
ST. MATTHEWS LUTHERAN CHURCH ESKO, MN

A family of believers grounded in, growing in and reaching out in Christ

ADDRESS:

St. Matthews Lutheran Church
Four Elizabeth Ave.
Esko, MN 55733

CONTACT US:

Church - (218) 879-3510
Email - stmattsesko@aol.com
Web - www.stmatthewsesko.org

OUR PASTORS:

Tom Brinkley, Pastor
Cell - (218) 343-2080
Email - Brinkley57@yahoo.com

John Pasche, Vacancy Pastor
Cell- (320) 296-9877
Email - revpasche@gmail.com

OUR STAFF:

Jennifer Keske
Preschool Director
Sybil Halvorson
Assistant Teacher
Barbara Dimino
Extended Care Teacher
Church - (218) 879-3510
Email - lelpreschool@gmail.com

Christina Walther
Youth Coordinator and Music Leader
Cell - (218) 391-3649
Email - walthchristina@gmail.com

Johnny Eng, Deacon
Cell- (218) 310-1385
Email - jemsoco@aol.com

Jen Prachar, Office Manager
Rebecca Bauer, Secretary

Let's Go!

Did you know that less than 1% of people in the world get to see a whale in their lifetime? Did you know that less than 1% of that 1% get to see a Blue Whale? That's astonishing! I consider myself blessed to have seen many different whales during various adventures around the country. Most recently, while in California for a family wedding, we were on a whale watch out of Newport Beach. The boat held 15 people. As it pulled away from the dock, the Naturalist on board told us that earlier that morning they had seen a Blue Whale and we were heading back out in that direction to see if it was still close enough for us to catch a glimpse. We were not disappointed. We got to see the Blue Whale! It was an amazing experience and I have enjoyed telling many people about it!

When was the last time you shared something really fascinating with someone? Maybe it was a wonderful food you tasted, a movie you saw, or a place you visited. Perhaps the fascinating thing you shared was related to your faith; a Bible verse you read, a Christian song that you heard or what you learned in church last week. Romans 10:13-14 tells us:

“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved. How then will
they call on him in whom they have not believed?
And how are they to believe
in him of whom they have never heard? And how
are they to hear without
someone preaching?”

God commands us do “go and make disciples of all nations...”, sharing the good news of His love and forgiveness with everyone. As Christians we have the privilege of being ambassadors for Christ, as we share His eternal hope. What is your faith story? Maybe it hasn't been like an exciting whale watch or exotic vacation, but it has been amazing because of the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Maybe your faith began by what your parents taught you as you grew up and you have grown through participation in church and learning through Bible study with other Christians. Maybe you began your relationship with Jesus recently and are still trying to find your way. Wherever you are in your faith journey, God wants us to share our experiences with others. We don't have to worry if conversations about our faith will go perfectly, because God will work through any seed of faith we plant.

Let's go share with others what our lives have looked like since we put our faith and trust in Jesus. Let's start the

conversation with others as we cultivate relationships based on a foundation of Christ that is so powerful and everlasting. Our faith may not always change life's circumstances, but it can sure do a lot for our hearts and our perspective on things. God's gift of Christ dying on the cross has given us the promise of forgiveness of our sins and his resurrection has promised us an eternal home in heaven with our Lord someday. Let us declare with joy and share with everyone: "He is Risen! He is Risen, Indeed!"

"And I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ." (Philemon 1:6)

- Christina

Confirmation Sunday May 1st 10:30 am

Congratulations to our confirmands.

Samuel Scott Cheslak

Ayden Charles Chopskie

Brynn Taylor Christensen

Bella Lu Forneris

Sophia Elizabeth Frank

Leland Raymond Hill

Logan Robert Johnsen

Dylan Mason Prachar

Hannah Patrice Roemer

Parker Daniel Sickmann

Jonah Richard Storck

Conor Kelsey Sullivan

Alexa Ann Sykes

Jolie Rose Urie

Chase Alexander Walz

Ava Marie Zywicki

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

CONGRATULATIONS to *Rev. Tom Brinkley* on his upcoming **RETIREMENT**



Congregation members
are invited to submit
photos and written
memories to the church
office by Sunday, May 15.

