

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

You go through seasons in your life when you ask, “What can I do with my time now?”

For some of you, that’s after you retire from your full-time employment. For some, it’s recognizing you want things to do outside of work and family life—that you somehow want to be involved in something that serves people.

There are areas where you can volunteer here at church, such as serving on a board or committee. Some are involved in Altar Guild, who regularly clean the Sanctuary and prepare Holy Communion. Some volunteer to keep the grounds clean, to do fix-it work, and do “everyday tasks”—little things that they realized someone needs to take care of. We have many, many volunteers who do small things that bless others. They do so with a good heart.

There’s something new on the horizon, too. We’re forming a new group in the Kansas City area of volunteers who can do projects as needed. It began as a ministry to quickly respond to disasters (helping others after damage from flood, tornado, or hurricane) and has now become something more... something that brings together a team of people who look to our local community and ask, “What can we do here? What needs to be done? Who needs help, who are not able to get something done by themselves?”

We’re hoping to build a Kansas City LERT team of people from churches in the entire area. What’s LERT? It stands for Lutheran Early Response Team, and there’s a network of LERT crews throughout the United States that are trained to deploy to natural disasters and provide meaningful aid, including spiritual care, feeding those who are displaced, and listening to people’s stories.

Not only do LERT teams go places, they also gather people from a congregation into a helpful team that can help out at our members’ homes, or to address a local community issue and provide the manpower.

If you would be interested in using your time to do something good, we’re building a new team right now. We’re even providing training right here at St. Matthew at the end of January. Men, women, and youth can all find themselves doing useful things that bless others. Read the article below, and see if this might be a season you’d like to become involved.

Pastor Otto

❖ **Disaster Response Training at St. Matthew — *Saturday, January 27***

We are hosting a Disaster Response Training workshop from LERT (Lutheran Emergency Response Teams) here at St. Matthew on Saturday, January 27th, from 9:00 a.m. through 3:00 p.m.

Once you complete this training, you’ll be FEMA badged and certified to serve if some disaster strikes in any community across the country. Note that serving does not mean you have to do manual labor, as there are many other quiet and helpful ways to serve on the St. Matthew team.

LERT also provides numerous opportunities where willing servants can help others during during non-disaster times; for instance, some teams have recently built wheel chair ramps, updated homes with more accessible bathrooms, and much more.

If you are interested, there are a few ways to sign up. You can click on the link which is included in our weekly St. Matthew church email, in the announcement regarding LERT training. Or, you can reach out to Tom Keel, a member of St. Matthew, to learn more. His contact information is: 816-213-5665 or twk500@gmail.com. Note: St. Matthew will be covering the cost of training for our members! *We ask that you register by January 10 if possible.* Thank you!

❖ Altar Guild — *Donate flowers for the altar in 2024*

The new 2024 Flower Chart is on the bulletin board in the narthex. You may write your name in to sponsor flowers to be placed on the altar for particular weekends. After the service, you may take your flowers home. We can have up to three (3) arrangements signed up for on any given Sunday. The cost is \$25.00 per arrangement. Please place your payment in the little box below the chart. Thank you!

❖ Classics — *We are not meeting in January*

Our December gathering was another fun time for *Classics*. Along with the great food folks brought, we had our main course of ham provided by *Classics*. Add to that the wonderful music of *Sounds of Summit*, including the Partridge and his accomplices. Best of all was the fellowship with dear friends. Note: we will not be having a *Classics* meal in the month of January, but we will resume gathering for our potluck meal on February 1, 2024.

❖ LWML Mites Mission Grant — *Lutheran Braille Workers-\$100,000*

The mission we focus on this month is Lutheran Braille Workers (LBW). LBW reaches out to the millions of individuals with visual impairment to strengthen their Christian faith by helping them access Scripture-based reading materials. This grant will provide LBW with the opportunity to produce and add to their library 50 to 100 Scripture-based topical materials in Braille and specialized large print. Since LBW works with every Christian denomination, these materials are available at no cost to all visually impaired regardless of faith or belief.

❖ Sewing Group

The sewing group will meet in the library area at church on the first and third Mondays of each month. We're always looking for more volunteers! Contact Linda Patterson at 816-820-4464 or Marilyn Heineman at 816-729-7260 for more information.

❖ St. Matthew Preschool News — *Sign up to be a Prayer Partner with a child*

St Matthew Preschool will once again be hosting Prayer Partners. We will have a sign-up sheet and donation box available shortly after we get back from Christmas Break. Prayer Partners pray, share a letter once a month, and purchase a Bible (\$15) for a student who will be graduating Pre-K in May. Our graduating students will write their prayer partner back once a month. We currently have about 40 children who will graduate.

