



Faith
MATTERS

STANDOUTS

VOLUME 12 • 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

STANDOUTS

by **DION GARRETT** *Senior Pastor*

“You’re getting a little big for your britches” wasn’t quite a family motto, but I sure heard it a lot. Growing up, I was steeped in the working class values of modesty, humility, and hard work. In my church life, I was reared in the Protestant values of the German Lutheran Reformation that profoundly shaped my perspective on faith and life. The message was clear, “Work hard, treat others well, and don’t ever act like you’re better than anyone else.”

I’m grateful for the way I was raised. It helped me grow into a respectful and hardworking adult. But lately I spent a lot of time wondering, “Is *standing out* really a bad thing?”

What I once believed was clearly biblical, *Christian*, I now see as having more to do with the ethics of the industrialized society I grew up in. My grandparents were largely factory workers, the members of my church were the same with a few farmers and the odd professional sprinkled in here and there. In the experiment of industrialization, society became a great machine and people became the parts. Raising up people who were as interchangeable as possible was the way to keep the great machine going *and growing*. The kind of humility, modesty, and hard work I had been raised with had more to do with economic policy during an era of tremendous industrial growth, than the teachings of Jesus in Scripture.

The Jesus of Scripture is a fierce advocate of “standing out.” Always humble, although in a different way than many of us were taught, Jesus is the one who urges us to be a “city on a hill” and the “light of the world.” He says, “Let your light shine before others, that they might see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). The more I read the Scriptures, the more I am understanding that making yourself seen, known, and heard isn’t what some would call, “getting big for your britches”, instead it’s a calling; **Jesus tells us to *stand out*.**

And then there’s Paul. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul goes through a long section describing the humility of Jesus, telling us to *imitate* Christ’s humility. And then in the next breath he says,

“¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing,

(sounds like how I was raised!)

¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”

(yup, that’s right, be faultless, good, and pure)

Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life.

(Wait a minute, what? “Shine like stars?” Isn’t that boastful? Arrogant? The opposite of humble?)

And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.”

(Boast? What happened to all the humility talk?)

Realizing that while God calls me to be humble, “shining like stars,” “letting my light shine,” and being a “city on a hill” is also part of my calling is something that I’ve been grappling with lately. Personally, and with St. John in mind.

Our 2016 community research revealed that St. John doesn't stand out much in the minds of unchurched and dechurched people¹ in west county. Little was known about us. It was sometimes even difficult to clarify *which church* we were talking about. There are several churches with similar-sounding names in our community, some with the *exact same* name. One of our respondents said it all when she said, "Not having been raised Catholic, every saint is the same to me." For the record, I was not permitted to barge into the focus group room to explain, "No, we are not Catholic." But we discovered when people hear "saint" names, that's a common perception. And even for those who know better, there are a LOT of "saint names" to sort through here in *Saint Louis*.

Later on, when prompted with photos, descriptions, and other details some people in the focus groups were able to identify us, but what they knew about us was either outdated or superficial. They talked about the fact that our campus was big, or that we caused traffic problems on Manchester Road. They talked of multiple service formats that no longer exist. Someone even mentioned the bright red carpet! Meanwhile, there were other churches in west county they knew much more about. It's not as if unchurched and dechurched people know *nothing* about churches in our community, it's just that they don't know much about *us!*

I've been increasingly bothered by these revelations over the last two years. I know we're an amazing church, an *atypical* church! In *Getting Started*, we get to hear from people who are so grateful to have found us. Yet, nearly every month we also hear people lament how long it took to find us because they didn't understand what we were about. While I'm deeply *humbled* by God's favor and blessing on us, I don't want to blend in to the landscape any longer, I want to *stand out!* I want to be known for who we really are, not through fuzzy, outdated, or inaccurate perceptions. What we also discovered in our focus groups, is that we have something going here that we should feel proud about, something that is truly life-changing!

