

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. Craig Otto

Blessings be with you in Jesus' name.

The day will come when we're back together, so during this time we trust the Lord, our living God, just as we always have. More than ever, we pray and receive. Christ, your Savior, abides in You and you in Him.

In this **May issue** of our newsletter, here's what you'll find:

Page 1 — Jesus' words from John 15 about Christ abiding in us.

Page 2 — How to apply for Lutheran school tuition scholarships, things to read and videos to see at LHM.org; announcements from our sewing group, properties, and food pantry.

Page 3 — Hello's and updates from Altar Guild, Classics, and LWML groups.

Page 4 — A devotion: *Hold to sacred teaching*

Page 5 — A devotion: *In need of rest*

Page 6 — A devotion: *In serious need of repentance*

Page 7 — A devotion: *The more you have, the more you share*

Page 8 — A prayer, and how you can access my daily 3-minute podcast

Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

"If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

—The Gospel of John, chapter 15

❖ St. Matthew Education Scholarship

St Matthews provides tuition assistance to children of member families from kindergarten through college. The student must be attending a MO Synod school. The assistance is for up to 75% of the annual tuition, not to exceed \$2,000 per student. The application can be found on the St Matthews website, gracefaithlove.org, and all applications are due by July 1, 2020. You can email your application to Brandon Miller at bjmiller23@gmail.com, as well as any questions you may have about the program.

❖ Resources from Lutheran Hour Ministries during Covid-19 Pandemic

Lutheran Hour Ministries has developed a webpage entitled “We’re In This Together” with some great tools and resources to help in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic era. Click on the COVID-19 link at the top of the main LHM webpage at lhm.org and you will be directed to this new resource page. Here you will find links to a multitude of free resources including the Lutheran Hour, Daily Devotions, LHM Learn (on-line courses on a wide variety of topics), and digital copies of all of the Project Connect Booklets produced by LHM. You will also find words of encouragement from Lutheran Hour Speaker Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler.

There is also a link on this website to “Gospel Adventures.” These are great resources developed for young people of elementary and middle-school ages in Lutheran Schools, Sunday Schools, and Vacation Bible Schools. Each “mission trip” consists of five days of video clips and downloadable resources and lesson plans focused on a particular country. The most recent trips were to Mongolia and Peru, and previous trips when the program was known as “Online Mission Trips” visited countries such as Kenya, Madagascar, Guatemala, Cambodia and Thailand. If you are looking for Christian resources to help in teaching at home, these are wonderful tools to introduce your children to the children and families from other cultures. And they are absolutely free from your friends at Lutheran Hour Ministries!

❖ Sewing Group

The St. Matthew Sewing Group will not meet in May. However, **we are in need of new members to help with our many projects this year once we resume.** You don't need to know how to sew — we also need cutters, stuffers, etc. If you would rather work from your home, we can provide kits for you to take with you. The group meets the second and fourth Mondays of each month. If interested, please contact Linda Patterson at 816-820-4464 (lfpatterns@gmail.com) or Marilyn Heineman at 524-2369.

❖ Food Pantry Collection

The Mission Board continues to collect items for the food pantry at Lee’s Summit North High School. Any contribution, monetary gift, or gift card is greatly appreciated. **A copy of the food list and a display of food items are located in the Narthex**, including: canned corn/peas/green beans, canned beans, canned fruit or applesauce, pasta sauce (plastic jars or cans), Pasta, canned chicken or tuna, tuna/chicken helper, pancake mix (small package), syrup, instant oatmeal (individual packages), Pop Tarts, individual cereal boxes, granola or protein bars, soup, mac-n-cheese, peanut butter, jelly.

❖ Property Status Report

The Family Life Center and Preschool areas have been quarantined and locked down to minimize any cleaning efforts later. This lessens the amount of cleaning needed when these areas can be re-occupied. The property is still being mowed and weeds are being pulled to maintain a presentable appearance. We have hired the janitors for cleaning twice a week, only in the office area and Sanctuary, as required.

❖ Altar Guild

The Altar Guild continues to wait until the day we can all meet again! If allowed, we will meet on Saturday, May 9 at 10 a.m., but it isn't likely. We all miss our church family so much and can't wait to see you all again!!

❖ Classics Gathering

For May, we need to stay home and stay safe. We pray for comfort and support during these difficult times. We look forward to seeing all our *Classics* friends again as soon as that is realistic.

❖ LWML Women in Mission

Per LWML MO District President, Sally Handrick, the physical gathering of women in convention this June 2020 in Springfield, MO has been cancelled. However, much of the convention agenda will be offered on the website, missourilwml.org, to be viewed on video on the original date of June 13 and will remain for some time for viewing again later. Voting will take place electronically as originally planned.

