



VBS at St. John: Built for a Purpose

By Lisa Schmidt | Children's Ministry Director

Search the term, "maker space" on the internet and you'll find there are thousands of these experiences popping up all over the world! Maker spaces are designated spaces in schools, libraries, community centers and the like, where kids and adults can come to dream, design, invent, ask questions, make mistakes, try again and create. In this time of digital overload, people are discovering that some good old fashioned imagination, tools and empty cereal boxes are providing something that's been missing...we were born to CREATE! This year at Maker Fun Factory VBS, kids will learn that they were lovingly crafted by God, THE CREATOR, and built for a purpose. Everything they experience will build on biblical truths that help ground kids in the solid foundation of Jesus' love.

What makes VBS at St. John different is that we focus on relationships, experiences, application, and individualized learning. Learner to learner interaction enhances the learning process and builds Christian friendships. When kids experience the Bible through discussion and interaction, it sticks with them nine times longer than something they simply hear or read. Kids don't actually have to climb into the body of a whale to learn about Jonah, but if they could, they'd never forget it! That's why we go to great lengths to provide incredible experiences for them. We even go the next step of equipping kids to apply what they've learned by encouraging them to be both hearers and doers of God's word.

Through this life changing week, kids will learn that God made them, He is for them, He is always with them, He will always love them, and He made them for a reason. When kids see their place in the world, it gives them purpose. Kids who know their purpose, become world changers!

FAITH MATTERS

NEXT IS NOW

ST. JOHN 
AT THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH AND LIFE
15800 Manchester Rd. Ellisville, MO 63011
636.394.4100
www.stjsh.net

Volume 11 • Issue 1
Faith Matters is published four times per year by St. John Church.
February, May, August, November
15800 Manchester Road Ellisville, MO, 63011-2208

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 12
Ballwin, MO

NEXT is NOW

By Jeff Cook | CFO/Director of Operations

NEXT is now! That statement brings me feelings of excitement and anticipation. It also makes me reflect on all that God has done within our church over the last year. It was at this time last year that *NEXT* was just an idea, a thought; in fact, it did not even have a name yet. However, it did have a purpose, a goal, a driving focus to build on the way God was already using this church to accomplish so much. As you may know, most churches in America are stagnant, even slowly dying. But St. John is a vibrant, growing church where people's lives are being changed each and every week. God is at work here and we take seriously the words from Luke Chapter 12, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." That verse is certainly one of the catalysts behind *NEXT* and it is exciting to see how so many of you have embraced that thought as well.

Your response to *NEXT* was overwhelming. We heard countless stories of how you felt God speaking directly to you. Challenging you to trust Him in new and challenging ways. Through it all we saw God unite us behind a vision to impact our world like never before. In all, 527 households representing over 1,550 people committed to *NEXT*. As a result of those faith-filled commitments, we are projecting that together, in the next two years, we will give \$10.85 million toward the \$11 million of work we believe God has for us! We are so excited about the success we have already had and truly believe we will surpass our \$11 million goal when it's all said and done because God is clearly with us and for us.

527 Commitments
46% Average Increase in Giving
31 First-Time Givers
85 New Intentional Givers

\$10,810,949
Total Pledges and
Regular Giving

Pursue People Like Never Before

St. John will continue to be so much more than a church that is only open on the weekends. We are going to reach into our community in ways we never have before. We are going to be diligent about forming partnerships with local businesses, non-profits, schools, and government entities, inviting them to engage with us in new and exciting ways which will allow our church to bring God's love into our local community. We are going to leverage the incredible growth of our Live Stream to create "house churches" where people open up their homes for a New Testament church experience with friends and neighbors who may never otherwise step foot in a church. All the while, we will continue to pursue people through short-term mission trips, local service opportunities, by supporting and facilitating LIFEgroups and engaging people through inspiring and life-changing worship services and culturally relevant teaching.

