

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

Note: the Pastors and our church secretary, Tamy, are working regular hours in the office: from 8:00-4:30 on Mon. – Thurs., and from 8-12 on Friday. Check the website and your emails for the latest updates. Thank you!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!

This will be a letter about unity in the church, a gift for us. It's also a letter recounting our recent experience and blessings. And finally, it's a letter about us being cared for by our Lord Jesus, who defends His Church and intercedes for us.

The last time we gathered in the Sanctuary for regular worship was Sunday, March 22. In the following weeks our county and state issued shelter-in-place orders for residents, and guidelines for businesses and organizations. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) began teaching the world about the novel coronavirus, described as a pandemic, and urged citizens to practice social distancing and pay attention to personal sanitary practices such as washing hands and wearing masks.

The response of St. Matthew has been typical of all religious institutions, which has been to respect the guidelines out of love for our neighbors. Not knowing how quickly the virus might spread, or whether clusters of people could become infected, businesses and entertainment venues and churches closed their doors to the gatherings we are accustomed to.

Our Board of Elders has met several times over these two months to discuss congregational care, worship, and activities. While the Elders are a group of 12—each having a variety of experience to draw upon—they were able to make decisions in the interest of the safety of our members, and to ensure we maintain a public witness to the Gospel.

The Pastors prepared weekly worship in the Sanctuary and recorded it for you to see, posted on the front page of our website. We each produced audio podcasts for the congregation to listen to daily, showing how to access these through emails and on the website. We continue to broadcast Bible studies using interactive video conferencing, so Wednesday and Sunday mornings our members can see each other, study Scripture, and pray together. Pastor Andrews finished confirmation classes for Grades 5-8 online, and has posted several Facebook updates on what we are doing as a congregation.

The church has received many thanks from the congregation for arranging online worship that members can participate in at home. Each week we provide an order of worship above the video that can be printed out or viewed on an electronic device. We led Divine Services in an empty Sanctuary five weeks, including services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, and Ascension Day. Also, the pastors arranged to offer Holy Communion to those requesting it by appointment.

Two weeks ago we received permission to gather in groups of ten, so the Pastors held 12 worship services May 16-17 (four on Saturday, eight on Sunday). Then we received permission to gather in larger groups, so we held four services last weekend in the Family Life Center, where the chairs can easily be sanitized and we could spread out. *We invite you to return when you are ready.*

Thank you—to all of you—for learning as best as possible to receive electronic communication, to keep one another posted on news and prayer requests, and for finding new ways to give offerings to the Lord. Overall, our congregation has shown a healthy response to a challenging time.

Members of St. Matthew shared a variety of responses to the situation, which are reflective of the society

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as a whole, and after hearing suggestions we could only steer the ship in one direction. Our Board of Directors, Board of Elders, and Pastors have listened and made decisions in a timely way to continue Word and Sacrament ministry during COVID-19 times, and to make the safety of our people, our staff, and our neighbors a significant priority.

Bless you for your quiet confidence that we as Christians can depend on the Lord at all times, that we will patiently wait for better circumstances to meet, and for your visible acts of caring for others simply because you saw a need and met it.

Such unity is a gift. We can't manufacture unity or pretend it's there when it's not, but we recognize unity when we see it in action.

Many thanks to the volunteer hours offered by members of the congregation to sustain the work of the church we carry out here.

Many thanks to you who have prayed for each other, prayed for the pastors, and prayed for your own families through this pandemic.

Your prayers never fall on deaf ears. Our Father invites us to call upon Him in every trouble... our Savior even now is an advocate for you, whom He bought with His own blood... and the Holy Spirit intercedes when our prayers are like groans that have no words.

In Jesus' prayer found in the Gospel of John, chapters 16 and 17, He prays that we be one, even as He is one with the Father. It's a beautiful truth we can take to heart. *Jesus prays for our unity, that we may know we are always with Him and the Father.*

During these months we pastors have followed our disciplines of personal devotions, drinking from the fountain of God's Word so we have living water to give you. Along with the Elders, we've sought to maintain contact with members, especially responding to immediate needs that arose. It's been a joy to serve together as pastors of this congregation.

We look forward to seeing all of you in person. In the meantime, we know we're in the care of the Great Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Otto

Worship in person or at home

We are now gathering for worship in the Family Life Center on Saturday at 3:00 and 5:00, and Sunday at 8:00 and 10:45. You need to sign up to attend church since we are limiting attendance to 65 people per service.