When our focus group facilitator began to share more with the participants in each group about who we really are, most people were surprised and intrigued by what they heard. Although their perceptions of us were horribly inaccurate, if they perceived of us at all, they began to lean in with curiosity and interest as we provided more insight into who we are. They began to discover that there is a church, right in the heart of west St. Louis County

(with a robust online presence for you out-of-towners), who is *very different* than other churches, a *standout*, if you will. One person said, "I think of churches like *The Crossing* or *The Journey* as being more progressive and accepting, so realizing there are others out there like this came as a surprise."

Another said, "I would be more interested in attending St. John after reading this, because it makes it sound not as formal... I always thought Lutheran churches were really formal."

It should be no secret that these revelations have been haunting me, I've written and spoken about them several times. Last year I introduced you to our St. John Brand Advisory Team, who has helped me process all this and has been working hard to plot a path forward. I also just completed a round of well-attended, "Brand Town Hall" meetings where I shared our research and what we've been doing about it in greater detail. These days I'm feeling very affirmed in *who we are* but I'm increasingly concerned that few people know us *as we are*. I'm not okay with being anonymous; I hope you aren't either! But we can change that!

Right now, as you're reading this, we're in a weekend message series that addresses how we can better *stand out*. Through our research, prayer, scripture study, and some good ol' self-examination, we have discovered key messages I believe our community needs to understand about us. If they can see us as we really are, then we can better fulfill our mission. If you've missed the first part of the series, *Standouts*, I urge you to go to our archives at stjstl.net/watch and check out the messages you've missed. It is vitally important that we all give our attention to this issue.

We are a church like no other, but why should that remain a secret? It's time we emerge from the fuzzy background and boldly *standout!*

¹ In our research, unchurched people were defined as those who have never had a meaningful, consistent relationship with a church. Dechurched people were defined as those who have not been attending church for a least three years.

IRONMEN



by **DOUG MAUSS** *Small Groups and Care Director*

One of the inspiring things I loved about St. John when I first started attending here was our people's attitude toward 4th of July. Some churches would use a holiday like that as an opportunity to make some money, by charging people in the community for parking. But instead, St. John throws open its doors! Dozens of our people volunteer to hand out sunscreen, hot dogs, and water. People feel valued and loved by our church.

Our IronMen BRO events are another opportunity to show how we value guys in our community. It's been so fun to get to watch men come out for OktoBROfest, Casino BROyale, and the BRO-B-Q – events that simply create a space for guys to have fun and to bond. I'm reminded of a Bible passage that is mostly only used in weddings these days. But I think it has a far broader meaning and application. It's Ecclesiastes 4:9-10. It says:

"Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:
If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.

One of the messages of our culture is that people need to get through life by themselves. Individualism says that we should

be able to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, and if we can't—there's something wrong with us. But that's not true. Even the most successful of leaders, entrepreneurs, or athletes needed people around them. They needed people who believed in them at an early age. They needed someone to give them an opportunity. They needed a mentor who taught them the lessons they would use to succeed.

The people around us in West County also need community. They need people who are cheering them on, supporting them, being "for" them. Many of those people have been burned by churches or by well-meaning Christians. They are often leery of visiting a church again. They're afraid they'll be met with a religious condemnation instead of a divine "unconditional acceptance." These are the very people that we hope our men will invite to an IronMen event. Because if they come to something like Casino BROyale, not only will they have a great time, but they'll experience a community of believing men who want nothing more than God's best for their friends and neighbors!

To all the men at St. John: thank you for being guys who spur each other on. After all, "as iron sharpens iron" so do our men sharpen each other. And please continue to use our IronMen events to welcome the men around us into friendship with us!



Something Truly SPECIAL

by **CHRIS TOOMEY** LIFEjourney Director

Did you know that St. John has a ministry for families who have kids with special needs? Our Special Needs Ministry makes it possible for these children to attend and fully participate in our Children's Ministry programming on Sunday mornings. And, equally important, their parents are able to attend the worship service where they receive respite and refreshment. Many of these families have actually been turned away by other churches in the past. Hearing these stories helped us realize the incredible need to better serve families/children with special needs. So, we formed a leadership team to bring assessment, expertise, organization, and training to our special needs program.