Come celebrate with
Pastor Tom
Sunday, May 22
10:30 am - Worship
11:45 am - Meal
(free-will offering)
1:00 pm - Program

RSVP for the meal to
jen@stmatthewsesko.org
218-879-3510
with your name, phone#
and number of people

WE WANT TO CELEBRATE YOU!

SENIOR RECOGNITION SUNDAY, MAY 15 10:30 AM

Join us for worship and cake!

Please e-mail Christina your picture (to be displayed)
by May 10. walthchristina@gmail.com



Memorial Day Worship

Monday, May 30 at 10:30 am

St. Matthews Cemetery
202 Church Avenue, Esko



Congregational Meeting

Sunday, May 8 at 11:30

To discuss and take a vote on whom
to extend a call to

Updates from the Call Committee

It's been a little over a year since the Call Committee began the process of finding a shepherd to lead our congregation. We often are asked why we have not been able to locate a pastor to fill this position. This not a unique situation to St. Matthews alone. There are currently over 500 vacancies synod-wide and 19 within the MN North District. The two seminaries will be placing only 84 pastors with congregations this spring. The majority of current pastors are over the age of 55 and the seminary graduating class is getting smaller and smaller each year. There are 34 Districts in the entire synod and everyone is pulling from the same pool of pastors. We are essentially dealing with a pastor shortage.

Pastors today are often considering a number of Calls, including the one they presently serve. We are doing our best to be patient so that we keep our direction at the forefront finding the one who fits the goals, missions and ministry of St. Matthews. One who is ready to serve in the role as sole pastor and works well in team ministry. May the Lord help us remain faithful in searching for the shepherd that has the gifts and abilities that would be a blessing to St. Matthews.

The Call Committee continues to have conversations about the future of St. Matthews and the pastor that would best serve our congregation. We have considered the option of the seminary again, but thought our best option is to continue to search for a pastor in the field. We are also discussing pastors that have been on our previous Call lists and those we have extended Calls to.

We ask that you continue to be patient and prayerful and to focus your heart and mind on the will of the Holy Spirit. God has prepared a pastor for St. Matthews and His timing is perfect.

President Fondow has sent us a call list of names of pastors from the field. We received a personal information form and self-evaluation tool for each pastor. This list and information are available to the congregation in the church office. We encourage everyone to take time to do your own research on each of these pastors and to watch or listen to their sermons. We would love for you to share your thoughts with us. Please note that this information is to be kept confidential among the congregational members. The call committee has been doing research on each of the pastors, narrowing the list down and conducting interviews. **A congregational meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, May 8th following the 10:30am service** to discuss these pastors and to take a vote on who we would like to extend a call to. We ask for continued prayers that God would be with us as we continue to do His work.

~The Call Committee

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| • Sue Wischnewski | • Dan Heikkinen | • Jen Prachar |
| • Brenda Hall | • Pat Johnson | • Isaac Wisted |
| • Dave Haugen | • Ron Eng | • Joe Klatt |
| • Scott Prachar | • Chris Nelson | • Deb Haugen |
| • Chris Schultz | | |

SAVE THE DATE FOR
A MONUMENTAL VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



St. Matthews Lutheran Church

June 27th - July 1st

Watch for registration information on St Matthews Facebook Page

VBS DAY CAMP IS BACK!



For Grades K-5
JUNE 27 - 30
11:30-4:00 PM
\$75 per child

**LUNCH WILL BE SERVED AT 11:30 WITH ACTIVITIES
TO FOLLOW!! REGISTRATION INFO TO COME!**

St. Matthews Lutheran Church

WORSHIP:

- Sundays 8 & 10:30 am Worship in the Sanctuary
- 10:30 am worship services online via Facebook
- Sundays - 9:30 am - TV option Channel 6 (KBJR) airs "My Savior Lives"
- 2nd Thursday each month - 2 pm Blessed Assurance worship with Holy Communion (for those with stringent health & safety precautions - Masks and social distancing required)

BIBLE STUDY:

