

# 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

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❖ Pastor's Message

*Rev. Steven Andrews, Jr.*

## The Chosen: A Pastor's Review

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In 2017, a group of Christians led by Dallas Jenkins launched a crowdfunded (paid for entirely by donations) project to create a new TV series about Jesus. Eight episodes aired, and then things went quiet for a while. But as 2021 rolled around, season 2 made its debut on Easter Sunday. Each season has raised ten million dollars, and the plan is to produce five more seasons in the future.

Over the past month, several members of the congregation have asked me for my thoughts on "The Chosen." I missed it when it came out a few years ago, so I didn't have much to say about it, other than that I've been hearing good things from many places. But it seemed like a good time to give the show a look.

Before we dig into the show itself, let's take a quick reflection on the people making it, as that helps us see how their perspective influences their work. Dallas Jenkins is working through VidAngel, now Angel Studios, which is a company owned and operated by the Latter-Day Saints to make family-friendly programs. Dallas appeared on the podcast "All in: an LDS Living Podcast," in an episode titled "Dallas Jenkins: Behind the Scenes of 'The Chosen.'" There he told the host, "one thing that is unabashedly true and unarguably true is that in getting to know some of my LDS friends here on this, especially through 'The Chosen,' you're passionate about Jesus Christ, and it's Jesus of Nazareth." But, the LCMS position is that the LDS does worship a different Jesus than we do. We don't just have theological differences, we aren't even worshipping the same God. Learning that before ever turning on the show, well, it's not a good start.

I do appreciate that the show begins with a line saying, "Viewers are encouraged to read the gospels." That's probably the best way to watch "The Chosen," is to actually read God's Word, and compare it to the show. Where do they differ? What did they do well? What artistic license did they use that made you consider something in a new way? I'll use these three questions to share with you a few of the things I've observed now that I've watched the first four episodes.

*Minor spoilers ahead.*

### **Where do they differ?**

This is probably the most important section. A production like this puts God's Word into pictures, and let's be honest, we 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans love pictures. This presents a great danger, because if the pictures depicted are false, even slightly differing from what is actually contained in the Bible, then the show could possibly cause you to read God's Word falsely moving forward.

The main problem early in the series is that the writers can't unthink American culture. They have recreated the Biblical world to be one that's experienced a feminist movement of its own. Mary Magdalene owns her own home. She leads a group of men and women in Scripture reading and prayer (this would be normal for many Christian churches that teach women can be ordained and hold such positions of authority). Simon's wife, Eden (she is never named in Scripture), chastises him, tells him "You can't tell me what I can or can't do," and throws him out of the house for the night. None of these things would've been thinkable in 1<sup>st</sup> century Judea.

*Continued >>*

By my recollection, you have to get near the end of episode four before you see the show attempt to tackle depicting a scene from the Bible, everything else up to that point is filler to support the story. From John 1:40-42, Andrew hears first of Jesus from John the Baptist, and then goes to his brother Simon and brings him along to meet Jesus. In the show, though, when Andrew tries, Simon argues against him, calls John the Baptist “Creepy John,” and doesn’t go to see Jesus. The second such scene appears shortly after, with Jesus granting Simon a miraculous catch of fish and then calling him to be a fisher of men. This is recorded in Luke 5. However, Jesus in the show uses very different words than He does in Scripture. I can’t imagine a good reason for a screenwriter to do this.

#### **What did they do well?**

Any project like this has the very difficult task of recreating the setting. You have to study Jewish and Greco-Roman writings, consulting with various different groups, all trying to put together towns, homes, clothing, etc., that look like they are from that time and place. For the most part, I believe they’ve done this part quite well. The homes are depicted larger than they likely were, and I can’t believe that a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish fisherman and his bride would have a four-poster king sized bed, since we have no known mention of such a bed existing prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Another difficult challenge in our age of moving pictures and entertainment buffets on demand, is to make a show that will keep people watching. They’ve succeeded in this. It’s definitely a watchable show, and the actors do their jobs very well.

#### **What artistic license did they use that made you consider something in a new way?**

My personal favorite, so far, is the extra-Biblical scene where Jesus heals Mary of her demon possession (Luke 8:2). The way the scene plays out does a great job of foreshadowing His appearance to her on Easter in John 20 when she mistakes Him for the gardener.

Another simple one that got me thinking was how they depicted Jesus living and sleeping as He traveled. Suddenly, I found myself wondering who cared for His mother Mary during the three years of His ministry.

And a last note, I think they’ve painted a very believable picture of how the Jews would have treated Matthew, one of their own, who had taken on the job of collecting taxes for Rome.

I’ll keep watching, cautiously. My impression so far is that if you want to watch this show, do so the same way you would any other, with discerning eyes and ears. See the accounts of Scripture they are showing you, and go, read the account in the Bible. And where they get it right, enjoy it. Where they fail, stick to God’s Word. While it doesn’t get a ringing endorsement from me, this show is making its impression on many Christians in our community, and likely non-Christians as well, so it’s good to know how to talk it through together. If you’d like to see my notes and reflections when I’m done, just let me know and I’ll be glad to share and talk them through together.