Mobilize The Next Generation of World Changers

We don't want to raise the Next Generation of church goers but the Next Generation of world changers; we believe they will one day dwarf our contributions in bringing Jesus' wholeness to our broken world. We are committed to helping kids and students grow in wholeness that Jesus alone brings. We will continue to develop intentional relationships in small group settings with adult leaders and mentors, grow the entire family in their love for Jesus and encourage them to continue their conversations of faith together. We will use over-the-top experiences like Vacation Bible School and age-appropriate gatherings like Friday Frenzie and Lunch Break to help the Next Generation to grow in their amazing relationship with Jesus. We will bring students in our community, from 6th-12th grade, together in a life of faith, action and community. Our students will participate in and lead worship services, small groups, missions trips, service projects, and events designed to address the spiritual, emotional, and social needs unique to teenagers.

Take Our Campus To The Next Level

By creating inviting and updated spaces, we will better communicate who we are through our very grounds and architecture. We will also foster a greater desire to linger and share life with one another, deepening relationships and our community. We will beautify the exterior of our campus by designing inviting green spaces with outdoor areas for gathering and by providing clear visual cues directing our guests allowing them to feel welcomed and expected before they even enter the building. Renovating The Commons will allow us to foster a greater sense of community. Stopping to share a cup of coffee, spending time in prayer with one another, and simply sharing life together are an essential part of our DNA at St. John. New guests will experience community at St. John as soon as they step into our buildings. We will also protect and excite our most vulnerable by creating an engaging, welcoming and more secure entrance to Children's Ministry from The Commons, distinguishing it as the key entry point to Children's Ministry and establishing a sense of excitement for our youngest as they begin their LIFEjourney.



LIFE CHANGE & IMPACT

By **Scott Osbourn** | *St. John School Principal*

St. John School continues to make an impact in the lives of families. While core values like faith development, academic excellence, and strong community drive our ministry, it is evident that families experience an educational platform that extends well beyond these values. As a result, we would like to share some valuable insights from three St. John School families.

“As a St. John family since 2012, I couldn’t imagine a day without this wonderful school in our lives. We originally chose St. John because it was apparent they let children learn through play, and allowed them to grow at their own pace. Today, this school has literally become our home away from home and our extended family. St. John has been there for us every step of the way; as our family has grown, as we’ve moved, and as we’ve changed jobs. Right by our side they nurture our children and help them grow into truly amazing little people. We are certain that our daughters spend their days being loved and showered with kindness; all while learning wonderful things like animal habitats, scripture and Spanish. The genuine compassion here is what matters most to us. Little did we know what a blessing this community would turn out to be for us. Our oldest has now transitioned from early childhood to kindergarten and we had no hesitation staying with the St. John family. We have another daughter progressing through the EC program and our third entering in the fall. Year after year our love for this school only grows deeper. We feel so honored to be cougars! I know that St. John has already made a difference in my little ones lives and I’m sure they will give back to the world just the same.” – *Sorcic Family (pictured top left)*

“It is a blessing and privilege to have St. John School partner with us as parents to not only provide an excellent Christ-centered education for our children, but also prepare them for a successful future while also modeling Christ’s love in every capacity. We are so grateful for the opportunity to be part of the loving community at St. John School that truly has become our home away from home!” – *Olivio Family (top middle)*

“St. John is a second home for our family. Over the past several years, it has been amazing to watch our family transform to be more Christ centered. We have watched as our children have become less focused on themselves and more focused on service. We watch as the upper grades embrace our younger students by being positive role models, reading buddies, chapel buddies and friends. We are able to show our school pride in sports, and robotics clubs. We love how we have become friends with so many of our children’s friends families. We enjoy the breakfasts we share, as well as family outings that help us grow closer as a St. John family. We love that every year our kids have a new favorite teacher because every teacher at this school is phenomenal. We have watched as our children become more engaged learners and confident leaders due to the positive role models (both children and adults) and individualized attention. St. John has given us peace of mind that our children are safe even when we cannot be with them. We are proud to send our children to a school where they are loved and respected.” – *Meers Family (top right)*

I am encouraged by these stories and the countless other experiences that are shared by our school community. I pray that as a member of St. John, you remain encouraged by the life change and impact of our school on families for the sake of Christ. I ask for your continued prayers for our school ministry and those entrusted to lead. In addition, if you would like to explore the benefits of St. John School further, we invite you to schedule a tour where you can learn more about how our core values drive our mission and impact the lives of students and families.

