

St. Matthew Newsletter

Our Vision: Connecting the world with Jesus Christ

Our Mission: Faithfully living as the Body of Christ, and sharing the Gospel that brings salvation

❖ Pastor's Message

Rev. Steven Andrews, Jr.

God's Worldstory

It was only five months! But we did it! We took the time in Bible class to look at the way God teaches us to see His creation, this life, our roles, and most of all His love for us. These things are God's worldstory.

We took the time to seek answers to life's most pivotal questions. Where do you place your trust? Where do you find belonging? Where do you find love? Where do you find provision and protection? Now, the world around us has answers. It certainly wants to tell you how to live your life, what role you have in a society. Various things, from governments and schools, to communities and families, all strive to be that foundation of your life, that place for you to place your trust, your hope, your confidence.

So the world provides us with lots of competing stories. Do I fashion the way I see the world and my life around CNN News? Or maybe Fox News? Do I build my life around my career, or if I'm younger the sport I love? Is the foundation of my life my family and our love, care, and support of one another?

We see these things, and so many more. All fighting for a position that belongs to God alone. It is God who created us. It is God who still sustains us, and the rest of His creation. It is God who provides our daily needs. It is God who defends us from the flaming darts of the devil. And it is God, through His Son Jesus Christ, who rescues us from ourselves.

God has called us out of our worldstories, out of our own sinful past, out of the ways we once loved, out of the things we once trusted above all else. The US government can't save you. And that's okay, because Jesus has! No matter how much money you set aside and stockpile for retirement or a rainy day, your wealth can't save you or even sustain you. And that's okay, because Jesus has and He does!

By His death and His resurrection, the One who once created you, has now saved you. He has called you by name in the waters of holy baptism. He has forgiven you of all your sins in breaking of His own body and the pouring out of His own blood in the Lord's Supper. You are His!

That's the great good news, the Gospel message of who Jesus is and what He's done for you! And that is the basis of our new worldstory, God's worldstory. I am a poor miserable sinner. But thanks be to God! He has redeemed even me!

God then lays out for us what this life is for. As His creation, His creatures, what did He put us here to do? How should we look at our life? How should we treat our neighbor? Should we be concerned with caring for the rest of the creation? Does my occupation really matter?

The list of conversations and topics that could be discussed on worldstory may actually be endless, a Bible class that never ends! Even after five months, there are still so many things we didn't talk

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about: safety, immigration, education, different career routes (military, stay-at-home, tech schools, etc.), contentment, debt, retirement, etc., etc., etc.

But as a very brief recap for those who couldn't attend the class, Jesus lays out two purposes for our life as we wait for His promised return:

Love the Lord your God - (1st – 3rd Commandments) this is concerned with your own salvation in Christ alone.

Love your neighbor as yourself - (4th – 10th Commandments) this is concerned with the salvation of the people around you in Christ alone.

This is the very simplest way that we look at our life. Does my job allow me to love God? Does my job allow me to love my neighbor? If you can answer both questions “yes,” your job is faithful.

God's Word helps to form the basic understanding that we have of this world and of our life in it. We care for God's creation. We love our neighbors, even our enemies. But above all, we know that we have a God who loved us so dearly that He offered up His own life to save us from ourselves!

If you missed the whole class, or even just want to catch up, we are recording our Bible studies here at St. Matthew. All of them, including Pastor Otto's newest on the Gospel according to John, can be found here: www.gracefaithlove.org/bible-studies (under the “Grow” menu).

God's blessings to you,

Rev. Steve Andrews Jr.

❖ Staffing under Consideration

St. Matthew has 12 elders who gather monthly for prayer, learning, and overseeing spiritual matters of the church (teaching, worship, and care ministries).

Among those 12 is an Elders' Personnel Subcommittee that is considering our staffing needs at St. Matthew. Ron Brohommer, Todd Gemeinhardt, Jim Ebert, and Caryl Froeschle are reviewing each ministry area with both pastors to discern 1) how we can best serve our people, and 2) how we can actively reach our community with Christ's love and the Gospel.

So far in 2019 we held four meetings on topics of worship, education, service, fellowship, and witness; an additional meeting was held on equipping our children, high school students and young adults for a lifetime of Christian faith.

Please pray for our pastors and elders as we review our current ministry model and consider staffing recommendations for the congregation.

❖ Building Friendships at St. Matthew – A Women’s Ministry Event

Women of St. Matthew, both new and long-time members, let’s get to know one another! Come join us for Game Night on Thurs., March 28, 7:00 p.m. here in our St. Matthew Fellowship Center. Please come for refreshments, bunco, a getting-to-know you activity, and prizes.

