

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

The Christian Gospel When You Are. . . *Afraid*

I'm not afraid, I'm just... It's not that I can't go out, it's that... You want to hear what I saw on TV last week, it was horrible... I can't abide when other people... What a new and icky place we've found ourselves in. It's a worldwide conversation about coronavirus, our response to it, politics and social angst, and our own personal experience of frustrating interactions with services that used to be fairly reliable.

And there's this: withdrawal; antipathy toward others; impatience; depression, fatigue, lost days and weeks. Worry, and talking about whatever comes up, being unhappy many days and not wanting to talk about *that*. Addictive behavior is numbing and we know it's useless at the same time. Our worst features are just out there: passive aggressive behavior and comments, ranting, repeating how bad others are whom we find so disagreeable... our self-righteousness is ugly.

That side of our life is killing us, and the world's upheaval due to the coronavirus pandemic will not go away—it will just keep adding layers. “When this is over” is not going to happen. The yarn is unraveled. The glass bowl is broken.

I have good news for you who are... afraid. *And you are.* The Christian gospel is the most important thing for you to hear and receive. It will allow you to process this awful experience, so this unraveling we're living through will not destroy you.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is more important than your coronavirus vaccine. The gospel is more important than any job or dreams or comfortableness. The gospel is way more important than getting back to doing stuff you used to like to do. *The Christian gospel* is that God gave His only-begotten Son to become flesh like us, to bear human suffering like us, and to bear the guilt of our sick society—present company included.

Jesus was pegged from the beginning as authoritative and merciful. God-like qualities indeed, for He is God. Yet He came for the critical episode of being cancelled by His culture. He was publicly shamed and told He was worthless. Some even spat their spit on his face.

Some of the people whom Jesus came to serve refused to listen when He said: “The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the gospel.” But He kept telling so each person in a crowd might rethink their self reliance and admit, “I need this. I'm not doing fine.” He told those who gathered the Father cares for them. He scolded them for worry, telling them not to be anxious. This reminder about the Father's care was good to hear, because they lived in fear of others much of the time.

Continued...

The Father's care—*evangelion*—is good news. Jesus gave blessings, forgiveness, grace, time, pardon, mercy, wholeness, saving... and most who received Him in person were taken aback by the whole thing. He was saying what they'd been hoping to hear one day. It was like being told they would be okay... really okay. He was giving His word.

Did they need this approval or blessing? Weren't they okay already? Who needs saving? You know just as well as them. Life is very hard, full of difficulty, new trials every day, and it's hard to deal with so much change and sickness and when bad things happen. You wonder if there's any purpose to it—you know, living. You ask if you're worth anything. It could make a person depressed, even despair, even withdraw, even check out.

When Jesus was presented next to the Roman governor on the dais, both dressed in royal colors, Jesus looked every bit the poor haggard criminal. He'd been beaten, bruises made his face swollen, and he was covered head to foot in blood. Easy for some to dismiss him as just one more piece of dirt to sweep away, but there had to be some in the crowd thinking enough is enough... that Pilate and the soldiers had overdone their cruelty once again.

We eye Jesus and it's hard to look away. It is for us a moment of solidarity. A deal is being made. We concede we may have something to learn here. He is the Son of God, yet treated like we often are... so this Son of God is actually someone I can relate to.

His own quote: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Saved through him... from what?

We're afraid it's all for nothing, and the pandemic has just gutted the life out of everything we used to find meaningful. We can't hug, touch, shake hands, gather as family. Our social groups dried up, and we have no guarantee they'll ever reconvene. Everything is harder, group events will never be the same, and we're afraid of what we're becoming as a society. You're afraid and it's making you anxious. You're open to hearing something good.

I have good news for you. Jesus shed his blood as the deal to atone for sinful humanity, to make a road possible for all to find forgiveness, hope, and the good God who made us. We get sidetracked and start thinking the worst problems are because of all those other horrible sinful people, and we're angry about them, and upset that "because of others" our life has wheeled to a halt like a train. It's not them. It's all of us, sinners dying, *yet wanting not to*.

The best thing we can do is look at Christ on the cross: "This was necessary? I needed saving? He had to die, be crucified, for me? Oh, how focused on my own life I've been. O Lord, O Lord, show mercy my way. Please. Show mercy. Please. Just please."

And our risen Lord Jesus stands, not in a bone box, but He stands alive in the flesh. I am your shepherd. I am your resurrection. I am your forgiver. I am the love you sought, the meaning you craved, the one hearing you pray all these years. Come and eat, and rest +

Peace in Him, Pastor Otto

❖ Altar Guild — *New Volunteers Needed*

The Altar Guild will meet on Saturday, March 13 at 10 a.m. in the Family Life Center. We will finalize the Holy Week and Easter services and continue review of additional items to be purchased with the memorial funds.

We are also looking for women in the congregation who are thinking about how they can serve our Lord and our congregation in service on the Altar Guild. Please join us for an easy way to merge your talents with service in a quiet, behind-the-scenes group with lots of great teamwork and mentoring. This is also a wonderful way for younger girls to be an intern to discover what might suit them in the future — both in the Altar Guild and LWML groups!

Next time you're touched by the seasonal praise banners, a floral arrangement on the Altar, or the beauty of taking Communion, think about how you can participate in this personal relationship with our triune God in His service. It's life changing! Call or email Deb Langsdale or Pastor Otto if you want more information, or just show up! Hope to see you there!

❖ Easter Lilies & Spring Flowers

The Altar Guild is purchasing 16 Lilies and 24 Spring Flowers this year to adorn the Family Life Center for Easter. If you would like to purchase or sponsor one of these beautiful plants, please sign up to do so on the sign-up sheet at the entrance of the Family Life Center or call the church office and let Tamy know. The cost of the lilies or springs flowers will be \$12.00 per plant. Please place your payment in the envelope hanging below the sign up sheet or mail it to the Altar Guild in care of the church. Checks are to be made out to "St Matthew Altar Guild". Plants may be taken home after the 10:45 Easter worship service. Thank you!