❖ Directing Your "Thrivent Choice Dollars" — *Support Church or Preschool*

Thrivent Financial Members are eligible to donate Thrivent Choice Dollars to many charitable organizations. Choice Dollars are made available to Thrivent members based on insurance premiums and certain investment products offered by Thrivent. Members can allocate their accumulated Choice Dollars annually, and the deadline is March 31.

If you have accumulated Choice Dollars, there is no cost to you to donate these funds, but *you do need to elect the charities you wish to support each year*. Did you know our St. Matthew church, and our St. Matthew preschool, are both eligible recipients for Choice Dollars? We have benefitted greatly in the past from these donations.

Please consider beginning the new year by supporting our church or preschool through the Choice Dollars Program. You may either visit the Thrivent website, thrivent.com/thriventchoice, and log in to your account, or you may call 800-847-4836 and when prompted say "Thrivent Choice" to begin the donation process by telephone. Thank you.

❖ 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.

❖ Notes from Deaconess

Sarah Longmire, Director of Family Life

During the season of Advent, we are invited to slow down and reflect on the coming of our Savior. Jesus is coming! We know that our Savior was already born, and has already died and risen, but we eagerly wait for Jesus to come again! In the quiet moments of Advent, we can rest securely in the knowledge that our Savior has come, has paid for our sins, and has named us as His own in Baptism. Following that, we are in the season of Christmas - the promised Savior is here! We rejoice that God always keeps His promises!

Even though Christmas, and the start of a new year, can be busy, they can also allow for time to reflect and consider what 'could be' in the coming days. Therefore, I have an opportunity for you to think about as you think about the start of 2024.

Have you ever heard of the word 'exegesis?' Perhaps you have heard of someone doing an 'exegetical study.' Simply put, this means that the Bible is read and studied word-by-word and within its original context. In the High School Bible study class as well as the Moms' Bible study, we have been doing an exegetical study of Ephesians.

I would invite you to consider, as you think about a new calendar year, doing an exegetical study of a book of the Bible. Pick a book and read it slowly, carefully, and with a willingness to wonder: 'who was the original audience of this book?' 'What do some of these words mean?' 'Who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this book?' 'How does this book connect with other parts of the Bible?' And most importantly, think about 'where do I see, read, or find Jesus in these verses?'

As someone who loves studying and thinking about God's Word, I would invite you to bring your questions or observations to me! Or, one of our pastors would love to discuss God's Word with you, too! God's Word is living and breathing; it continually reminds us of our sin, shows our need for a Savior, and points to the Gospel of Jesus' Death and Resurrection for us. When we take time to slowly and carefully read God's Word, we are blessed to find just how deep God's love, mercy, and grace for us truly is.

❖ Lutheran Women in Mission — *January 2024*

"THANK YOU" to everyone that helped with the Vespers service, dinner and donations. A very generous offering of \$638.00 was collected for Beautiful Savior Home and Auxiliary. Many winter necessities were also collected for Our Redeemer Lutheran Church (for the homeless) in Kansas City.

ALL LADIES OF THE CONGREGATION are invited our next LWML Society meeting held on Sunday, Feb. 4 at 2:00 p.m. in the Family Life Center. Mary-Martha Circle will be hosting.

OUR CIRCLES MEET MONTHLY — Lydia Circle on the second Thursday afternoon at 12:30 PM or Mary-Martha Circle on the last Tuesday evening of the month at 7 PM. Circles meet in the Family Life Center meeting room. You do not have to belong to a Circle or the Society to attend the LWML Society meeting.

SOUP-TO-GO will be available after the Feb. 17-18 services. Look for more information to come!

LWML MITES CHALLENGE — Your gifts during November toward our MITE challenge totaled \$124.00. The big mite box is always set out in the narthex on the *last weekend of each month*. Empty your small mite boxes or loose change into the big mite box on Jan. 27-28. Check out the year-to-date goal thermometer!

LWML MISSOURI DISTRICT CONVENTION will be held right here in the Kansas City area June 7-9, 2024! Save the date so you can attend the convention this year, which will be held just a few miles away at the Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center in Independence (that's the hotel next to Hobby Lobby and Bass Pro Shop at the intersection of I-70 and Hwy. 291). Our theme: "He will make your paths straight" *Proverbs 3:5-6 More info to come!*

INGATHERING FOR LUMAA – Non-perishable food items and monetary donations. (Donations may be placed in the LUMAA basket in the Mission room). Next LUMAA meeting will be at Our Redeemer in KC on January 17 at 9:30 AM. If you plan to attend, please contact Joyce Martin.

❖ Introducing a “New” Old Prayer — *What is “The Litany” ?*

Today I’m introducing you to the Litany, a responsive prayer. It is among the regular spoken liturgies in our hymnal. It’s a good prayer because it includes petitions for our neighbors, the world, our enemies, and ourselves.

You’ll notice a common phrase “Lord, have mercy,” which is our translation for the Greek “Kyrie eleison.” This prayer is often found in orders of service followed by Christians in the first century after Christ ascended.