The Quarterly Society meeting at St. Matthew scheduled for Saturday, May 2 has been cancelled. Elections were to be held for the offices of President and Treasurer, but the Board agreed that the current officers may serve until new officers can be duly elected, hopefully, at the upcoming Quarterly meeting in September.

❖ LWML Mites Mission Grant

Grant #9 \$40,000: The people of the Wind River Indian Reservation, Fort Washakie, Wyoming, are in need of the Good News of Jesus Christ. They are unable to finance the cost to take their children to Bible classes, but a van for the mission would provide opportunities for reliable transportation. For more information about this grant, go to www.lwml.org/2019-2021-mission-grant-9.

LWML encourages everyone to continue to collect and send in their mite offerings (and offerings to their local congregations). The needs of His people continue. Giving our mission dollars and praying for grant recipients gives glory to God and takes our minds off of difficulties we may be experiencing.

❖ Mary Martha Circle

All of our activities for April were cancelled, as well as the May 2 Society meeting. Prayerfully we will be able to meet in May. Our meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 19 at 7 p.m. Patty Bechel will be our hostess and have the closing devotion. We will have a bible study and catch up on business and projects. In this time we have sent \$100.00 to District Mites to meet the goal for our new mission projects. The convention in June has been cancelled, but there will be virtual voting by the delegates. We also sent LUMA \$200.00 for their efforts in helping those in need in our area. God Bless and Keep you until we can be together again.

❖ 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? Contact Carrol McAllister at cammac2@swbell.net or 816-763-4535.

Hold to sacred teaching

Welcome to the Daily Word with Pastor Otto for Thursday, April 23.

Episode 35

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's reading is [2 Thessalonians 2:15](#)

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. This is the Word of the Lord.

Would it surprise you to know the teachings of Christian faith are the same as in early years? While people who saw Jesus were still living, the disciples wrote down their experience. The Apostle Paul knew the risen Jesus and spoke with Him; then he told about His resurrection in cities like Thessalonica. He urged Thessalonians to stand firm in this testimony, and look to when they'd see the risen Christ themselves. Paul taught them to hold fast to their beliefs and not change. While others adopt strange teachings, Paul said *they're better off* keeping the traditions passed on. While others are carried away in immoral activity, Paul encouraged Christians to stay pure and chaste. So the early Christians believed a fixed set of teachings, and cared for themselves by avoiding sinful behavior. Today we hear many say, "Listen to me." They would have us forsake the teachings of the Bible and adopt their ideas, which they think are superior. But we're better off holding fast to the teachings passed on to us, trusting the God of our fathers. In fact, our salvation depends on it. We're saved through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom the prophets foretold. In Him we have forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. Have you considered: the teachings of Christian faith will only remain the same for coming generations, *so long as we hold fast to them in ours?* We have a sacred responsibility to learn Scripture, attend worship, and testify to Jesus in our day, for the sake of those who follow us.

We pray: Father, our Creator, You are the eternal God. You've given us Your Word and called us to live by it, setting us apart in a world of ever-changing beliefs. Give us wisdom to learn, courage to confess, and trust in Your salvation that comes through Christ. In His name we pray. Amen +

In need of rest

Welcome to the Daily Word with Pastor Otto for Wednesday, April 22.

Episode 34

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's reading is [Jonah 4:6](#)

Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. This is the Word of the Lord.

Jonah's world suddenly became disoriented. He didn't ask for his life to change, but it happened. The Lord called him to live in repentance, and guide others to repentance. Jonah wasn't interested, so he distracted himself by ignoring the duty. When he was at his most desperate, feeling guilty, thinking he had no strength for his own needs, *he finally prayed*. "I called to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me." Over time Jonah adapted to the changed course of his life. He could complete his own roles, and guide others to follow the Lord. He came to understand the Lord is always in control, helping the helpless and ministering to the faithful. The Lord helped Jonah by giving him rest. Jonah was considering what task was next, so he found a place to be alone. While he sat still, the Lord caused a plant to give him shade. In that moment Jonah remembered the Lord does answer prayer. Before he knew what to ask for, the Lord was at work restoring him, supplying what he'd need for the coming day. He was exceedingly glad because of the plant. It works this way for us, too. When we're spent and don't know how we'll complete our responsibilities, the Lord's already at work guiding our day. He gives sleep, daily bread, wisdom, and friends who help us keep perspective. You can be a person who trusts the Lord, even when you're exhausted. We rely on Him when things are stable, call on Him in every distress, and thank Him for every answered prayer.

We pray: Almighty God, you gave Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to take on flesh the same as ours. He knew the weakness of the body, the anguish of spirit, and endured this unstable world. Yet as our Savior and Lord, He speaks peace and it's given. He says "Come and find rest" and causes our rest. Bless us, dear Lord, with faith that You are already providing that which we need. Amen +

In serious need of repentance

Welcome to the Daily Word with Pastor Otto for Tuesday, April 21.