Over the past few years, our ministry has been overjoyed to accept 12 children who have special needs. These children are paired with a "buddy" who provides one-on-one attention to help the child more easily engage in the Sunday programming. As a result, we are seeing these kids learning and growing alongside other children. To help you understand the unique impact this ministry is having, I'd like to introduce you to Abby, a delightful girl who has physical and cognitive developmental delays. This is what Abby's mother shared...

It is a huge blessing that we can turn Abby over to Grace (Abby's buddy) for an hour on Sundays. This allows us to focus for that hour without any interruptions, knowing that Abby is in good hands. I hate having to give other people

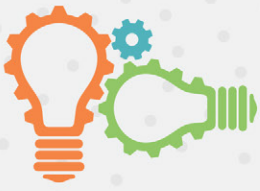
that responsibility, but the Holy Spirit says it is wise for me to share it with others even if it makes me feel uncomfortable.

Getting up five times a night, spending thousands of dollars on medical supplies that insurance companies deny, feeling our joints and bones deteriorate faster than others our age due to constant bending and lifting, and dealing with the grief of not having a "normal" child that can run and play... it is not easy, but God has used Abby to teach us and I have accepted her for how God made her.

I just want her to enjoy her life as much as possible and know that she is loved by us and others. God spoke to me audibly many years ago when I asked Him if I should pray for healing for her. "You are to LOVE her." It was an answer that gave me peace. I am no longer looking for the "miracle cure." God is wanting us to see the big picture. At the end of the day, God wants us to feel hope; to experience renewal of the heart and mind; and, to learn that this situation is only temporary even though it does not feel that way.

I love Abby so much and wouldn't trade her for anything in the world. But, please know how much you are helping by giving her a "buddy" on Sundays. You guys are spot on in this approach. So, thank you! I just feel so blessed by St. John and the people there.

I am so thankful to be a leader in a church that prioritizes and values the investment in ministries like this one. Our current challenge is that we have an increase in families coming to STJ who have children with special needs, but we don't have enough "buddies" to pair them with. Our team is praying for new volunteers who have a heart for kids with special needs and a desire to make a difference in things that matter!



FAMILY STEAM FUN NIGHT

by **RACHEL BAUSCH** *Early Childhood Director*

Building community with families is a huge part of being connected as a St. John family. Each year we look for new and innovative ways to bring families together to share in learning and building community. This Fall we created an evening for families in the Pre-Kindergarten (EC4), Jr. Kindergarten and Kindergarten to come together at school in the evening for a Family STEAM Fun Night!

The evening was filled with exciting learning experiences, special parent/child bonding activities which enabled families to work together to build relationships. Families had the opportunity to experience hands-on learning projects based around STEAM. STEAM is an educational approach to learning that uses (S=science, T=technology, E=engineering, A=art, M= math) as access points for guiding student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking. The end results of STEAM are students who take thoughtful risks, engage in experimental learning, persist in problem-solving, embrace collaboration, and work through the creative process.

Stations were set-up in each of the EC4, Jr. Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms for all to explore.

ICE CREAM SUNDAE CREATIONS

Students and families fashioned ice cream sundae creations using a variety of toppings and a little creative ingenuity. Some created funny faces, some created chocolate volcanoes, and some created an entire story about their ice cream creation. The end result though was delicious ice cream eating with family and friends.

SPEEDOMETRY

Hot wheel tracks were built with great engineering skills and designed in a variety of ways. The cars raced down high tracks, around sharp corners, through loops, and some even jumped in the air with ramp creations. Levers were formed using a variety of classroom materials to allow for more exciting car races that took racing to a whole new level.

LOOSE PARTS

Loose Parts exploration allowed students to build open-ended designs using math and science concepts. Loose parts can be natural or synthetic. It is helpful to think of loose parts as something that will help inspire a child's imagination and creativity on their own terms and in their own unique way. For example: students created snowflakes with beads and glass gems on mirror surfaces or used natural materials consisting of sticks, leaves and pinecones to create people.

