

Good News
From New Road
St. Matthew Lutheran Church, God's Family in Service

September 2020

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church



Greetings St. Matthew Family,

“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces characters and character produces hope, *and hope does not disappoint us.*”

These verses from Romans chapter five are painted on a canvas that hangs in my office. It is one the first things I see when I come into my office and one of the last things I see as I shut my door. I have found those words ringing loudly in my ears over these last several months – *hope does not disappoint us*. It really has become more of a mantra that I find myself repeating over and over again – *hope does not disappoint us*.

I need this reminder, and I suspect that many of you do too. Despite disappointment, grief, anger, (related or unrelated to COVID-19), the hope of Christ continues on, the hope of Christ is not and cannot be diminished, because the hope of Christ is not rooted in the finite things of this world (that often disappoint), but this hope is rooted in the everlasting and eternal love of God. That deeply rooted hope, *does not and cannot disappoint us*.

So, as I write this to you today, I try to remain hopeful, knowing that someday are easier than others, but also I cling to joy reflecting on that fact that we have been in ministry together for a year. Time this year has been a tricky thing, but it was a year ago that we felt the Holy Spirit move together and we started our journey together, not knowing what the future would bring.

As we made promises before God, to pray for one another, and walk this journey together there was no anticipating what the year would look like, other than knowing that we would be in it together. And while a global pandemic wasn't on anyone's radar, I am still filled with that hope, excitement, and possibility for what the future will be. Things look different now, yes, but the Holy Spirit is still alive and well through you, the people, and your loving and generous hearts.

I am so grateful for your support through our first year of ministry together, and extremely humbled by your concern for one another, and myself, over these last few months. As we continue to discern and pray about next steps forward, we will begin a phased re-opening of the building of St. Matthew.

What does that mean? It means that small groups (10 or less) will be allowed to begin to meet in person while following physical distancing practices and wearing masks while in the building. We know that fostering community is important, and so we will begin small as we continue to adjust to new normals. It has been encouraging to see the numbers go down in the area, as well as the positivity rate, but we would like to see that number lower before we start worshipping indoors together. Thank you for what you already have been doing to keep one another and those in the community safe.

We will have an opportunity to **gather outside for worship** on **September 13th at 7:00pm**. This will be a short communion service on the lawn of the church with distancing, in conjunction with God's Work Our Hands, Sunday. More details about that are below.

It has been a joy to serve with you this past year, and I look with hope for what this next year will bring.

In Christ,
Pastor Kelsey

Church Council will be meeting weekly by Zoom

Members present: Stephanie Abright, Sally Engelbrecht, Sharon Gripp, Shelly Jasek, Paula Jenson, Pastor Kelsey, Kirk Krause, Paul Larson, Cynthia Tingle and Jeremy Wallace

Members absent: Linda Stanford

- The checking account balance, as of July 31, 2020, is \$214,234.27. The dedicated account balance, included in the checking account, is \$110,233.14.
- Statements of giving are being prepared for the congregation.
- The Grace to Go event was a good time to see some of the St. Mathew Community.
- A trivia challenge is planned during Thursday's Zoom social gathering.
- The Synod Assembly and Theological Conference will be online this year.
- Crestview Elementary is in need of disinfectant wipes; if you have access to any of these wipes with 70% alcohol content, please consider donating them to this school. Care packages are being assembled for homebound individuals. More details will follow regarding these two giving opportunities.
- God's Work. Our Hands. An outside trash pick-up day is planned on Sunday, September 13th. It will be an hour or less beginning at 5:30 p.m. and an outside worship service will follow. More information will be shared later.
- The coronavirus statistics are still being monitored. There could be a phased reopening within the next couple of months if the numbers continue their downward trend, but communication will continue as the statistics change. Masks and social distancing are required.

Respectfully submitted,
Sally Engelbrecht, Secretary

This format is to provide highlights of the Council Meeting. A copy of the minutes will be available from the church office no later than the end of each month.

God's Work. Our Hands.

The ELCA will celebrate God's Work. Our Hands. on **September 13**. As service across the ELCA will look different this year, there are three ways you can participate...

1) The evening of **September 13** we will first gather at **5:30pm** to pick up trash outside of St. Matthew and along the streets that surround us. Trash bags will be provided, but you are encouraged to bring your own gloves for working. Following this time of neighborhood clean-up, we will gather on the lawn of the church at **7:00pm** for a short service of communion. You are invited to bring a lawn chair and a mask, as we gather distantly to pray together, and receive the sacrament of holy communion.

2) Our local neighborhood school Crestview, along with teachers in our congregation, are in desperate need of disinfectant wipes for their classrooms. While they are in high demand it is difficult to find them at the store. If you happen to come across them or have some extra to spare, your donation would be gladly appreciated. 70% alcohol is recommended. This will be an ongoing need as long as kids are in school.