Episode 33

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's reading is [Luke 13:3-5](#)

Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will perish. Consider the eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and it killed them: do you think they were worse offenders than all the others in Jerusalem? No, I tell you. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." This is the Word of the Lord.

One of the best loved chapters in the Bible is Luke 15, where Jesus teaches the parable of the lost prodigal son. But the Jesus we meet in chapters 9-14 is a strict prophet. He confronts those who keep blaming others, without considering their own need for repentance. The ones who defend themselves as upright and just, most often are making *fools of themselves*. A man asks Jesus, "Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus scolds him for portraying his brother in a poor light, and coveting cash. Unless he repents, he'll die gripping a few coins he can't even spend. Others ask if it was fair or right for Pilate to exercise discipline in Galilee. Jesus holds up a mirror on their blame of the governor. Why spend emotion appraising someone else's sin, when their own sin merits the same condemnation? Jesus tells them, "Stop blaming others. Take a look at yourselves *and your own need for repentance*." They won't see holiness when they look in a mirror—they'll see a foolish, contrite person who needs forgiveness. This is why Luke, chapter 15 means so much, after six chapters of reflecting on the poor condition of our soul. We consider the prodigal son who spent his father's money, only to see that being right and independent came to nothing. He returns to his father, and to his surprise finds grace and a place at home. We won't find our place in the Father's house unless we first turn back toward home. Repent of things that will pass, and ask the Lord if you can move back in again.

We pray: Father, I have sinned against you and so many people. I haven't realized my own actions were selfish, and how I blamed others for my own situations. Please forgive me, and if you can use me in Your kingdom, I pray you'll make me into the person You want me to be. In Jesus' name. Amen +

The more you have, the more you share

Welcome to the Daily Word with Pastor Otto for Monday, April 20.

Episode 32

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's reading is Hebrews 13:1,5

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have. This is the Word of the Lord.

The less you have, the more you share. Could that be true? It may not be for all people, but there is some truth observing *the less you have, the more you share*. There's discontent due to the disparity between "haves" and "have nots." Those who have much are concerned with the proper way to share, and those who have less share because they have to. Many rely on the generosity of neighbors, and then share what comes their way. Maybe those who've known hunger can see it in the eyes of others? God's Word says our thoughts about money affect our willingness to share: *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have*. We're held captive if we covet, holding our money, afraid what would happen if we became poor. So we guard our storehouse, trusting at least we have enough for ourselves. But then, how do we respond to the Lord's teaching: *Don't neglect to show hospitality to strangers?* Some have needs today, and they will for the foreseeable future. Can we find a way to share? This calls for thoughtful giving. We offer tithes to the Lord, care for our family, and we can bless those who need hospitality. Perhaps we need to give first, then pray that God will supply our needs as well. Giving doesn't have to be done because of guilt, and it's downright joyful when we give out of love. You might even adopt a new saying: *The more you have, the more you share*.

We pray: Lord Jesus, You taught it's more blessed to give than receive. You raised the loaves to heaven and gave thanks for bread, then provided more than anyone expected. We pray to know the joy of having our needs met, so that our praise resounds with thankfulness. Amen +

St. Matthew



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+ + +

You remain in Christ.
You are baptized. The Lord
has given you His Spirit, so
even when everything is off
kilter you remain in Christ.
He is our strength when we
have none. May He give you
endurance, and restore you.
Amen.

MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

❖ *How to listen to Daily Word devotions*

The Daily Word devotions included in this newsletter are examples of what you can find every day on your phone, tablet, or computer. Since March 18th I've written a daily devotion for members of St. Matthew and recorded it. Daily Word is a three-minute podcast for you to listen to a Bible reading, reflection, and prayer.

You can get it on our website, www.GraceFaithLove.org, right on the front page. Look for the heading, *Listen to Pastors' Bible Studies and Devotions*. Where you see the description of Daily Word, click on the link provided: <https://anchor.fm/rev-craig-otto>. If you scroll down a bit, you'll see a picture of our church and you can click the Play arrow and it should start.

I'm blessed so many of you have found it encouraging, a blessing, and a source of prayer during our absence from church. If you have difficulty playing it I recommend you download *Spotify*, a free app from your App Store, so you can play it there.

In addition to finding Daily Word on our website, you can also find it on Facebook. Every day I post a new devotion to the St. Matthew Lutheran Church Facebook page, and also to my personal Facebook page.

Once you learn how to access one online resource like Daily Word, you'll find it easier to listen to the other Bible studies, devotions, and sermons that Pastor Andrews and I are making available.