St. Andrew has emblazoned a simple and powerful statement on the back of their church sign: "Know Christ, Make Him Known." They gather as families, around the structured order of worship, and make their church a second home. And then they take the Christ they have come to know in worship out into the community. In other words, they let the Word of God do its work.

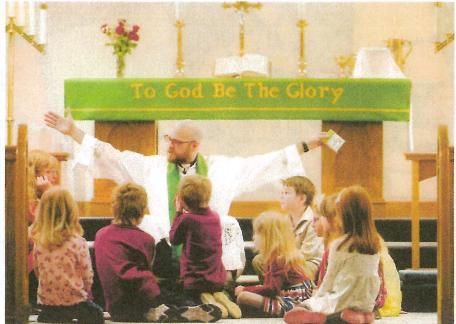
# The Family of God

You can't miss families at St. Andrew. They're everywhere. Children gather with Stein for the children's sermon. They color in pages to submit for the next week's bulletin cover. (If you want to see the entries that weren't selected,

they're posted on the back wall.) The gentle murmur of children is part of life at St. Andrew, where the children also race to sign up for acolyte service or volunteer to ring the consecration bells or to bring up the offering during the service. Members of every age gather as family for Christ in Film, a monthly event where they watch and discuss a movie together.

A number of small groups meet at St. Andrew. When these groups started, members were uncertain whether or not they were intended for families. Alex Semenchuck, an elder and member of St. Andrew, said that he and his wife, Danielle, would often ask Stein, "Can we bring the kids to this event?" And the answer was always yes. "It's just an assumed thing now," Alex said.

These groups include an adult night-out group, a group for 20- and 30-year-olds (children invited), and a group for stay-at-home parents to







ether and support one another. Speak-20- and 30-year-olds group, Danielle just for young families, and we pray good Christian fellowship, and then I half the time talking and chasing our and." She finds comfort in not having jize, "because everyone else is chasing s around too."

ethe chaos of small groups, it's often the distructure of St. Andrew that attracts For many of them, their lives feel and disjointed. But inside the church, something else. The regular order of Stein says, is where "God regularizes ig in a world that's completely irregular." sations with parents bear this out. The friends are looking for something it a little more lasting. And you get in the traditional service," Alex said. The no question: I'm not going to experience side of the church]."

just the order of service either: "We kids to know the hymns," said Danielle. 3 not alone.

### nd Home

emenchucks and many others at St. the church serves as a second home because it's a place where they come Christ. When asked why the congregalike home, Lois Balsman said simply: "Jesus." Then she elaborated: "His Word and His Sacraments. This is offered to us three times a week. ... We're nourished though His Word and empowered then to serve our neighbor."

For George Feldt, elder and member, "the preaching of the Gospel, how God's Word works in our hearts" makes St. Andrew a home for him. "It's just beautiful to be here," he said.

# "This is our home. When things are tough, we come to church."

Stein has worked intentionally to make St. Andrew into a type of second home, a place where members can come to hear God's Word and also to build community and camaraderie. For many, the persistent rush of daily life has left a gap: "They are completely hungry for a place to call theirs that they can be part of," said Stein.

This works out differently for different members. For Danielle, "[church] went from being a place where we did things, a place we're supposed to go to ... to now, this is our home," she said. "When things are tough, we come to church."

For others, it's become a place to offer up their gifts in service to the community. People have made crucifixes or donated artwork for use in the church. Mark Swanson, a woodworker, made all the new pews and furniture for the congregation when the sanctuary was renovated. Recently, he made a processional crucifix, which includes a snake coiled around the base. Using a wood burner, he made each scale of the snake being crushed beneath the cross of Christ.

All of this makes St. Andrew a home to Stein as well, a home he intends to settle into for a very long time. Even as things change, he places great emphasis on St. Andrew's history, particularly the pastors who served long pastorates. During those times, the congregation "had great stability; that's what people are looking for in the changing world, which is why I'd love to be here 30 years and never go anywhere else."

(continued on page 27)



"Team Flex" volunteer applications are being accepted through April 30 for this summer's LCMS Youth Gathering (July 19–23 in New Orleans). Team Flex volunteers can serve from four hours on a single day to eight hours a day for all five days of the event. Team Flex volunteers are also needed before and after the Gathering. This opportunity is open to all LCMS adults ages 18 and older. Interested adults may apply at lcmsgathering.com/volunteer.

District conventions are underway across the 35 LCMS districts. Conventions have already been held in the LCMS SELC, North Dakota, South Dakota, Southern Illinois, Minnesota North, Northern Illinois and Southern districts — and there are 28 more to go. District conventions will continue through July of this year. Keep up with district convention news, including the election of district presidents and adoption of district resolutions, at reporter. lems.org/tag/district-conventions.

On Feb. 27, noted LCMS author and Luther scholar Rev. Dr. Paul L. Maier died at age 94. Maier, who served on the faculty of Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, for 52 years, authored a variety of books, including a #1 national bestseller in religious fiction, A Skeleton in God's Closet (1993). Maier also served four terms as an LCMS vice-president, as well as on the boards of the Concordia University System and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. You can find Maier's full obituary at reporter. lcms.org. We also recommend to you "Jesus and Apologetics," an article Maier wrote for The Lutheran Witness in 2023, which can be accessed at witness.lcms.org/2023/jesus-and-apologetics.