3) While this time of COVID has been difficult for many of us, we are mindful that some of our beloved people in care homes, and who are homebound, have been particularly isolated with few to no visitors allowed. We would like to remind them that we are continually praying for them, by sending them care packages. If you would like to donate supplies for the packages things we are looking for include: adult coloring books, markers/colored pencils, large print word find books (or things similar), pre-packaged snacks and crackers from the store.

Donations for both Crestview and the packages can be dropped off outside the church office Mon.-Thurs. 9:00 am - 1:00pm. Pastor Kelsey is often around outside of those times so if you would like to drop off at another time just give her a call.

If you would like to volunteer to help organize the kits or deliver them to our people send Pastor Kelsey an email: pastorkelsey@saintmatthewwaco.org

Holy Happy Hour

Join members of this community for fellowship online, Thursday nights at 5:30 pm. This is a great way to connect with those we have been missing these last couple of months. If you need information on how to participate email or call Pastor Kelsey.

Art as Worship Update

In response to the highly unusual circumstances of 2020, the St. Matthew Lutheran Church Fine Arts Committee would like to announce a change to this year's plans for Art as Worship. We had intended to celebrate our 10th anniversary by revisiting all the themes from previous years, but have decided to put that plan on hold until 2021. Instead we are announcing a fully-online gallery show to be held in November with a new theme of VIGIL.

The theme of VIGIL was inspired by Pastor Kelsey Fitting-Snyder's suggestion of framing our experiences around the atmosphere of Holy Saturday. That day is full of the almost, but not yet; the tension of holding the pain, disappointment and doubt. It is a day that grasps the hope that tomorrow will come.

Holy Saturday services are often called Easter Vigil, the Paschal Vigil, or the Great Vigil of Easter. It is a liturgy held in traditional Christian churches as the first official celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus.

vigil

vig·il | \ 'vi-jəl \

Definition of vigil

- 1: the act of keeping awake at times when sleep is customary
- 2: an event or a period of time when a person or group stays in a place and quietly waits, prays, etc., especially at night
- 3a: a watch formerly kept on the night before a religious feast with prayer or other devotions
- b: the day before a religious feast observed as a day of spiritual preparation
- c: evening or nocturnal devotions or prayers — usually used in plural

The 2020 gallery will be an online visual experience rather than an in-person gathering in the hallways of our church gallery. Photos will need to be submitted by artists by November 9 so that they can be collected into an online show, which will be premiered on November 21 (the original date of our gallery opening).

Art as Worship is open to artists working in all media. Entries must be your own original artwork. Each applicant may submit up to two works with up to two photos of each; additional photos or video of any three-dimensional work (sculpture, books, etc.) may be submitted. The St. Matthew Fine Arts Ministry reserves the right to reject work that is deemed inappropriate. The full artist's application can be found at www.fineartsministry.blogspot.com

Did you know?

Did you know that St. Matthew is on a certificate hanging in the NT-NL Synod office as one of the founding members of the Mission Endowment Fund? The Mission Endowment Fund was established 25 years ago to help congregations establish new ministries and outreach as well as new mission start congregations. This is something that St. Matthew has been a part of from the beginning. Because of the generosity of this congregation, our outreach extends beyond this community but to numerous communities across the synod. As COVID-19 has impacted communities across the synod differently, the benevolence we make monthly has had a significant impact in helping keep food ministries, clothing ministries, care centers etc. operational during this time. Even during this time apart, God continues to work through the heart of this congregation to help neighbors in need both near and far.

Prayer Requests and Concerns



While we remain apart, we continue to pray for one another and those close to us. Since we have not been together for worship, the prayer list has not been updated regularly. If you have an update or a concern, please call the office and leave a message or reach out to Pastor Kelsey directly.

Members with Prayer Concerns:

Ron Knobel, Alfred Gstattenbauer, Steve Jenson, Agnes Decker, Clydine Arthur, Ron & Stephanie Lambring, Lauren Roller, Elnora Schwake, Ron Peterson, Eunice & John Linda, Ty Henrichs, Tammy Vickrey, Stephanie Partin, Irene Erickson, Melba Hafer, Henry & Mary Ann Lippe, Toni Barnum,

Those for whom prayer is requested:

Amanda Burke, Allen Fields, Melanie (Beth Pristash)
 Carlos Remedios, Rodney Roller, Patrick Dalton, Brenda Light, Blake Griffin, Lou Brazil (Terry Roller)
 Roger Sanders (Clydine Arthur)
 Jimmy Moore, Laura Burney (Ross & Kim Browne)
 Philip Reyna (Mary Koon)
 Melva Williamson (Donna & Bobby Zimmerman)
 Larry Warenke (Jean & Bill Moeller)
 Jo Bob Gough (Mary Herring)
 Melva Williamson (Donna Zimmerman)
 Jerry Murphy (Peggy Tooker)
 Ty Croford (Linda Stanford)
 Janice Richter (Meridith Sellers)
 Peggy Ricketts, Vicki Terry (Carol Linda)
 Patsy Forrester (Bill and Diane Jones)
 Clinton Damron (Cora Gillespie)
 Michelle and Karl VonRosenberg (Jo VonRosenberg)
 Kenneth and Paula Moerbe

Our Christian Sympathy for

the family and friends of Michael Dwyer, Bill Schwake, and Bill Moeller

Thank you for keeping members of the congregation, and their friends and family in your prayers. We know that situations change, and as we work to ensure best care of those in need of prayer, we will keep people on the list for a month at a time. Please contact the church office with any additions or removals.