- Sundays 9:15 am - Adult Bible Study in the Family Life Center
- Sundays 9:15 am - Women's Bible Study "Women of the Bible" Pastor's Office
- Tuesdays 7 am - Men's Bible Study in the Fireside Room
- Tuesdays 9 am - "Coffee with Pastor" online via Facebook
- Wednesdays 5:30 pm - Women's Bible Study "Jesus in Me- Experiencing the Holy Spirit" in the Fireside Room
- Thursdays 9:30 am - Women's Bible Study "The Book of Isaiah" in the Fireside Room

YOUTH:

- Sundays 9:15 am - age 3 - 6th grade Sunday School downstairs
- Sundays 9:15 am - Grades 7-12 Bible Study in the Youth Room
- Wednesdays 5-6:30 pm Grades 7-12 Be Real

Office Hours:

Monday 8AM-3PM


Tuesday 8AM-3PM

Wednesday 8AM-5PM

Thursday 8AM-2:30PM

Friday 8AM-3PM





Crazy Making: Why We Keep Doing What We Don't Want to Do

Experience Recovery
For Every Hurt, Habit, or Hang Up
Thursday Evenings at St. Matthews - 6 pm

Upcoming Topic: Crazy Making: Why We Keep Doing What We Don't Want to Do. This 4 week series begins April 7th. Please contact Deacon Johnny Eng at (218) 310-1385 with any questions.

Upcoming Directory

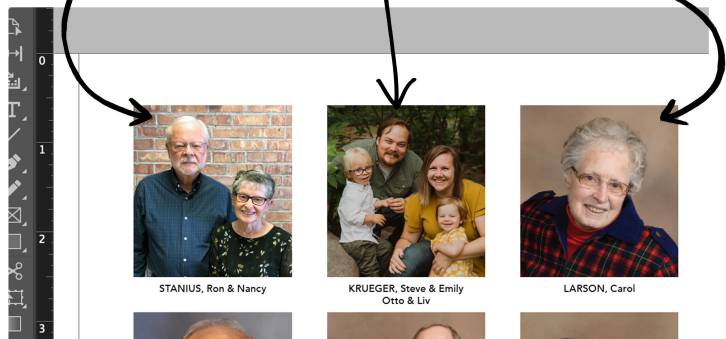
If you haven't already submitted your information via email, please stop by after worship service on Sunday April 24 or May 1 at our table in the gathering space to register to be included in the 2022 pictorial directory and have your picture taken or let us know to reuse your picture from the 2018 directory. If we take your picture we will send you a digital copy if you like.

St. Matthews Pictorial Directory

The Christian Outreach Board is organizing an updated St. Matthews pictorial directory. Life Touch no longer services our area so the directory will be produced by our members. Photos can be submitted, taken for you by a member of our team (in between Sunday services) or you can opt to reuse your photo from the 2018 directory. See the examples of types of photos contained within this announcement. Please complete the form included here and drop it in the collection basket, drop it off at the office or email the information requested to SMLCdirectory2022@gmail.com.

2022 Church Directory PHOTO OPTIONS:

1. Snap a photo at the church
2. Submit a photo to SMLCdirectory2022@gmail.com
3. Use your 2018 directory photo



*We will be making this directory in-house, as LifeTouch Photography has stopped servicing the our area



2022 Church Directory

If you opt to have your photo taken at church, you will be given a digital copy.



Please fill out this information as you would like it listed in the 2022 directory