IN THE RED

By **Brent Hunsinger** | *Creative Director for Worship*

When you think of holidays, what pops into your head? Halloween? New Year’s Eve? Your birthday? Christmas, Easter, Holy Week? All of us have our favorite holiday. For some, it may be because your family celebrated all of them in a big way. Maybe some of them are special to you because of a personal connection. Maybe you’re tired of holidays and the commercialization that has happened to them. You throw your hands up in the air, and say, “Is nothing sacred anymore?” Yes, some things do need to be set apart and kept holy. The Holy Week Experience (THWE) helps us to do just that for the final days of Christ’s life.

Most Christians know the story of the days leading up to Easter; in fact, many feel they can’t get to Easter without traveling through Good Friday. But, for many, the true story of Easter is out of context. There is lack of understanding of why Christ-followers get more excited about Easter than about Christmas. Or, maybe, there is a need to make that personal connection of Holy Week to your LIFEjourney with Christ. The Holy Week Experience will fill that need.

On Thursday, April 13 and Friday, April 14, we’ll set the stage for Easter with The Holy Week Experience: In the Red. Fully immersing us in the days leading up to Easter, you’ll be transported to the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as the people greeted him with song. Their hearts were open and their love was red in anticipation of the Savior that God had promised. We’ll quickly move through the events of the week, as Jesus shares the intimacy of The Lord’s Supper with all of us. Judas will be caught red-handed and Jesus fulfills the prophecy made long ago in the Old Testament. Constant in his purpose and set on reclaiming what was once lost, Jesus fervently pressed on in the red. Though the sum was great, he paid it all when he willingly went to the cross.

THWE: In the Red will focus on the last week of Jesus’ life utilizing creative elements in this experiential service. THWE ends with Good Friday—Jesus’s death on the cross and being laid in the tomb. This year, we’ll conclude the service at the cemetery as we grieve like those who were with Jesus on that final day.

During the next few weeks as we enter into Lent, we’re asking for you to be in prayer. There are people you know who need to be nudged and encouraged on their faith walk. Pray for them now. Pray for you to have the courage to invite them to THWE: In the Red. Pray for their hearts to open to experience the love Jesus has for them—for all of us.

CAN WE TRULY MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY?

By David Jameson | Community Engagement Director

Well, that's a great question, and we first need to identify what success looks like here in West County. As I was researching "community development" in preparation to write this piece, I came across story after story of social justice agencies working to improve communities in third world countries. In each story, these agencies developed partnerships with the local governments and businesses, implemented a unified plan that was to be carried out with the natives, and resulted in the percentage of households reporting positive change in income rising from 26% to 84% (and other similar statistics). Praise God! Another example was in rural Colorado, where a town went from having an unemployment rate of 60% down to 42% with some targeted programming and training. Again, praise God!

While this is a huge win for these communities, this has absolutely nothing to do with us! This does not need to be the focus here in West County, as we live in an area of affluence. There are plenty of people here who struggle to pay bills and find themselves in tremendous debt, but the economic need is just not the same here. We don't struggle with water contamination, we don't struggle with rampant disease from poor hygiene, we don't struggle with energy deficiency, and we definitely don't struggle from a lack of food or shelter.

So what do we struggle with here in West County, with our agonizing quest for our long overdue car upgrade, with our painstaking struggle of identifying

tonight's restaurant of choice, and with our grueling debate over cable or DirectTV (or Netflix)? What about isolation? What about pride, and an over-reliance on ourselves? What about a deep soul sickness that stems from constantly lacking... something? I would argue that the biggest need here in West County is a lack of true connection, both with other people and, ultimately, with our Creator.

