

# 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. Craig Otto

### Life at Sixty

The locusts are loud outside. On a hot July night it's over 90 degrees after eight o'clock. I live in Missouri, so what's unusual about that? These are the rhythms of living here.

Home for me has been in Crestwood, Jefferson City, Gladstone, Columbia, St. Louis, Perryville, and Lee's Summit. Guess that makes me a Missouri boy. It could be worse. Missouri's been a good place to live with all the seasons, Midwest nice, and a decent cost of living.

I can't really sum up what each decade of my life has brought, but I sure know I've changed over the years. We all come with some hard-wired DNA and personality characteristics, and while I still carry that... I've changed.

Grumpy I'm not. Hopeful I am. Cynical I'm not. Patient I am. I look for the good in people, give them the benefit of the doubt, and ask myself what it's like to be the other person.

Life at 60 is okay, not a milestone, not a slide, not really thought-provoking. It's just like 58.

I like being outside. The smell of trees, grass, flowers, fresh air... I'll take some of that every day. Tonight the low sun was a burst shining through tree leaves at the end of our cul-de-sac. Nice touch, nice moment. But pulsing, shrieking locusts are way too much.

I preached to the saints in Raymore today, and they were grateful a pastor had come. We heard how Jesus stepped into Peter's boat and told him to lower his nets into the water. The nets suddenly filled with fish and his boat started to lean. Peter and the disciples saw the work of God when Jesus was near... no coincidence, for He did miracles.

Is our new granddaughter a miracle? Our five-year-old grandson? Yes, and they are baptized, which means Jesus has made them His own. In the Jaroslav Vajda hymn each baptism is a miracle... a work of God. To the tune of a Swedish hymn, *Children of the Heavenly Father*, we sing, "Here we bring a child of nature, Home we take a newborn creature, Now God's precious son or daughter, Born again by Word and water."

At 60 I believe. It's not me being gullible. I just believe.

It's not my faith that makes something true, because I could be believing in something ridiculous or way out there. Faith in my own ideas is always a bad look. But I take Jesus at face value and do not question Him. He is my saving-one. He is alive and protecting me. I am His.

I value Sunday. The Body sings the hymns, the liturgy, and its rhythm is comforting. Do I favor some hymns? Each one I choose speaks to us, and yes, a few make my eyes well up because the words or the tune hit me that way.

Losses come steadily. This is one big difference between "life at 50" and "life at 60." Becky's parents died, Mildred and Delbert. In recent years so have our beloved aunts and uncles: Evelyn, Harold and Mary Ann, Edward and Barbara, Overton and Sue.

I've watched my father lose one ability after another over five years. While some things may have been stressful for my mother and me, this Alzheimer's journey has not been about us. We haven't been in his body watching life slip away and become confusing. For him it was scary and frustrating in the early days of his memory loss, and now he lives days on end disappointed that this is his end-run. He can't talk to us, but he knows us. He's kind. So there's sadness in the situation, a helpless feeling on our part, yet we still show up to engage and care.

*Continued >>*

*Pastor's message continued...*

This morning I went for a walk. The sky has been grumbling for hours, clouds that look like rain, yet mostly just thunder. The cool breeze in the 70's is a relief from last night's humidity. I hear wind through the leaves of the trees... a train in the distance... the pock and scuff of pickleball.

I was ordained August 6, 1995, so that makes this month my 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of serving in the ministry. Have I changed? Yes, in so many ways. I look different, listen differently, have taken on new responsibilities.

I still think about something from back then. When I received a call to start teaching and praying with the saints in my first congregation, I accepted that my life's work is to serve Jesus Christ. Like the Apostle Paul, my role is to help others know Jesus: "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

Pray for me, that I, a forgiven sinner, might continue this with a good heart.

The world has changed over 30 years, but my role remains the same. I am called by Jesus to speak His words, call us constantly to repentance, and receive sinners in His name. I die to myself, not pursuing my own goals, but spend my days bringing God's law and gospel to you, even grace, grace undeserved, wasteful grace.

Life at 60 is still like life at 17, 25, 39, and 48... that is, I still feel like me. Joyful, optimistic, learning, shy, observant, willing to help.