NAMES _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ ☐ CELL ☐ LANDLINE

☐ CELL ☐ LANDLINE

EMAIL _____

☐ Use my 2018 directory photo

☐ I will submit a photo to SMLCdirectory2022@gmail.com

☐ Please coordinate to take my photo at the church

MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 1- Jace Stewart, Jason Seboe, Jonathan Stodola
- 2- Leif Herman
- 3- Ian Rossetti, Sue Wischnewski, Alyssa Lucas
- 4- Tallon Kiminski, Jerry Toman, Anna Hanson
- 5- Michaela Rossetti, Jenna Maslowski, Jess Crassweller
- 6- Rick Hanson. 7- Eileen Christopherson, Kennadi DeBondt
- 8- Peter Contardo II
- 10- Judith Nelson, Pastor Tom Brinkley, Tyler Issendorf
- 11- Katie Frank, Ella Seboe
- 12- Dennis Ellefson, Don Juntunen, Josh Muchow, Kurt Bartell
- 13- Angie Davidson, Isabella Bowman, Maya Carroll
- 14- Kyle Jarvi, Peg Koski, Bella Forneris
- 15- Paul Koskela, Evelyn Eng, Kat Welman, Daran Tan
- 16- Nancy Seppala, Rebecca Hanson, Steven Krueger, Sue Butkiewicz
- 17- Joe Kersting, Jolene Anderson, Judy Kremer, Hillary Anderson, Gavin Belich, Bradley Warren, Nevaeh Butkiewicz, Zion Postaal
- 18- Tim Lindquist, Loretta Peterson, Hailey Kangas, Sawyer Hipp, Dan Linder III, Aspen Berg
- 19- Roseann Erickson, Jason Paulson, Addison Johnson
- 20- Shannon Rahkola
- 21- Walter Behm, Margaret Lindquist, Travis Hanson, Shari Reuer, Nathan Stephenson
- 22- Karson Noordhoek, Cole Marvel, Elsie Axelson
- 24- Mason Perich, Christopher Eblom, Jacob Hustad, Kade Heikkinen
- 25- Nathan Hallgren 26- Cody DeBondt, Brycen Mulek
- 27- Sandra Rengo, Matt Wisted
- 28- Benjamin Hanson, Aaron Fischer, Bettina Peterson, Kai Hester-Lowry
- 29- Sierra Boitz
- 30- Savannah Swenson 31- Richard Anderson, Mila Rahkola, Landon Sellman



April

Baptism

April 3 Henry James Peterson

May God keep Henry in His grace unto life everlasting.

St. Matthews Offering Income April 20, 2022

Month	Given	Budget	Difference
July	39,600	36,200	3,400
Aug.	39,100	36,200	2,900**
Sept.	44,800	36,200	8,600
Oct.	32,100	36,200	(4,100)
Nov.	42,300	36,200	6,100**
Dec.	51,700	36,200	15,500
Jan.	38,200	36,200	2,000**
Feb.	33,100	36,200	(3,100)
March	42,600	36,200	6,400
April	29,800	27,200	2,600*
	393,300	353,000	40,300

*3 out of 4 weeks

**5 Sunday Month

Giving last year to date: \$413,200

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP



Our group will meet Thursday May 19th at 1pm in the Fireside Room. Please check the weekly announcements about the book selected to read. For information, please call Judy Nelson at 218-590-1521.



LCMS Worship - Sundays at 9:30 a.m.
KBJR Channel 6, Duluth

My Savior Lives Northland is a locally produced, regionally recognized TV program with a message for the world. The service includes a 30 minute worship service led by participating pastors of the Minnesota North District of our LCMS. My Savior Lives Northland is broadcast every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. central time on KBJR Channel 6 NBC and cable and satellite systems carrying these stations.

May 1 Pastor John Bonk, Two Harbors

May 8 Pastor Robert Franck, Duluth

May 15 Pastor Stafford Thompson, Munger

May 22 Pastor Troy Peperkorn, Silver Bay

May 29 Pastor Don Stauty, Virginia & Aurora

Please send contributions c/o:
Mt. Olive Lutheran Church
2012 East Superior Street
Duluth, MN 55812

FLOWER BASKET FUNDRAISER

The preschool is selling Fig Tree flower basket certificates for \$35. The fundraiser goes through May 4th. Certificates are available to purchase from preschool families or you may stop by the church office.



the figtree
Home & Garden

ST. MATTHEWS YOUTH



ROADSIDE CLEAN-UP

TUESDAY, MAY 17, 3:30 PM

MEET AT THE CHURCH. WEAR LONG PANTS AND SHOES THAT CAN GET WET. GLOVES OPTIONAL. REFLECTIVE VESTS AND BAGS PROVIDED. ADULT DRIVERS NEEDED

QUESTIONS? CONTACT CHRISTINA 218-391-3649

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Train children in the way they should go;
when they grow old, they won't depart from it.
Proverbs 22:6

Preschool News

The last day of school for the 2021-22 year will be Friday, May 27. Registrations are currently being accepted for the 2022-23 school year, which begins in September. Registration forms can be downloaded from the Preschool page on the St. Matthews website.