So...can we truly make a difference? Let's jump back to where we started, to "community development". The United Nations defines community development as, "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems." I love that. When I think of what God has called me to do with my position here at St. John, this statement is basically it. I believe that I am called to St. John to help "community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems." That's a lofty statement, but here are some ways that we can make this happen.

This is going to sound elementary, but if the problem in our community is a lack of connection, then let's create opportunities for people to connect. I believe that people who are born again through the death and resurrection of Jesus have an enhanced ability, realized or not, to truly connect with people on the deepest of levels. I'm not saying it's inherent, I believe it takes work to realize and release this. However, the fact that the Holy Spirit, God himself, dwells in us certainly gives us an edge.

Our church is incredible at creating opportunities for us to connect with other members, as well as folks within our community, and I believe our reach is fairly wide. I know, because I've heard through our focus groups, that so far it hasn't been enough. There are still tens of thousands of people here who aren't connecting with their Father. All this means for us is that West County is ripe with opportunity for us to pursue people like never before, and in order to make that happen, we need to be partnering with people and organizations in our community that can help us reach those that have so far been missed for numerous reasons. And you know what the best part is? You can do be doing this of your own accord, and many of you are! Many of you have already started conversations with organizations that align with your passions, or you've found ways to serve that connect you with people you would never have met otherwise. Thank you for being ambassadors of St. John!

Many of us want to be plugged into our community like this, but so many things keep us from making that commitment. We have jobs, we have kids, we have sports, we have hobbies, we have houses, we have cars, we have workouts, and all of these things require time. If that's you, and you've been wanting to plug into our community and have just been too busy, I would just encourage you to think about it. Think about where your skills and your passions intersect, and find a way to do that, whatever that is, here in West County. What you want to do may seem insignificant, but you have to remember that this is "a process where community members come together

to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems." You won't be alone.

Imagine, for a moment, this incredible vision. Imagine if every board of directors, every sports league, every bingo group, every bird watching club, every parks and recreation committee, and every networking group had one St. John member in it. Now imagine that those St. John members are using their skills and passions to connect with people and, ultimately, help connect those people to Jesus. Finally, just imagine how much community development could happen if God's people, the ones who have a special ability to connect people to their Father, are being influencers at every level in West County and are working together to address this "soul sickness". It's a very lofty goal, and I am 100% confident that I can't do it alone. However, with your help, with the help of the incredibly supportive St. John staff, and with God's favor, I know we can make a difference.

If you want to talk with me about this vision or how you can play a part, shoot me an email at djameson@stjstl.net.



STUDENT MINISTRY: THE INVALUABLE MENTOR

By **Jon Shepard** | Associate Director of Student Ministry

The word mentor can be used as both a noun and a verb. To get us started let me give you the dictionary definition that I made up because the real dictionary definition was boring. A mentor is a super incredible Jesus warrior that uses their powers of patience, love, and limited understanding of social media to help students know Jesus better. See, isn't that better than "an experienced adviser"?

What Pua and I do in Student Ministry here wouldn't work without our mentors. Many churches simply call them small group leaders, but that sells them way short. Our Student Ministry mentors know their students, they play games with them, they attend their sports games, they watch their dances and theatre performances. Mentors take their difficult questions; they are there for both good and bad times as another consistent positive adult influence. Mentors encourage, love, disciple, and celebrate students. Finally, they lead small group (which is also an extremely important thing). Basically, mentors mentor and that's why we need them.