# The Concordia Invitational Tournament (CIT) lives on.

Concordia University Chicago and Concordia University, Nebraska (CUNE), have announced their intention to continue the CIT, one of the longest running collegiate basketball tournaments in the country. The CIT was first held in 1951, and since then it has brought various Concordia universities together every year for fellowship and fraternal competition. In December 2023, Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor announced that it would discontinue participation in the CIT at the conclusion of the 2025

event (which was held in January). "While we plan to take a one-year break to prepare for the future of CIT, by God's grace we look forward to bringing the event back for the 2026–2027 academic year," said CUNE President Dr. Bernard Bull.

The response to Hurricane Helene in North Carolina is ongoing, and volunteers are needed for Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) deployments out of Camp Linn Haven in Linville, N.C., in the coming months. To view a list of these volunteer opportunities, as well as upcoming LERT training sessions being held across the country, visit lcms-lert.org/need.

# Did you know that The Lutheran Witness has even more content online

each month? Last month, we shared an article on how to plan a midnight Easter Feast, the first installment of a series by Josh Pauling on how Christians should set boundaries around digital technology use and more. In April, look for two more installments of the Pauling series and a literary reflection on the novel Kristin Lavransdatter.

Today, we have numerous options for receiving the news. "Snippets" does not replace those but simply offers short updates and thoughts on events we think are newsworthy in the life of the LCMS and the world.



At the end of February, Pew Research Center published its latest Religious Landscape Study. which seems to suggest that the decline of Christianity in the U.S. may be reaching a plateau. The 2023-2024 study found that 62% of Americans are Christians. While this is a steep drop from 78% in 2007, it remains stable with the results for the past five years, which have hovered between 60% and 64%. The study also broke down its findings by religious denomination, publishing data on many Christian denominations including the LCMS. Among the results were statistics on age: According to Pew, currently 5% of LCMS members are ages 18 to 29, 17% are ages 30 to 49, 30% are ages 50 to 65, and 47% are 65 and older. To access the full study, visit pewresearch.org/ religious-landscape-study.

Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in East Congo (CELCE) have been affected as conflict in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has intensified dramatically in recent months. The hostilities have left hundreds dead, thousands wounded and more than 700,000 people displaced. The CELCE has a significant number of members in the affected area. CELCE Bishop Herman Kashaba has asked for Christians around the world to pray for the DRC, calling the situation "not only dramatic but apocalyptic." (International Lutheran Council)

In April 2025, Tokyo will begin implementing a four-day work week for government employees. The policy is intended to support working parents in a country where the birthrate recently fell to a new low of 1.2. The country's intense work culture and high cost of living tend to make it difficult to raise a family. Family-friendly policies like the four-day work week, which some companies in the West have also begun implementing, have been shown to improve workers' overall well-being and productivity as well.

Recently, Republicans have been working to protect in-vitro fertilization (IVF), even as some pro-life groups push back. While on the campaign trail, President Donald Trump made promises to require insurance companies to cover IVF, and in February, he gave an executive order directing his staff to expand access to IVF. In the past year in Georgia and Alabama, Republicans also passed laws protecting IVF. God's Word teaches that life begins at conception meaning that all embryos created through IVF are humans. Tragically, the vast majority of embryos created via IVF either die or are left frozen in storage indefinitely. Regardless of our political views, we must continue to tirelessly advocate for the lives of the most defenseless in our society.

# DO YOU HAVE NEWS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE SNIPPETS?

Please submit your news items as a letter to the editor at witness.lcms.org/contact.



Get the full details and schedule here



# **NEW** OFFERING

LIFE AND DEATH: A

CONFESSIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PASTORAL BIOETHICS

April 29 - June 3, 2025 ONLINE

\$99/SIX WEEKS

4:00pm-5:30pm CST



CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY CONTINUING EDUCATION STUDIES

# BIBLE SCHOOL AN EPIC ADVENTURE! VACATION

9AM-12

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MASSILLON, OH 44646 1900 WALES RD NE





JOIN US FOR A PICNIC AND GAMES ON JULY 18TH!

COMPLETE THE REGISTRATION FORM

(330) 837-4645

# BIBLE SCHOOL AN EPIC ADVENTURE! VACATION

# REGISTRATION FORM



GRADE COMPLETED.

BIRTHDATE

ADDRESS\_

LIST ALLERGIES/MEDICATION

PARENTS' NAME(S)\_

PHONE #

**EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER** 

OTHER ADULTS TO PICK UP CHILD

SIBLINGS/FRIENDS ALSO ATTENDING:

FAMILY CHURCH

OR INTERESTED IN ST. JOHN LUTHERAN

I GIVE VBS LEADERS PERMISSION TO PHOTOGRAPH MY CHILD FOR ANY LAWFUL PURPOSE WITH THIS PROGRAM.

NOTE: IN ORDER TO HAVE ENOUGH SUPPLIES, PLEASE TRY TO RETURN FORM TO CHURCH BY JUNE 30\*\* (OK TO USE MAILBOX OR OFFERING PLATE)