Do I talk to the television and gripe about people? I really don't. I'm not surprised how sin plays out in the world. What I see leads me to pray... maybe I can make a difference in my little corner, encourage someone having a hard day, a bad turn, a loss, a disappointment. **Christ teaches me there's a tomorrow.** I remind you of that.

Ah, but the mind. I also find myself ruminating on things I am not, a recognition that I'm not sufficient for every situation that presents itself. Some days I can't help but think about my worries. But maturity has changed me, and I can patiently wait out the Holy Spirit these days. I trust in strength to come. Not everything works out well, but the Spirit works peace so I can abide change. I have a strong center... faith in Christ.

My 60 years have taught me not to stew over things beyond my control, nor to lose sleep overthinking them, nor to go down the road of rehearsing speeches in my head. I've learned to say, "Satan, go away," and "Lord, send me Your Spirit to console me." Two things I picked up from Jesus.

Because I'm flawed and living through similar life curves as you, I'm able to empathize, to listen, to learn about your unfolding story. Having a friend come alongside is okay. Your pastor is here *so you can hear about our Pastor*. You know the word *pastor* means *shepherd*, right? I remind you of your Shepherd. I pray with you and help you place your faith and trust in Him. That's my role at 60, to turn your eyes to Jesus.

On a walk through a Lake Giacomo trail, fully shaded, I feel surrounded by the rush. Leaves are bunched together in tree tops, the wind rustling thousands against each other. I hear the sound of creaking—it sounds like a creaking door, but it's branches in the trees, wood straining against itself. What a privilege to be in God's creation, surrounded by beautiful green foliage, seeing deer bound away, listening to that beautiful strange sound, wind and creak, and sweet birds.

Life at 60 is not just enduring the raging sound of locusts and hoping it ends. Life at 60 includes squinting at sun, appreciation of breeze, sounds of new life, and the hope of tomorrow. The world we see is teaching us about a new creation yet to come, where hopes are fulfilled and faith is sight.

Bless You, Lord Jesus. Everything we have, today and tomorrow, comes from Your gracious hand.

*Peace in Christ, Pastor Otto*



## ❖ Classics — *Thursday, August 7*

Our Classics gathering in July had a wonderful meal of salads, side dishes and desserts along with our Barbecue main course. Many thanks to all who provided this great food and fellowship.

For our August gathering, Shirley Mattis will be Lead Host. She, along with several of our regular attendees, will bring all the fixings for our main course of tacos. As you are able, other folks are invited to bring a salad or dessert.

Along with this delightful food and fellowship, we'll be having some beautiful piano and vocal music provided by Denise Edwards, Shirley Mattis's sister. Please come and join us for what promises to be a most enjoyable time on Thursday, August 7 at 11:30 in the Family Life Center.

## ❖ Lutheran Women in Mission — *August 2025*

**Join us as Women in Mission** — All women of St. Matthew, age 18 and up, are welcome to be part of LWML. We gather for Bible study, serve our neighbors, and raise funds for grants that support missions and church workers. Much can be done among Lutheran sisters united in Christ! We would love to have you join us in any capacity. We have circle members as well as associate members. Contact any of our members or Leah McKeage, Society President.

**LWML President to Visit St. Matthew: Leadership Workshop** — Save the date! On Saturday, Nov. 15th, our district LWML will host a free workshop at St. Matthew: the LWML Missouri District Leadership Development Workshop. If you would like to come, all women are invited. The national LWML President, Eden Keefe, will be among the presenters. More information to come. Register at <https://formurl.com/to/LeadershipWorkshopSDG>

**Position open: Chairperson for Gospel Outreach & Human Care** — The role of the chairman for this society committee is to assist members in caring for the spiritual and physical needs of others. This is done by assisting our society to organize collections, as well as highlighting collections done at Zone and Convention gatherings. If interested, please contact Leah McKeage.

**Lydia Circle:** We will meet Thursday, Aug. 14 at 12:30 in the Family Life Center to preview activities and the calendar for the coming year. We welcome ladies to visit and join our group. Lydia Circle shares in the activities of St. Matthew LWML, has Bible Studies, are involved in service activities, and share desserts and fellowship. If you have questions, contact one of our officers, Joyce Martin, Sue Sailors, Marilyn Stelljes or Jan Cowan. Visitors are welcome!