September Birthdays

James Stokes..... 9/2
 Michael Pareya 9/6
 Meghan Gripp..... 9/7
 Peggy Tooker 9/7
 Abel Pederson..... 9/8
 Branden Love-Stone 9/13

Gary Herzberg..... 9/16
 Jean Melzer 9/16
 Alfred Gstattenbauer 9/17
 David Hafer 9/19
 Robert Krienke 9/20
 Karen Mullens 9/22
 Arlene Schwarz 9/23
 Bill Abright 9/25
 John Jasek 9/25
 Lashana Hatfield 9/26
 Larry Henrichs 9/26
 Kaylee Landon 9/26
 Tammy Vickrey 9/26
 Lee Nordt 9/27
 Marilyn Cruse 9/30

September Anniversaries

Ron & Sharon Peterson..... 9/1
 Jay & Jean Dittmann 9/3
 Del & Sue Hensel..... 9/10
 Terry & Janet Roller 9/13
 Michael & Cynthia Frey 9/18

NEWSLETTER

The **monthly newsletter deadline** is the **3rd**

Sunday of each month. Please send submissions to cvanauken@grandecom.net or place your handwritten information and thank you notes in the wooden box near the entrance of the workroom. Thank you.

Online Calendar Updates

As we work to keep our **online calendar** up to date, please contact Sally Engelbrecht, sengel1918@yahoo.com, for any additions or corrections.

**Offering Giving Option**

Simply Giving is offered through the church office for automatic withdrawal from your checking or savings account to give to St. Matthew Lutheran Church. In addition, you can give from your phone using the GivePlus+ app and entering zip code 76710 to find St. Matthew.

Bishop's Message: Tuesday August 25, 2020

Bishop Erik Gronberg, NT-NL Synod

Across NT-NL's territory, the signs of fall, other than the average high temperature, are evident. Schools are re-opening in various fashions in many places, the Dallas Cowboys are practicing again, and churches are contemplating fall programming and worship options. This is typically an exciting time of the year filled with new opportunities and ideas. Yet I am hearing from many of our leaders, and in conversations with leaders in other fields, that they are not excited or energized but instead feel stuck, exhausted emotionally and physically, and overwhelmed. And with this also often comes a sense of guilt and anxiety that because of how they feel, they are not measuring up.

These feelings are all understandable given the amount of change, adaptation, and learning that we have collectively had to go through, combined with deep division in our nation. Add twin hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, and our surge capacity has been largely used up. In addition, this pandemic is not like typical disasters. As has been noted before, when a typical disaster occurs, there are stages in the response cycle. But this pandemic, due to its nature, continues to impact, and its total damage has yet to be seen, and it is full of what has been described as "ambiguous loss." These are losses that have no clear resolution, and as such, require creativity to manage. The article linked in this post addresses some ways you can be creative in that, but I am going to focus on just one of them: "both-and" thinking.

As Lutherans, we are familiar with the idea of "both-and" thinking. We are saint AND sinner. We embrace the law AND gospel. Jesus Christ is human AND divine. These are seemingly incongruous things to hold in tension, but we do so because they are a way of understanding the incongruity of our existence. We sin, and yet we are set free by the gospel. We know the law is good and we are to follow it, but we are not legalistic in our understanding of salvation and rely on God's grace.

Living into the "both-and" nature of this time acknowledges reality but also encourages us to look forward, trusting that there will be a resolution to this current crisis. We can have our honest moments of being stuck, mourning our losses, but also recognize the creativity and celebrate new things that are happening in this time.

"Both-and" thinking can help us navigate this time of ambiguous loss. To understand the difficulty of our situation and yet be able to look forward to what is to come. We can take seriously the losses experienced by our communities and minister to those in grief while also asking good questions about our future and that of our community. We can be wise about stewarding resources and protecting our neighbors by not having in-person programming but also respond to natural disasters that come in this time with open arms of welcome as Briarwood is doing for those who might have to evacuate from the hurricanes in the gulf.

This pandemic will come to an end, but we will not, as I have said, ever go back to "normal." Too many lives have been lost, disrupted, and forever changed. But we can continue to learn through this time, take moments to evaluate the future of our congregations and ministries, and resource one another for this new work. Crises can bring clarity and prioritization. By living into the "both-and," there is a way forward for us as we continue to trust the promise that our future is secure in God.