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another. I Thessalonians 3:12a

❖ Altar Guild

The Altar Guild members will meet on Saturday, March 9th at 10:00 a.m. in the Library. We will finalize plans for Holy Week and Easter. If you are interested in joining the Altar Guild, please contact Deb Langsdale or come to the next meeting!

❖ Mary Martha Circle

Mary Martha Circle met on Tues. Feb. 26th. Christy Chambers was our hostess. Special speakers were Ken and Betty Greinke. They gave a wonderful presentation about their mission work in Nigeria. After a short business meeting, Jean Stubbs closed with a devotion.

Please join us on Tues. March 26th at 7 p.m. in the meeting room of the Family Life Center. Elaine Froechle will serve as hostess and give the devotion. Pastor Andrews will be joining us to finish our Bible study on Genesis 2 & 3.

❖ Lydia Circle

The Circle’s regular February meeting fell on Valentine’s Day which was fortunate because we had our annual Valentine Salad Lunch and, for those who participated, a reveal of Secret Prayer Sisters and drawing of new names. We had a very nice turnout, including the Pastors, Tamy, and several visitors/new members. It probably goes without saying that no one went away hungry. Several of our sisters were missing due to illness or being out of town, but they were certainly with us in spirit. Deb Jones and Pam York were hostesses. Our next regular meeting will be March 14 at 12:30 PM and we invite any ladies to join us.

❖ March Missions Collection (LWML Mite Boxes)

We don’t think of the United States as being a mission field, but it is the third largest mission field in the world. Rio Grande, Texas is one of the poorest areas in the US and the majority of the poor are Hispanic. These people need help with English and with literacy. But mostly they need to hear about Jesus. Most of these immigrants and refugees are unchurched. Through the ministry of a trained church worker the entire circuit will benefit and new church workers will receive training. This ministry is reaching out with the help of the LWML to show the love of Jesus. For more information about this grant, please go to www.lwml.org/2017-2019-mission-grant-19. **You may donate to the boxes in the narthex.**

❖ Classics Gathering

Our March Classics will feature a Pot Luck Luncheon, followed by a delightful musical group, *Hopeless In Love*. Please bring a favorite dish and join us March 7 at 11:30 here at Church.

❖ New Sunday Bible Class

Do you know which disciple was in the Garden of Gethsemane while Jesus poured out his heart in prayer... or which disciple was literally was at the foot of the cross at Jesus' crucifixion... or who was the last living of the Twelve...? The answer is John, son of Zebedee.

The Gospel according to John has intrigued people of all nations since early Christian gatherings. John, James and Peter travelled closely with Jesus and were often with him in times of prayer, miracles, and even the day Jesus appeared with Moses and Elijah (known as the transfiguration of Jesus).

John's eyewitness testimony to Christ shows us how Jesus' words cut to the heart of those who heard them, leading them to live no longer for themselves but to serve God and their neighbors.

Some days Jesus' words were so provocative that Jewish leaders or others in the crowds tried to capture or kill Jesus. He was telling them God's words are more important to follow than their own inner ideas of how to live. They didn't like being told their way of thinking was wrong.

In our Bible class for the next three months we will **see** and **hear** this Jesus and his message. Each morning we will see a video clip from the movie, *The Gospel of John*, that covers the chapter we are studying. Then we will read the actual text, paragraph by paragraph, to learn how to understand it.

Our goal is to engage you with God's Word, to help you learn to pray, to help you learn how to read the Bible in a meaningful—and accurate—way.

Note that we're calling this *Sunday Bible Class*. We are not currently calling it *Adult Bible Class* because we encourage Middle School students and High School students to also attend. The level of learning they receive at school is already high, their ability to see how adults interact with the text is helpful, and the content is understandable. In other words, we are equipping them to read the Bible and ask the right questions of God's Word as they prepare for adulthood.

Schedule for The Gospel of John class on Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Date	Chapter	Video length	Teacher	Special notes
Mar. 3	1	12:30	Pastor Otto	
Mar. 10	2	7:30	Pastor Otto	
Mar. 17			Brian Mitchell	LHM Bible Study *
Mar. 24	3	5:10	Pastor Otto	
Mar. 31	4	9:00	Pastor Otto	
Apr. 7	5	8:20	Pastor Otto	
Apr. 14	6 <i>part 1</i>	9:40	Pastor Otto	Palm Sunday
Apr. 21	<i>Easter Breakfast served 8:45–10:00 a.m.</i>			Easter Sunday
Apr. 28	6 <i>part 2</i>	5:00	Pastor Otto	
May 5	7	8:10	Pastor Otto	Confirmation at 10:45 service
May 12	8 <i>part 1</i>	6:30	Pastor Otto	Mother's Day
May 19	8 <i>part 2</i>	4:30	Pastor Otto	
May 26	9	8:10	Pastor Otto	Memorial Day weekend

*Pastor Otto will be out of town to attend a family wedding on May 17. Brian will lead us in a Bible study prepared by Lutheran Hour Ministries, and also share with us the resources (print and online) that are free and readily available. LHM resources are designed to help you grow spiritually, and to equip you with the means to help others learn of the Christian faith and remain faithful.