Because prayers in worship can lead to church unity if they are commonly used, the church in the fifth century especially began encouraging the practice of Christians praying the Litany. This prayer was easily learned and spoken not only at church, but also at home. In some settings the leaders and people even chanted or sang these responses.

Martin Luther found comfort from the Litany. In 1529 he prepared two versions for common use. Note that the year 1529 was also the year Luther wrote the Small Catechism as a tool for teaching the faith clearly to adults and children. The Litany became hugely popular among the people. It was a way to petition God’s help, praying for help from enemies who threatened their borders, and from thieves who often took advantage of those traveling and living in rural areas.

Today you can pray the Litany, and it especially helps you pray for others. — *Pastor Otto*

Litany

L O Lord,

C have mercy.

L O Christ,

C have mercy.

L O Lord,

C have mercy.

L O Christ,

C hear us.

L God the Father in heaven,

C have mercy.

L God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

C have mercy.

L God the Holy Spirit,

C have mercy.

L Be gracious to us.

C Spare us, good Lord.

L Be gracious to us.

C Help us, good Lord.

L From all sin, from all error, from all evil;

From the crafts and assaults of the devil; from sudden and evil death;

From pestilence and famine; from war and bloodshed; from sedition and from rebellion;

From lightning and tempest; from all calamity by fire and water; and from everlasting death:

C Good Lord, deliver us.

L By the mystery of Your holy incarnation; by Your holy nativity;

By Your baptism, fasting, and temptation; by Your agony and bloody sweat; by Your cross and passion; by Your precious death and burial;

By Your glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter:

C Help us, good Lord.

L In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death; and in the day of judgment:

C Help us, good Lord.

L We poor sinners implore You

C to hear us, O Lord.

L To rule and govern Your holy Christian Church; to preserve all pastors and ministers of Your Church in the true knowledge and understanding of Your wholesome Word and to sustain them in holy living;

To put an end to all schisms and causes of offense; to bring into the way of truth all who have erred and are deceived;

To beat down Satan under our feet; to send faithful laborers into Your harvest; and to accompany Your Word with Your grace and Spirit:

C We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

L To raise those who fall and to strengthen those who stand; and to comfort and help the weakhearted and the distressed:

C We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

L To give to all peoples concord and peace; to preserve our land from discord and strife; to give our country Your protection in every time of need;

To direct and defend our president and all in authority; to bless and protect our magistrates and all our people;

To watch over and help all who are in danger, necessity, and tribulation; to protect and guide all who travel;

To grant all women with child, and all mothers with infant children, increasing happiness in their blessings; to defend all orphans and widows and provide for them;

To strengthen and keep all sick persons and young children; to free those in bondage; and to have mercy on us all:

C We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

L To forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers and to turn their hearts; to give and preserve for our use the kindly fruits of the earth; and graciously to hear our prayers:

C We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

L Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,

C we implore You to hear us.

L Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

C have mercy.

L Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

C have mercy.

L Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

C grant us Your peace.

L O Christ,

C hear us.

L O Lord,

C have mercy.

L O Christ,

C have mercy.

L O Lord,

C have mercy. Amen.

St. Matthew



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*When I am afraid,
I will trust in You.*

Psalm 56:3

JANUARY NEWSLETTER - 2024

❖ Dominican Republic Info Meeting — *Monday, January 8*

On Monday, Jan. 8 at 7:00 p.m., Deaconess Sarah will host one more informational meeting about our upcoming servant trip to the Dominican Republic (we'll be traveling the last week of July). If you are interested in going on the trip (even if you have already attended an informational meeting), please consider coming to interact with others.

❖ Learn How You Can Be Involved in Church Life

The Missouri District is hosting a gathering here at St. Matthew on Sat., Jan. 20. It's an E2 Conference... and E2 stands for "Equip and Encourage." It's a way to interact with other members of local LCMS churches, sharing what we do well at St. Matthew, and learning what other churches are doing well. Annual E2 conference serves as a support and training for congregations and their ministries. Everyone (lay people and church workers) is invited to attend.

Sessions include topics like Shared Youth Ideas, Family Discipleship, Stewardship Resources, Intergenerational Faith Formation, Serving Your Community, and more. The conference is free to attend. Light refreshments and coffee will be provided. To register, you can email Pastor Otto at otto@gracefaithlove.org, or you may register online on the Missouri District website (mo.lcms.org) and click on the E2 information on the home page.

❖ A prayer to help you pray

Dear Lord, hear us praying. We have so much to be thankful for, and we also have so much we are concerned about. Bring Your help and healing, Your guidance and blessings, for those things we pray over. We trust You know best how to answer our prayers, and that You will grant us patience and faith for what we endure. Thank You for one more day, Lord. And thank You for Jesus, who does all things well for us. In His name we pray. Amen +

*My prayers are with you,
Pastor Otto*