**Mary Martha Circle:** Mary Martha will meet at 7:00 p.m. in the Family Life Center meeting room on Tuesday, Aug. 26th. Please join us for fellowship, devotion and planning upcoming events. Visitors are welcome! We regularly meet on the 4th Tuesday of each month.

## ❖ LWML Mission Grant of the Month

**"Phil's Friends"** — Bringing hope to cancer patients in Missouri — \$20,000

The congregational members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Chapel in Cape Girardeau have established a *Hope to Hospitals* program in conjunction with Phil's Friends, in which they visit those affected by cancer, bringing the hope of the Gospel. They need more materials to prepare for including in Care Packages to support local cancer patients and, as they expand the mission, to those in surrounding Missouri. More Bibles, hats, blankets and fleece, fuzzy socks, toothpaste, mouthwash, tissue packs, lip balm, puzzle books, journals, cards, etc., are needed.

## ❖ Altar Guild — *How to donate flowers for the altar*

The 2025 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. If requesting roses, the cost will be market prices. Please place your payment in the little box below the chart. Thank you!

## ❖ St. Matthew Prayer Partners

Do you have a prayer request? Would you like to receive emails notifying you of prayers of the congregation? To receive our St. Matthew Prayer Partner email, contact Carrol McAllister at [cammac2@swbell](mailto:cammac2@swbell) or 816-763-4535.

## ❖ Sewing Group

The sewing group meets in the library area at church on the first and third Mondays of each month. We always welcome more volunteers! Contact Linda Patterson at 816-820-4464 or Marilyn Heineman at 816-729-7260.

## ❖ Two Guest Pastors are here to teach us this month

**The weekend of August 2-3**, Pastor Andrews will lead liturgy and our preacher will be Pastor Biermann. This is the best weekend for him to visit, since he preaches at many churches as the Director of Concordia Center for the Family. He preaches all three services, assists with Holy Communion, and teaches class on Sunday.

**The weekend of August 9-10**, Pastor Otto will lead liturgy and our preacher will be Pastor Shaver. He and his family are here in the United States for mission education; he is a pastor and professor at a church and seminary in the Dominican Republic. He preaches all three services, assists with Holy Communion, and teaches class on Sunday.

### Sunday Bible Class - 9:30 a.m.

**Rev. Todd Biermann** is a teacher and communicator about family life issues, and teaching the Christian faith in our families. August 3 this engaging speaker will share his presentation on “passing on the faith to our families.”

**Rev. Dr. Ross Shaver** is an American who is learning Spanish while he teaches theology courses at Concordia the Reformer seminary in the Dominican Republic. He also serves as the called pastor of Pueblo Nuevo Lutheran Church. August 10 he will share about missionary life there.

Note: While it's unusual for Pastor Andrews and I to not be in the pulpit every week, our church will benefit from hearing these faithful voices. Each is engaged in meeting the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a unique context: *young people, families, and the currently open window to plant churches* in the Dominican Republic. As each one visits, they will meet you face to face... the vibrant and faith-filled congregation which has given them financial support in recent years.

*Peace and grace be with you, Pastor Otto*

## ❖ St. Matthew Preschool News — *August 12 event*

St. Matthew Preschool is turning 25. We will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 12 at 10:00 a.m. in conjunction with the Lee's Summit Chamber of Commerce. Everyone is invited to attend. We will celebrate in October and hope to have all those who have been part of the preschool attend. If you've ever attended, taught, or helped start the preschool, please email your name and address to [stmatthewps@gracefaithlove.org](mailto:stmatthewps@gracefaithlove.org). If you are interested in helping with the event planning, please email your contact information and let me know your interest in helping.

## ❖ Seminar on Sexuality — *Coming in September to St. Matthew*

Here at St. Matthew on Saturday, Sept. 6, we will be hosting a seminar led by DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel. This is an official organization affiliated with the LCMS, led by directors Rev. David Fleming and Dr. Beverly Yahnke. Our event is open to everyone in the congregation, and we will invite other local LCMS congregations to participate. **The retreat is free for you to attend, thanks to a grant from Synod**, as long as at least 50 people attend. DOXOLOGY describes the theme:

*With the legal redefinition of marriage, the confusion regarding gender, and rapidly changing sexual mores in society, Biblical educators, pastors, singles, couples, and parents are looking for guidance in articulating and promoting a positive view of the Christian vision for marriage and sexuality. **Our goal is to equip people with tools to speak constructively and to live confidently amid the current confusion.***