❖ Lydia Circle

Our group has been largely inactive during the COVID lockdown, although we did participate in the "jar recipe" project before Christmas. We were planning to get together for lunch in February to mark our annual reveal of our secret prayer sisters but Mother Nature had other ideas. Due to cold and ice we canceled and hope to reschedule soon.

❖ Mary Martha Circle

Mary Martha Circle of LWML met on January 26. Pastor Andrews led a Bible study on the book of Revelation, we packed 17 Valentine boxes for students away from home, and we planned for our Soup Sale to be held on February 20 & 21. There will be no meeting in February. We plan to meet again on Tuesday, March 30. Watch for e-mails with more info in March. Joy in Jesus!!

❖ Our March LWML Grant

Grant #19—Making Jesus Known in the US Ethnic Communities at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Across the country, in both rural and urban areas, there are passionately devoted first-generation immigrants serving in full-time ministry positions who share the Gospel among their immigrant/ethnic communities. A number of these dedicated church workers are students enrolled in two programs at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis: the **Center for Hispanic Studies (CHS)** and the **Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT)**. This grant will give financial assistance to meet their tuition needs.

❖ Classics

In the interests of member safety, we have postponed Classics through at least April, 2021. We look forward to resuming Classics gatherings when we are able to do so safely.

❖ 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.

❖ Service / Mission Opportunity — *Tiny homes speaker*

Vincent Morales, one of the founders of the Veteran's Community Project KC, will be doing a presentation on **March 6 at 6:15 pm** (after the 5:00 pm service). This organization, among other things, builds tiny homes for Veterans in our community. He will have a short slideshow and talk about his organization and how we as a congregation can get involved in supporting them. Please plan on being there! This is a great opportunity to learn about something going on in our own backyard and hear of ways we can interact with our greater Kansas City community and point others to Christ. (It will also be recorded and available to watch on YouTube if you are unable to attend.)

❖ Christ Cares for Children Kenya

St. Matthew Lutheran now sponsors four young ladies with Christ's Care for Children, Kenya; Mildred, Jedida, Sheila and Nancy! There are photos and a brief biography on each girl in a red binder on the table in the FLC. I am awaiting new sponsor packets which will contain information on interacting with them and more information on the program, Project 24. I will be placing these in the binder as well. You can learn more and follow their progress and activities on Facebook by searching for **Project24Kenya**. I encourage you all to get to know these young ladies and keep them in your prayers. I will be receiving newsletters and updates throughout the year on all 4 of them, so keep checking the binder! So exciting to watch God work in their lives!

❖ African Radio Ministries Update

The latest ARM newsletter is in the yellow binder, but here is an excerpt that particularly pertains to St. Matthew—it is specifically because of our financial support that this new program addition is possible! Praise be to GOD!

“Radio Pastor Mengistu is requesting that before the end of this year ARM add a program for the Tigray people. We replied that he should begin looking for a radio Pastor right away. Join the Ethiopian staff in praying that a good preacher with a true servant's heart can be found for this new program. The Tigray are located in Eritrea as well as northern Ethiopia. It will be wonderful to send words of hope to the Eritreans who are suffering greatly under the anti-Christian dictatorship now in place.”

❖ Lee's Summit North Food Pantry Collection

The Mission Board will once again collect items for the food pantry at Lee's Summit North High School. Any contribution, monetary gift, or gift card is greatly appreciated. Please place donated items in the shopping cart located in the entryway of the Family Life Center. Items requested include: canned corn/peas, canned beans, canned stew/beef vegetable soup, 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.

St. Matthew



Lutheran Church
700 NE Chipman Rd.
Lee's Summit, MO 64063
Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PERMIT NO. 84
LEE'S SUMMIT, MO

Regular Worship Times

5:00 Saturday

8:00 Sunday

10:45 Sunday

Welcome!

MARCH NEWSLETTER - 2021

❖ Lent & Easter Service Times

Our 2021 Lenten series is "Return to the Lord." These services are **every Wednesday at 4:00 and 7:30 p.m.** and also livestreamed from the home page of our website. *Come home to your congregation, your place to hear the Lord call you to discipleship. The Lord remains in control of all things, and invites us to return.*

Midweek 2 (Mar 3) – Return from Betrayal

Midweek 3 (Mar 10) – Return from False Witness

Midweek 4 (Mar 17) – Return from Denial

Midweek 5 (Mar 24) – Return to the Kingdom of God

Maundy Thursday (Apr 1) – Return to the Table 7:00 p.m. only. Includes stripping the altar at the end.

Good Friday (Apr 2) – Return to Truth 12:00 noon and 7:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday (Apr 4) – Return and See 7:30 and 10:45 a.m.

❖ Missing Being Here in Person? Pastors Are Still Giving Private Communion

All along during coronavirus, the pastors have been providing Holy Communion in a brief devotional service to members of the congregation. A family or individual sets up an appointment, and we meet in the Sanctuary. Masks are worn. The pastor vests, sets up Holy Communion so you only pick up the elements, and we pray together. If you're still unsure about being in a crowd, this may be a way you can start returning.

❖ Bo Giertz Devotional Book, "To Live with Christ"

Around three dozen of you have a copy of Giertz's Lutheran devotion book. If you're following, we're on page 204, The Second Sunday of Lent, on Sunday, Feb. 28. If you're interested in a hardback copy, let me know. If you like electronic versions, you can buy a copy from Kindle or other services. *Pastor Otto*