VIRTUAL REALITY (VR)

Students and families explored space via the virtual reality goggles. This virtual reality experience allowed for the usage of vivid three-dimensional space models to enhance a student's learning experience. What a great way to explore space and all of its dimensions!

GRAFFITI ART

Graffiti art was created using watercolors and student creativity. The students experimented with a variety of beautiful colored watercolor paintbrushes. They created endless beauty on a large canvas as they watched colors blend together and evolve on the canvas. We have this stunning piece of art on display in our South Wing for families to enjoy!

Family STEAM Fun Night was truly a special night for students and families to engage in building community with one another. It also allowed us to delve deeper in the STEAM educational approach to learning. We look forward to more events like this in the future.



UNIQUE JOURNEY

by **SCOTT OSBOURN** *St. John School Principal*

We continue to focus on the core values of Spiritual Development, Academic Excellence, and Strong Community at STJ School. While these values are reinforced daily throughout our school, we are excited that our graduates carry on these timeless values. As a result, we are honored to share the stories of two STJ graduates who exemplify the values of STJ School. While each graduate has their own unique journey, it is clear that STJ School played a key role in their faith, academics, and lifelong friendships. We are proud of their ongoing accomplishments and are inspired by the role STJ played in their lives.

St. John prepared me for high school not only academically, but also spiritually, and as a leader. Academically I took four honors classes freshman year, and have increased that number since. I now take 4 AP classes as a junior, and will take even more next year, and St. John gave me the academic base to succeed in high school. Through theology classes at St. John I was able to develop a deep understanding of scripture and was able to bring that with me to high school. The spiritual development I had at St. John also translates to social life in high school. I can always refer back to what I learned at St. John when I am making a hard decision, because I know that what they taught me can help me use my faith in the real world. Lastly, St. John did a great job preparing me to be a leader in high school. My leadership development at St. John helped me be ready to be a leader in high school through student government, sports teams, clubs, and even helping create a new student board to facilitate staff and student conversations. While it is obvious that St. John prepared me greatly for high school, I would say that this was not actually the most important thing I got out of St. John. It is the lifelong friendships that I made my nine years at St. John, and these are people that I know I will always be able to count on, for the rest of my life, and that is something you cannot get anywhere else.

Josh Abel - Junior, De Smet Jesuit High School

Growing up in this world you learn that life is not perfect and is full of sin. As I grow older it gets harder and harder to avoid sinning and to stay strong. I would not be able to be this strong, religiously, without the solid foundation I received at St. John. I started at St. John in 5th grade. Coming to a smaller school was a huge advantage. I got more one-on-one time with the teachers and making friends was so easy. I experienced trips like Space Camp and the Grand Canyon. I also had the opportunity to play sports in the Lutheran league and travel to tournaments making fun memories with my teammates. St. John changed me from being a skeptical believer to being one with God day in and day out. After leaving St. John my parents were worried about how I would handle high school, especially a public high school. In reality St. John prepared me more than enough for the struggles, hardships, and academics of high school. I've excelled academically and recently was accepted into the college that I love. Last month, we had a St. John reunion party with the Class of 2014. It turned out to be an amazing night. I have made friendships that will last me forever. Now I look back on my years at St. John as one of the best decisions my parents ever made for me.

Jackson Maurer - Senior, Marquette High School

We celebrate our graduates and current families at STJ School. We remain committed to providing a program that impacts students beyond the time they spend at our school. I am inspired by the stories of our graduates and countless others I hear of families who are or were connected to STJ School. As we continue to live out our mission, I continue to ask you for your prayers and support of our school ministry and all those who serve. If you are interested in learning more about how STJ School can impact your family, please contact us and arrange a tour. We would enjoy the opportunity to share how STJ School strives to make a lasting impact on families.