God’s blessings,  
Rev. Steve Andrews Jr.

### **St. Matthew Safety Recommendations — June 2021**

Our St. Matthew Board of Directors met Tues., May 18, to consider recent Covid-19 safety recommendations from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control). The following protocol is adopted for worship and congregational life beginning June 1.

#### **Thoughts on St. Matthew Practices**

1. Our Christian faith community engages with people in all circumstances. While the Church adheres to a common confession regarding beliefs, it is not a homogenous group. Its members do not share the same experiences, opportunities, or views as one another. Our goal is to provide a ministry of Word and Sacrament, which always occurs in challenging times.
2. Integration is the reality for any congregation. There will always be vaccinated and unvaccinated members and visitors together. Our new guidelines reflect this goal.
3. Covid-19 is in early stages of research regarding cause, transmission, and short- and long-term effects. We cannot be overconfident in our assessment of the disease or the social situation surrounding it. Both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals engage some level of risk.
4. Vaccinations are available for measles, mumps, rubella, shingles, herpes, chicken pox, flu, covid, smallpox, malaria, and other diseases. Individuals may receive or decline these for any reason.
5. Individuals make their own health care decisions according to personal need, the counsel of those in the medical community, and conscience.

#### **St. Matthew Recommendations — June, 2021**

In accordance with May 2021 guidelines released by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and the Jackson County Health Department, **masking and social distancing are no longer required for individuals who are fully vaccinated** for gatherings of any size indoors or outdoors. This takes effect at St. Matthew June 1, 2021.

1. Out of concern for our members and visitors, especially those most at risk (elderly, immune-compromised, those with respiratory illness, etc.) our Board of Directors encourages those who gather to follow CDC guidelines for disease prevention.
2. The CDC recommends that those who have not been fully vaccinated continue to wear a mask when participating in worship and activities at church for their own protection.
3. The CDC recommends quarantine (refraining from public activities for 14 days) for those who have not been vaccinated and experience symptoms of Covid-19 or are exposed to someone recently diagnosed with Covid-19.
4. All members and visitors are encouraged to show care and consideration for others regarding handshakes, hugs, and personal contact. Some members and visitors will refrain from these.
5. Some who have received the vaccine will continue to wear a mask for personal safety.

## ❖ Altar Guild

The Altar Guild will meet Saturday, June 12 at 10 a.m. in the Narthex or FLC — depending on space available. We will continue discussion on our memorial purchases, our summer schedule and projects and our new member recruitment. *Please join us if you're interested in finding out more about how you can serve on the Altar Guild! We need women who can help the congregation prepare for worship, including the preparation of Holy Communion each week, changing paraments, etc.*

## ❖ Classics

It's getting closer! We're hoping for further downward trends of new COVID-19 cases, and increased availability of vaccines. With that in mind, and in the interest of member safety, our group is focusing on resuming *Classics* this Fall, perhaps as early as September. Stay tuned... and stay well!

## ❖ LWML 2021 Convention

[Running the Race...Looking to Jesus!](#) — The LWML 39th Biennial Convention, June 24-27, 2021, in Lexington, KY, will be an in-person rally. Go to [www.lwml.org](http://www.lwml.org) for more information.

## ❖ LWML

Society officers were elected and installed at the May Society meeting. Newly elected vice president, Eunice Brown, and secretary, Marilyn Stelljes, will be serving with president, Jean Stubbs, and treasurer, Patty Bechel, during the coming year. Members are preparing for the Fall LWML KC South Zone Rally which will be held on Tuesday, October 26, 2021 at St. Matthew.

## ❖ Mary Martha Circle

Mary Martha Circle met on Tues. May 25. We had Bible Study, a brief business meeting, and installation of Vice Pres. Christy Chambers and Treasurer, Patty Bechel. Our next meeting is scheduled for June 29. Please plan to join us.

## ❖ Baby Bottle and Diaper Drive

We are holding a fundraiser May 9 through June 20, 2021. Our Missions Committee, along with Lutheran Women in Mission, are jointly sponsoring a drive for Resource Health Services (formerly known as Rachel House). Members of the congregation are invited to donate Size 1 diapers. *We are also distributing baby bottles so you can fill them with coins, currency, or checks.* See the display in the lobby of the Family Life Center. Resource Health Services is located here in Lee's Summit. It is a pregnancy resource center. RHS helps meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those dealing with unplanned pregnancies, which includes the entire family system of the one who is expecting.

## ❖ Stamps for Missions: *Don't throw those cancelled stamps away!*

St. Matthew members, please save cancelled stamps and place them in the mailbox to the left of the bulletin boxes in the narthex or give them to an LWML member. Save stamps valued between 1 and 55 cents, except, do NOT save flag stamps or Christmas stamps. Tear the stamp from the envelope, leaving a minimum ¼" margin; a volunteer will trim them more carefully later. Since the LWML Missouri District initiated this project in late 90's, the sale of these stamps has earned the District over \$16,000.00.