To help me write this I asked one of our seventh grade guy mentors, Scott Morris, to tell me about his group this year. He began where I expect any guy mentor to start: friendly competition over games. Now while it's not normally our girls who come up with the "let's see who can run into the couch the fastest game," middle school guys love their competition over insignificant games. His group connects over competition. Whether it is a made up game, pool, foosball, ping pong, or a group game during Core, it gives them energy and starts the morning off right. Scott tells me he remains undefeated in foosball (but he hasn't played me yet.) What he said next was gold, "Honestly, my biggest goal each and every week is for the boys to want to come back next week." Scott is someone who gets it,

because relationships develop over time and Student Ministry is all about relationships. Everyone, whether it's a good one or a bad one, has a relationship with God, other people, and themselves. For our Student Ministry to be holistic, we have to develop all of these in a healthy and truthful way.

One thing I love about small groups is that they create a safe environment for students to talk through deep thoughts as well as build the kind of relationships where they feel known. Scott's words here were strong so let me share them directly.

"We work through the discussion questions but really try to freestyle so it doesn't feel like school or that they are being forced to learn. We also try to really point out what each person does well. Some pray unbelievably well. Some are very knowledgeable about the Bible. Some are quick to look things up and like to read to the group. Some ask great questions. Whatever the gift or contribution, we lavish the praise and try to draw their contributions out. If someone has a really challenging question or expresses doubt or confusion on their faith, we really encourage that, too. We want the kids to know that it is the only way to learn and that it's important to verbalize these doubts if they have them."

Is that not incredible? How would your faith be strengthened if every time you had a hard question or a doubt about something, you had a small group of people to discuss and find the answer with that wouldn't judge, but encourage you? That's what is happening in Scott's and our other small groups. He says, "When someone is really struggling with a spiritual issue, that's when you know they were paying attention and God is at work on them." Student Ministry here at St. John wouldn't be the same without our mentors. Mentors mentor, and that makes a huge difference.

Reconstruction & Recovery

By **Mandy Branch** | Christ in Action Coordinator

It is a cold morning in the middle of winter. You get out of bed and walk across the hallway to wake up your kids for school. You go downstairs to get breakfast ready and tell everyone to come eat-it's the same sugary, non-nutritional breakfast they've had for weeks. You were trying to save money where you could. After you put their dishes in the sink, you throw on a coat and some winter boots and open the front door to go heat up the car. As you open the front door, there is a slip of paper with the words "Eviction Notice" on one side. Your heart immediately breaks...you'd been anxiously waiting for this day but you never really thought it would come. You immediately feel disbelief, despair, and fear.

What is your next step? You first consider the reality of your situation. Your employer laid you off a couple of months ago and you put off finishing your degree when your children were born because their needs came first. You've tirelessly been putting in applications and attending interviews to no avail. You aren't eligible for unemployment yet because the company who let you go paid you severance (which you used to keep the water and electric on for a couple of months). Your oldest child's GPA is at the top of her class and she loves the friends she's made at school, you don't want to leave the district.

Unfortunately, your landlord has given you a couple of weeks to move out. Where will you go? How are you going to lift the heavy furniture on your own? You had to quit getting your Cortisone shots for your knees because when you lost your job, you lost your insurance. Your closest family member is your father and you don't want to inconvenience him. Besides, his senior living apartment isn't equipped to squeeze in three more people. Your friends have no idea what's going on with you financially and they've already done enough. Anyways, it's West County. "Can't you just go get a hotel room or something until you find a new place?" Well not really. When you have bad credit due to outstanding credit cards and student loans, apartment complex managers tend to deny your applications. That could be one very lengthy and expensive hotel stay.

You decide you'll call around to seek public assistance. You begin Googling public assistance programs and most of them serve within St. Louis City zip codes only. The St. Louis County program you find says you won't receive financial assistance of any sort for at least three months. You try one last place after making what feels like 10,000 phone calls. The agency

is out of funding. You call a friend and she tells you about the Christ in Action program at St. John.