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

by TARA REIMANN *Missions & Community Engagement Coordinator*

What can you expect from a trip to our Mission partner Stronghold Cambodia? Everything. This year's mission trip was my first experience in Cambodia—my first trip anywhere in Asia. My initial impression was 'If everyone is always moving about on the streets (because the streets have traffic we in the US have never experienced, not in St Louis, or Chicago...maybe LA); 'if everyone is always moving about on the streets, when are they working, and who is working?' The answer of course is that the population of Phnom Penh is over 1.5 million people. To give you a comparison, St Louis has a population of roughly 317,000 people. One of the striking facts I was told is that Cambodia and Missouri are pretty much the same size. After looking up the population in Phnom Penh I decided to compare Missouri to Cambodia. Care to guess the results? For two places of the same size, the difference in population is greater than 10 million people. 10. Million. People.

Traveling to Sihanoukville from Phnom Penh knocked back the wow factor of how densely populated Cambodia is, *barely*. After precariously making our way through the South China Sea port city's traffic, we stepped through the gates to our beloved partner Stronghold and into the arms of our missionary partners Tim and Diane Esala, Jesse and Naomi Phan and Christy and Terry Cooper. Did their hugs last just a bit longer? Did they say they were happy to see us just a little bit more passionately? Perhaps.

My second impression of Cambodia was the rich culture and the accepted way of life for the Khmer (Cambodian people). Would we recognize that deeply visual culture here in the United States? Not even in the most intricately built college campus or beautifully designed cathedral. Would we be able to identify with their way of life? Not even in the poorest, lowest common denominator, economically bottom of the totem pole neighborhood. Yet, as we walked through the dirt roads with fields of trash and muck instead of neatly lined soccer fields, children I had never set eyes on came out to cling to my hand. Mothers who were cooking over an outdoor fire pit with a 12 inch diameter, proudly showed the evening meal they were preparing for their families; puppies and chickens alike frolicked over the broken and used husks of sugar cane (the favorite treat of the little ones). Weeks old rain water dripped from the bins that collected and held it; young adults dozed on the family beds you could see peeking out of the small huts with tin roofs or stood and watched us with intelligent questioning eyes: now what are the Barongs (their word for westerners) up to? To measure, 8 huts stood huddled on the same amount of land that one west county house in a close knit suburb might sprawl on.

Great expectations indeed. What does a week at Stronghold look like with those sights and sounds as our welcoming cry? Children

with boundless energy greeted us each morning with hands respectfully clasped. After giving the traditional greeting, we were flocked by the children, each desiring a high-five, a hug, a stroke on the arm. No self-esteem issues for me there! The long-term missionaries told stories and jokes trying to outdo each other in entertaining us as we strengthened and grew relationships with the staff. We worked side by side, ate side by side (the food and restaurants were out of this world), we prayed side by side and we eventually cried side by side.

We prayed over land that Stronghold is interested in using to expand and grow. We cried over the many ways God has been showing his grace, mercy and favor to Stronghold through relationships built and during a time of economic change in Cambodia. I was privileged to watch one of our St. John mission trippers fall in love with the teaching ministry being done at Stronghold, and see her welcomed like a daughter to the Stronghold family. I watched, with tears in my eyes, as another tripper met and bonded with a child she has been supporting with prayer and her hard earned finances. Another one of us was reconnected to the power of prayer in a beautiful and humbling way; and yet another member of St. John, who chose to take this trip yet again, opened her heart to the parents in the community sharing the joys and hardships of being a parent with them. Through all of it David Jameson and I watched and learned with awe as Diane Esala continuously turned to our Lord and Savior for all things big and small. The absolute faith and belief she continuously holds that God does and will answer our prayer, our call, was inspiring in a way that words cannot define. It became a mad dash race for both David and me to challenge ourselves to live in this convicted yet intentional way. Suddenly in all of these individual events, our expectations have been exceeded.