## ❖ 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](mailto:cammac2@swbell.net) or 816-763-4535.

## ❖ How We're Spreading the Gospel in Nigeria and Kenya from Here

Christ Cares for Children Kenya—Our congregation currently 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 have updated each girl's section with information and a letter from her to our congregation. There is also information in the binder regarding ways for our members to correspond with these young ladies to encourage and support them. Please take time to look through the red binder and get to know them. You can also follow them on Facebook by searching up Project 24-Kenya.

Update from African Radio Ministries—The May ARM newsletter is in the yellow binder. Please take a moment to read through these letters and learn how African Radio Ministries is reaching the lost with the greatest news of all—salvation through Christ! You can follow them online at [africanradioministries.com](http://africanradioministries.com)

## ❖ June Mission Minute

June is typically a time for weddings. I personally know of four couples with a June wedding anniversary. Weddings symbolize a new adventure, a continuation of this life's journey with a partner—your helpmate. At a wedding, a new family begins.

Family is one of the greatest gifts God has given us. Family is there to support, guide, comfort, love, and nurture us throughout our lives. However, with all the blessings of love and support our families provide, there are some things they are powerless to “fix.” There are some wounds they can't heal for us, and some paths they can't travel with us.

Here is where we take comfort in knowing that God holds us. He promises to always walk with us through our darkest struggles, carrying us when it seems we can't go on. We trust him to give us the courage, support, strength, and hope to persevere.

Pray for families you know... all who are going through their own struggles. Pray that they would seek God's help and support as they battle demons. There is true power in prayer. In a time when the world seems to be winning at every turn, God is for us.

*Annie Femrite, Member at Large, Missions, [annfemrite@sbcglobal.net](mailto:annfemrite@sbcglobal.net)*

## ❖ St. Matthew Sewing Group now meeting

The Sewing Group at St. Matthew will once again be meeting on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month at 12:30 p.m. in the Library area. Please come join us!

## ❖ Lee's Summit North Food Pantry Collection — On hold until Fall

We will not be collecting for Lee's Summit North during the summer months. We will resume the collection next fall. Thanks to everyone who donated food items during the school year!

## ❖ Preschool News

St. Matthew Preschool would like to thank all who participated in the prayer/pen pal program with our graduating preschoolers. It was a great success and the students really enjoyed it. We are done for this school year, but will have a new group of Pre-K students next fall who will need lots of prayers. It will go from September to May this next school year. Preschool has filled all teaching positions for the fall 2021-2022 school year. We are still accepting applications for Substitute Teachers. Our enrollment is currently at half capacity, but we are praying to be full by the time school starts at the end of August 2021. We would appreciate prayers and family referrals to the preschool.

# St. Matthew



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## **New Sunday Bible Study**

### Wilderness Wanderings

Pastor Otto leads us in readings from Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, showing how God's people hold together in difficult times.

Coffee, juice and donuts are now a regular part of our 9:30 Bible study time.

## JUNE NEWSLETTER - 2021

### ❖ June Service/Mission Opportunity

Joseph from Glory House KC will be coming to do our June Mission presentation after the Saturday service on June 19<sup>th</sup>. Please plan to attend and learn more about how Glory House KC supports and cares for people in Northern Haiti and how we can in turn support them. The brief presentation begins at 6:15 pm. Our congregation has purchased 36 rolling suitcases for Glory House KC in support of their efforts and I am awaiting shipping confirmation to their location in Independence. If you have an organization in mind that could be our July Mission Presentation, please let me know so I can reach out to them and get it set up. I am wanting to do at least one per month.

### ❖ Our Pro Deo Learning Garden — *St. Matthew volunteers are needed*

Do you enjoy gardening? Are you interested in mentoring others to enjoy gardening? The Pro Deo-Rotary Club Learning Garden at St. Matthew is a way to connect *what you like to do* with what teens in our community need to learn—life skills. You can help with oversight for the care, maintenance and beautification of the garden. For more information, contact Jan Nelson, garden coordinator and Pro Deo Youth Center board member at [jannelson5@gmail.com](mailto:jannelson5@gmail.com), or call her at 816-590-9558. You may also reach out to Joyce Martin, [martin2649@sbcglobal.net](mailto:martin2649@sbcglobal.net), 816-350-1773, who is a member of St. Matthew.

### ❖ Groundbreaking for our New Addition!

Come join us Sunday, June 6, at 9:30 a.m. for the groundbreaking of our new Administrative wing. After prayers, a hymn, and a few words from the building committee, we'll return to the Family Life Center for coffee, juice, donuts, and fellowship. The remainder of the education hour will also be used for Pastor Otto's new Bible Study, Wilderness Wanderings.