During the four presentations, we will study 1) God's view on human sexuality in the Scriptures, 2) How to care for a person who identifies as transgender, and two presentations on how to think about and have conversations about these topics... sometimes even with persons who are engaged in such behaviors. To learn more, you may go to our own St. Matthew website and you'll see an *In His Image* logo on the home page. There is a link you can click for more information about the day's agenda. Or, if you'd like to learn about it from the source, you may go to the DOXOLOGY website ([www.Doxology.us](http://www.Doxology.us)) and choose “In His Image” under the Programs menu. This is an important topic, and we are all learning how to respond. *You may attend just some of the sessions, or all of them, and the event is free to you and any guests you would like to bring along.*

## ❖ *Summary of 2025 Missouri District Convention — by Don Sanders, Voting Delegate*

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Triennial Missouri District Convention was held from June 22<sup>nd</sup> through June 24<sup>th</sup> in Columbia under the theme “Bold Hope in Christ” drawn from 2 Corinthians 3:12. District President Lee Hagan presided over the convention. The convention opened on Sunday night with the Divine Service.

On Monday, one of the first orders of business was to elect the district president for the next three years. President R. Lee Hagan was the only nominee and was re-elected for another three-year term.

All three of our St. Matthew staff were elected to leadership roles. After five ballot measures and a tight race, **Pastor Otto** was elected to serve a three-year term as the First Vice President of the Missouri District (this is an addition to his continued role as our pastor at St. Matthew). **Deaconess Sarah Longmire** was elected to serve on the nominations committee for the next triennium. **Pastor Andrews** was elected by his peers to serve his second three-year term as the circuit visitor for the Kansas City South Circuit.

The essayist for this year’s convention was Rev. Dr. Kevin Golden, an associate professor of Exegetical Theology, dean of Theological Research and Publication, and director of Resident Field Education at Concordia, St. Louis. Dr. Golden’s essay focused on the convention theme, “Bold Hope in Christ.” Dr. Golden stated that hope gradually fades over time but he also emphasized that Christian hope which is bound and grounded in Christ continues forever, even after our passing.

Numerous resolutions were passed at the convention, most with very minor changes. A resolution that generated a lot of discussion surrounded the defense of God’s gift of life. The convention approved a resolution stating that it is a false teaching to say that a fetus is not a person, as this rejects a full understanding of Christ’s incarnation.

There were numerous guest speakers for this year’s convention. Some of the guest speakers were *Marian Hoehner*, President of LWML; *Rev. Ken Krueger*, President and Chair of Ministry Focus; *Kevin Herweck*, Vice President and COO of Concordia Plans; *Rev. Todd Biermann*, Director, Concordia Center for the Family; *Dr. Bernard Bull*, President, Concordia University Nebraska; *Rev. Dr. Chad Kendall*, Associate Vice President for Church Relations and Mission and Associate Professor of Theology, Concordia University, Chicago.

There were some resolutions regarding a few churches being assigned to different circuits, but none of those changes impacted the Kansas City South Circuit of which St. Matthew is a member.

**I would like to thank the congregation for giving me the opportunity to attend the convention. God’s blessings to all of you! — Don Sanders**



*There were over 450 attendees at the Missouri District Convention in Columbia, MO. This voting body meets every three years to learn about mission and ministry in our region, to vote for lay and clergy leaders, and to consider proposals for further Christian mission, education, and witness in the state of Missouri.*



*Officers of the Missouri District elected to three year terms:*

*Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan (center) was reelected president of the Missouri District for a fourth term.*

*Rev. Craig Otto, senior pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Lee’s Summit, was elected first vice president.*

*Elected second through fourth vice presidents were: Rev. Randy Asbury, pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in St. Louis; Rev. Samuel Powell, pastor of Trinity in Jefferson City; and Rev. Richard Cody, pastor of St. Peter in St. Joseph.*



# St. Matthew



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## AUGUST NEWSLETTER - 2025

*Inside...* **Pastor Otto's essay "Life at Sixty"** — Convention news — Visiting Pastors



*Pastor Otto carried the processional cross during the opening hymn of the Divine Service ... President Hagan thanked Brian Mitchell for serving on the District Board of Directors for nine years ... Pastor Andrews taught a session on Family Discipleship to attendees.*