Life change is happening at Stronghold Cambodia. The last evening of our stay in Sihanoukville Jesse and Naomi invited all of their ministry partners, Khmer and Barong, short-term and long-term alike, into their home for a meal. We were greeted with a holy kiss and open arms – again. For the record, Naomi is the most incredible cook. We enjoyed an evening straight out of the New Testament. Relationship, prayer, affirmation and worship. The impact on everyone from that evening and week will last and stretch into years – if not eternity. We did not expect the long-term missionaries to get refreshed and renewed by our visit, but *we should have*. I did not expect to fall so completely in love with the culture and people, but *I should have*. We did not expect to have every challenge and every prayer of supplication answered in the positive, but *we should have*. We did not expect to have the overwhelming welcome that we got from the children in the community, but *we should have*. We should have. Why? Because when it's God's work, we learned that we can expect EVERYTHING.



“When everybody works hard, everybody has a story to tell.” *Jesse Narit Phan*





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

EXPERIENCE THE HOLY LAND

10-Day Biblical Tour of Israel

Hosted by: Pastor Stephen & Carol Hower

Travel Dates: January 15-24, 2019

\$3992.00 from St. Louis, MO

(Price Includes: \$707 US & Intl. departure taxes/fuel & \$145 gratuities)

Additional departure cities available upon request

Informational Meeting | Sunday, March 4, 2018 | 4-5pm

Ministry Center, Room 250

For further information, please contact:

Pastor Stephen & Carol Hower

16338 Black Cherry Drive, Grover, Missouri, 63040

Phone: 314.803.0674 Email: howercarol@gmail.com



REGISTER ONLINE
RegisterNow.ittworld.com
Tour Code: **Hower19**



Kristi ~ Member Since 1999

THE *Kristi & JT*
MONSCHHEIN | TEAM |
www.themonscheinteam.com
636.537.8288

BERKSHIRE | Alliance,
HATHAWAY | Real Estate®
HomeServices

When you see *how much* we KNOW, you know *how much* we CARE!

- Consistently Ranked Among Top 5 Agents in Greater St. Louis
- #1 Agents at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Alliance Real Estate
- More than \$1 Billion in Sales

* ©2017 BHH Affiliates, LLC. An independently owned and operated franchise of BHH Affiliates, LLC. Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices and the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices symbol are registered service marks of HomeServices of America Inc.® Equal Housing Opportunity.



Garrett W. Knox,
Senior Mortgage Banker
NMLS #: 221438

Direct (314) 575-7167
Email gknox@fsbfinancial.com
eFax (866) 409-2157

Garrett ~ Member Since 2003

Apply Online at www.GarrettKnox.com



Convenience Stores

**14181 Manchester Road
2401 Hwy 109
15670 Manchester Road**

MANCHESTER EYE CARE

A MEMBER OF *VISION SOURCE*

*Comprehensive Eye Care
for the Entire Family*

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

14552 MANCHESTER ROAD



636.227.8700 | MANCHESTEREYECARE.COM

LENT & EASTER SERVICES

{TWO THOUSAND AND EIGHTEEN}

Midweek Lent Services | 1AM

March 7, 14, 21 | 7:00pm, Sanctuary

HOLY WEEK

The Prayer Labyrinth

Wednesday, March 28 | 6:00pm-9:00pm

Thursday-Friday, March 29-30 | 6:00am-9:00pm

Passion of the Christ | *Rated R, Recut version*

Thursday, March 29 • 7:00pm • Sanctuary

Good Friday

March 30 • 12noon, 6:00pm, 7:00pm, 8:00pm

Communion, Sanctuary

The sanctuary will remain open after each service for prayer and reflection.

EASTER

Easter Saturday • March 31

5:00pm, Sanctuary

Easter Eggstravaganza • March 31

Activities open at 6:00pm.

THE 10,000 EGG DASH! • Begins at 6:15pm

Easter Sunday • April 1

7:45am, *Sunrise Service*

9:00am*, 10:45am*, *Sanctuary*

*Live streamed at stjstl.net/streaming

© S P I R I T S

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

15800 MANCHESTER RD.
ELLISVILLE, MO 63011
636.394.4100
STJSTL.NET

AT THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH AND LIFE
ST. JOHN