- To sign up please go to our website and see the instructions on our home page. You may also call Tamy in the Church Office at 524-7068.
- We are following careful practices of social distancing and sanitizing to provide a safe setting.
- Watch worship from home: We still record weekly worship and post it online (see video below).

To attend Sunday morning Bible study in person please call Tamy in the Church Office.

- We are now meeting in person for Sunday morning Bible study in the Family Life Center at 9:30 a.m.
- Watch Bible class from home: We still share Sunday morning Bible study live using Webex. You'll find the link to participate in the weekly email we send to homes.

❖ 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.

❖ Sewing Group

The St. Matthew Sewing Group will not meet in June. However, **we are in need of new people 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.

❖ 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.

❖ The June Mission Minute

The May 9th food drive for Coldwater was a smashing success! Love how we are able to touch so many lives with care and the sharing of our blessings! Many, many thanks to those who participated with either food or monetary donations! All Glory to GOD!

Mission Challenge—This week's challenge is one of prayer-it is so powerful. Pray for our leaders, that they would be guided in the right course of action going forward. Pray for our communities as they open up, that everyone would show concern and care for each other by following the guidelines and recommendations put in place. Pray for those affected by loneliness and anxiety, that God would be close to them and ease their fears. Pray for St. Matthew as we begin to open up for worship together, that it may go well and we will be able to continue. Many thanks for the great efforts of our Pastors and all who are working so tirelessly to meet the needs of our congregation-even more so during these times. Blessings to all of you!

Ideas for outreach activities? Please let me know!

Annie Femrite, Member at Large-Missions annfemrite@sbcglobal.net

❖ 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.

❖ Altar Guild

The Altar Guild members will meet on Saturday, June 8 at 10 am. in the Library to discuss the new member campaign. Please contact Deb Langsdale if you have the passion for service to our church in the care of the Sanctuary or attend our meeting for more details!

❖ Classics Gathering

We are pleased that Worship Services have started again, with needed changes to accommodate our members' well-being. We would dearly love to resume Classics events and renew the fellowship and sense of community this group has enjoyed for these many years. But safeguarding our members' health has to be the paramount concern. Due a number of factors, we believe the prudent course of action is to cancel Classics for the Summer months and focus on finding an effective way to resume, possibly as early as September.

❖ LWML Women in Mission

Benefit for Rachel House—The St. Matthew Mission Committee and Lutheran Women in Mission are cosponsoring a drive to benefit Rachel House May 24 through July 1, 2020. Both disposable diapers (sizes 1 and 2) and monetary donations are being collected in the church narthex. You can participate by bringing diapers and/or by filling a baby bottle with coins, currency or a check and returning it to the display. If you prefer, a check or cash may be placed in an envelope labelled "Rachel House" and sent to St. Matthew.

Rachel House helps meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of both women and men dealing with unplanned pregnancies. 2019 Stats and News: Over 2,605 Pregnancy Tests • 1,744 Ultrasounds • 5,882 Women and Men served in Education • 469 Fatherhood Clients • More than 2,088 Gospel Presentations.

2020 LWML Missouri District Convention. The physical gathering was cancelled; however, much of the convention will be accessible at www.missourilwml.org beginning Saturday, June 13 and beyond. There will be links to the keynote speaker's presentation, Bible study, YWR presentation, etc. Delegates voted electronically for mission grants and officers on June 1.

❖ LWML Mites Mission Grant

LWML Grant #10: Trinity Lutheran School, in Mobile AL, is a stronghold of Christ centered education in a community dealing with inter-generational poverty and the challenges of urban living. They serve 200 students from infants through fifth grade, and reaches another 45 students daily from four public schools through its afterschool program and Good News Bible Club. Daily prayer, chapel, and devotions help children, many from unchurched homes, develop spiritually in knowing God loves them. The LWML grant fund of \$58,000 will purchase a handicapped accessible church bus for school children, elders, neighbors, and church members to participate in church and school ministries. Praise God!

❖ Church Property Maintenance

There are a number of small projects that can be worked on around the exterior of the church, while keeping a safe distance from others. I'm looking for folks that might be interested in taking on one or two of these tasks. If you are interested, please contact Craig Elwell at: 816-616-3753 or by email at: acelwell54@gmail.com.

St. Matthew



Lutheran Church
700 NE Chipman Rd.
Lee's Summit, MO 64063
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May the God of hope fill
you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him, so
that you may overflow
with hope by the power
of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

JUNE 2020 NEWSLETTER

❖ Worship in person

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