❖ Your spiritual life during March and April

We enter the season of Lent as we gather for worship on Wednesday, Mar. 6. This is a tradition from the early church that has been sustained for nearly 2,000 years—preparing our hearts to be repentant before God for a period of 40 days.

Ashes are a sign of remembering we have a brief life on earth—from dust we came, to dust we shall return. If God is so gracious to us, how can we sin outwardly against His ways? How can we read the Scriptures and think of them as the words of men? During Lent, we pray for God to help us live a clean, holy life that honors Him.

The Israelites of old were taught to place ashes on their skin to reveal how they were sinful and unworthy in the sight of a holy God... and to pray to this same God for mercy. We place ashes on the forehead in the shape of a cross, to mark ourselves as remembered by God and marked for forgiveness.

Each Wednesday service during these forty days is meant to help us remember God's promises. Then on Maundy Thursday we gather to eat and drink "in remembrance of Jesus" and on Good Friday we will pray, like the thief on the cross, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

So how can you participate in a meaningful way to make these upcoming 40 days different?

- 1) Set a priority of coming to **worship on Saturday or Sunday**. The Lord calls us to gather each week in the third command, "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy." If you have fallen away from this practice, this is a good time to resume regular worship and receiving the Lord's Supper.
- 2) Also come to the **Lenten services** on Wednesdays this year. In the same way our pastors "prepare a meal of God's grace" for weekends, they "prepare a meal of God's grace" for Lent that focuses on prayer, remembering Jesus' suffering, and learning to let go of sin.
- 3) **Pray**. Pray to our Lord about your life, bold to ask for mercy. Pray to Jesus about the present, knowing you are choosing to live for Him each day.
- 4) Find a time to **read from your Bible** during the week. Use the *Portals of Prayer* booklets we provide, which offer a brief reading for each calendar day... or use the special Lenten booklets we provide, with devotions written specifically for this season. These *People of the Passion* booklets will be in the narthex the first two weeks of March.
- 5) Learn from someone who can "open up the Scriptures" to you. Too often it is said, "I know what I need to know." Others have said, "I'm not interested. I don't want to learn. Nothing in the Bible will change anything about the way I think." Isn't there more to learn from the Word? We learn bad habits and odd ways of looking at things from others—sometimes even following voices which call us away from God. Maybe Lent is the right time to **come to a Bible class** one of the pastors is teaching. Their role is to help you apply what you are reading.

❖ Who Provided Your Food, Home, and Every Blessing?

What is in our hands is meant for today, to be eaten or used with thanksgiving... or to be given by our hands.

Everything we have and everything we are is a gift of God's providential care. We understand that we're not islands unto ourselves. We could not exist without those who have gone before us and those who walk alongside us. God has given us forefathers in family, country, and faith. We are recipients of what God worked through them. We know God provides for our well-being through these means.

He gives us farmers and ranchers so we can eat. But more than that, God created and gave us all the things those farmers and ranchers cultivate. He gave us the corn, the beans, the wheat, the cows for milking, the steers for grilling. He gave each of those things for our nourishment and sustenance. Without God creating and instilling in those things their taste, their nutritional value, etc., we would not exist.

God gives us doctors, surgeons, nurses, and hospitals. He gives us medicine and medical instruments, and, of course, He gave us everything to make those medicines and medical instruments. He instilled in those things the properties to be utilized for those purposes. Without God creating and instilling healing properties into those things – and without God creating the ability within man to learn this and implement it to serve our medical needs – we would not enjoy the health we do now.

But there's more. He gives us gainful employment through our employers and provides for the necessities of life through the labor of our hands:

“Then Moses said to the people of Israel, ‘See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan.’ ” (Exodus 35:30–34)

And one step back from that, He has created and given us hands, and attached to hands are arms with strength. He created us with minds to make those arms and hands move and accomplish the work set before us. And with that mind, He has given us reason and senses.

That mind, because of the reason God has instilled in it, is able to work through difficult problems before we press those arms and hands into labor. It allows us to grapple with concepts and run through scenarios instead of having to experience every situation personally. It allows us to learn from the mistakes, as well as from the accomplishments, of ourselves and others. This can be done for our entire body, all our skills and talents, everything that makes us ... us.