Your initial contact is with the receptionist who tells you to come in that day and fill out some contact information. You meet with the social worker the next day who speaks with you about your immediate needs and the events leading up to the eviction notice. Together, you come up with an immediate plan. The Christ in Action program has already sent an email to a group of volunteers to see if there is anyone available to help you move your belongings out of your townhome this weekend and into a temporary storage locker. You meet with the social worker two weeks later to talk about what's next. The discussion includes your short term and long term goals, your next steps, and how to get back on track financially.

That's a quick re-telling of just one situation when Christ in Action has been called upon to help someone in need. But, CIA goes beyond the quick fix. Typically, we don't "prevent disaster from happening." More often, the work we perform includes helping clients after a crisis (such as eviction) has hit. The relationships we build with our clients empower them to reconstruct their lives for a long lasting effect. We feel that giving people the strength, hope, skills, and support to pick themselves up is often more beneficial than giving "hand-outs".

We have come up with some creative and resourceful ways that clients can obtain payment. For example, clients may put in volunteer hours at St. John in exchange for payment. Additionally, we offer Financial Peace University and the Employment Workshop to our clients. When they complete steps to better their financial situation, Christ in Action rewards those positive and fulfilling behaviors. Clients never have to go through any part of the program alone. Our wonderful advocates are willing to walk with our clients on the journey to financial and spiritual recovery. In these ways, we feel we are best serving West St. Louis County and enabling others to live out their calling.

If you would like to become a member of the CIA Email Alert Term and/or to learn more about serving as an advocate, we'd love to talk to you. Contact Mandy at mbranch@stjstl.net or 636.779.2311.

KALDI'S and KOLACHES

By Carol Wyatt | Communications and Facilities Director

As part of *NEXT*, we've cast a vision to pursue people, mobilize the next generation of world changers and take our campus to the next level. A promise for a space in The Commons where people can gather informally and enjoy a light breakfast and some good coffee is part of our campus improvement plans. As we started talking about our February series, "PB&J: Creating Connections That are That Good," it seemed only natural to create a series-long space for all of you to enjoy and connect in before and after services.

So, on the first Sunday of this series, this space became available for all of you to enjoy—and enjoy it you did. Partnering with Kaldi's Coffee and St. Louis Kolache, we're able to offer you some high quality and low cost breakfast items.

As we lean in, step up and break out during *NEXT*, you can expect to see other surprises pop up on the campus as we explore the best fit and practices for our St. John family.



Convenience Stores

14181 Manchester Road
2401 Hwy 109
15670 Manchester Road

MANCHESTER EYE CARE

Benjamin T. Secoy, O.D.
St. John Member

**Comprehensive Eye Care
for the Entire Family**



14552 Manchester Road
636-227-8700 • manchestereyecare.com



TOTAL HEALTHCARE SUPPLY

- Orthotics • Lift Chairs • Scooters
- Wheelchairs • Oxygen
- Hospital Beds • Diabetic Supplies
- Bathroom Safety
- Ambulatory Aids • Sleep Therapy - CPAP

Board Certified Orthotist
Physical & Respiratory Therapists,
Nurses & Licensed Dietitian on Staff

Accepting Major
Insurances & Medicare

www.medresources.com

Chesterfield, MO 63017
Home Office: 636.733.7200 Retail Store: 636.530.4500



Alton, IL 62002
618.466.5632

Masterpiece Smiles

Improve Your Self-image and Confidence Today!

Cosmetic, TMJ & Sleep Therapy, Family Dentistry

A Father and Son Team



Dr. Jeremy & Dr. Mike

St. Louis' First AACD Accredited Cosmetic Dentist
St. Louis Magazine's Top Dentist List 2009–2017
St. Louis' First Diplomate in both
Sleep and Craniofacial Pain (AACP & ABCP)

We believe in:

- Honoring God in all we do
- Delivering a "WOW" customer service
- Using the most advanced technology
- Being friendly and highly trained

"Let us show you the difference"



Dr. Michael Frith
Member of St. John

269 Clarkson Road
Ellisville, MO 63011
Call us today at 636.394.5200

**Free Custom
Cosmetic Imagery!**

drfrith.com