So, everything we have and everything we are is a gift from Him. This is what we confess in the First Article of the Creed when we say that we “believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.”

But that is just the First Article of the Creed. We confess two more articles that deal with God's provision for our spiritual well-being. He sent his Son to die and be raised on the third day for our justification. He delivers that justification through the means of grace (baptism, preaching and the Word of God, and the Lord's Supper). And to give you those means of grace, He gives pastors and teachers, etc. Literally everything we have and everything we are in this life – and the next – is an inexpressible gift from God.

And it is for this, all of this, that we give thanks. And that is what stewardship is all about – giving thanks for God's provision for us. To give thanks is more than having an attitude of gratitude, more than just a feeling in our hearts.

It is an action. It begins in the heart, but it doesn't stay there. It works its way out through the mouth in praise for God's gifts and in love and charity through the hands to our neighbors in family, country, and church.

“For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey him” (*The Small Catechism*, 16).

So give thanks to God for His inexpressible gifts – for everything we have and everything we are. Do this not only in word but also in deed.

❖ St. Matthew LWML Society – LUTHERAN WOMEN IN MISSION

Three things to know about our service and fellowship...

LWML provides scholarships for students preparing for church work. Study grants are available for high school seniors and college students planning a career in LCMS church work. If anyone is considering becoming a pastor, teacher, deaconess, director of Christian education, etc., please fill our an application by April 15, 2019. For more information go to www.missourilwml.org (under forms).

Women of St. Matthew may become Associate LWML Members. Did you know that an Associate Membership in St. Matthew LWML is a new option? Associate members meet **quarterly** with Circle members; the emphasis is on fellowship and a program, often a speaker or mission project. Women are kept apprised of opportunities for Christian growth and service. Gatherings take place on Saturdays and Sundays in February, May, September, and December (the all-women's Christmas vespers and dinner.) The next quarterly program will be SATURDAY, MAY 4, 9:00 AM.

Spring Rally with Karen Averitt as speaker. The Spring LWML Zone Rally/Retreat will be SATURDAY, MARCH 30 at Timothy in Blue Springs, 9:00 AM. Karen Averitt, former member of St. Matthew, will speak on the topic, "What Will People Think?" Afternoon speakers will cover women's safety and community outreach.

Contacts: Jean Stubbs, 525-0859; JoAnn Davis, 347-8702; Lois Lorei, 210-4319

❖ St. Matthew Prayer Partners

Do you have a prayer request? Are you interested in being on our e-mail list notifying you of prayers of the congregation? Please e-mail Carrol McAllister at cammac2@swbell.net or you may call her at 816-763-4535.



St. Matthew

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"Be still, and let your heart
be turned to prayer."

Ash Wednesday will be
March 6, with services at
4:00 and 7:30 p.m.

2019 theme:
"A Lent to Remember"

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MARCH 2019 NEWSLETTER

❖ Midweek Lenten Worship Services Begin March 6

In addition to regular weekend worship, **we hold services during Lent on Wednesdays at 4:00 and 7:30 p.m.** Our youth will be serving meals each Wednesday evening.

Wednesday services and sermons are entirely different from weekend services, designed to help us live in repentance during the 40 days leading up to Easter. This year we follow the theme, "A Lent to Remember." Lent is a season in the Church Year in which we consider our lives before God, repent of self-serving attitudes, and remember how faithful God has been toward us.

Our first service of Lent will be Ash Wednesday on Feb. 6 at 4:00 and 7:30 p.m. We offer the imposition of ashes. All who wish to receive them may come down the center aisle where the pastors will place ashes on the forehead saying, "From dust you came, to dust you shall return."

❖ 2019 Theme for Wednesday & Holy Week Services: **A Lent to Remember**

Mar. 6	Ash Wednesday	Remember Dust	Psalms 103:13-14
Mar. 13	Lenten Midweek 2	Remember Wondrous Works	Psalms 111:4
Mar. 20	Lenten Midweek 3	Remember Jesus' Words	Luke 22:61-62
Mar. 27	Lenten Midweek 4	Remember the Covenant	Psalms 105:8
Apr. 3	Lenten Midweek 5	Remember Sins No More	Jeremiah 31:34
Apr. 10	Lenten Midweek 6	Remember Steadfast Love	Psalms 98:3
Apr. 18	Maundy Thursday	Remembrance of Me	1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Apr. 19	Good Friday	Remember Me	Luke 23:39-43
Apr. 21	Easter Day	Remember Jesus Risen	2 Timothy 2:8, 11