The annual spring fundraiser — hanging baskets from Fig Tree in Cloquet — will end May 4. Purchase a \$35 certificate from the preschool or the church office, which can be redeemed for a 12" basket. Please let your realtor friends know; it's a great opportunity to dress up homes

going on the market!

The LELP board of directors has placed ads and flyers throughout the local community to hire a new Assistant Teacher and Extended Care Teacher. If you, or someone you know, are interested in either of these positions, a job description can be obtained by contacting LELP at lelpreschool@gmail.com.

LELP has received another Minnesota COVID grant, which will be used to cover payroll expenses when the preschool was closed in March due to a COVID outbreak. These grants have truly helped sustain LELP financially throughout this difficult period. At the March meeting, the board agreed to raise preschool rates by a small percentage in hopes of operating profitably next year. The board intends to focus its efforts on increasing enrollment for the 2022-23 year.

LELP teachers and the board are grateful to the St. Matthews Endowment Committee, which approved funding for new tables, a toy kitchen with play food and several other needed school items. The ongoing support from St. Matthews and its members for the preschool ministry is deeply appreciated.

LELP staff, families and board members are grateful for your prayers.

LELP admits students of any race, color and national or ethnic origin.

St. Matthew's Men's Fishing Retreat



GONE FISHING

When: Friday, May 13th to Sunday, May 15th
Where: Lutheran Island Camp on East Battle Lake, near Henning, MN
What: A weekend of Fellowship, Fishing, Friendship and Fun
How: Contact Jason Rice (507) 829-8756 or jasonpaulrice@gmail.com
Cost: TBD, but typically around \$130 to \$150

BONUS: Saturday morning we will be having the
Second Annual Dr. Jeff Walther Memorial Bass Tournament!

ST. MATTHEWS LUTHERAN CHURCH



Women's Spring Swap

**MAY 14
11AM-4PM**

FELLOWSHIP
GAMES
DEVOTION

BRING 1 OR 2 ITEMS TO SWAP & A SNACK TO SHARE.

FREE ADMISSION! FOR ALL WOMEN 18 +

FAMILY LIFE CENTER

St. Matthews Family Life Center

RUMMAGE

SALE

ON ESKO SPRING SALE DAYS

MAY 19-21

Thurs. 5/19, 10 am - 7 pm
Fri. 5/20, 8 am - 4 pm
Sat. 5/21, 8 am - 1 pm

St. Matthews Youth will be having a sale and are accepting donations in the church garage beginning May 15.

ST. MATTHEWS BE REAL YOUTH GROUP PRESENTS...

ESCAPE ROOM DINNER AND MOVIE

Friday, May 6

5:00 - 9:30 pm

FRIENDS | MUSIC | FOOD | FUN
1ST PLACE PRIZE! | GRADES 10-12
MEET AT ST. MATTHEWS - 4 ELIZABETH AVENUE, ESKO

Stewardship Corner

Living Sacrifices

Stewardship is not just about giving money to the church. It includes this, to be sure, but it is not limited to it. Stewardship involves our whole life – everything we have and everything we are.

Let us not, though, fall into the trap of thinking that because we give of ourselves in one area then we can neglect giving in another. Stewardship is not stealing from Peter to pay Paul. It is not a game that we play whereby we justify ourselves in not giving a tenth of our income because we have given in some other way.

This is why our Lord warns: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.” (Matthew 23:23) We are given to do both – tithe of ourselves and what we have.

And so it is that St. Paul makes his appeal to us: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1–2)

We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. We are not to have the mind of the world, where we exchange equal weight of this for an equal weight of that and think that we have done what God has required. Our whole life is given over for service in and for the Church of God. This is to be done in thanksgiving for what God in Christ has accomplished for us. This is our spiritual worship, the reasonable response to what He has done for us. Not one for the other but all in all.

But what does this look like? St. Paul never lays down a general principle without also giving us some practical application of what shape that principle is to take concretely. He gives the general principle that our bodies are to be living sacrifices to God. And, after admonishing those who have been given particular gifts of grace to serve the church, St. Paul then speaks generally of what is expected of all. He says:

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” (Romans 12:9–13)

This is what it looks like to present your bodies as living sacrifices. This is how we live out the grace of God here in time.

Let us then heed the apostle’s teaching. Let us present our bodies – everything that we have and everything that we are – as living sacrifices to God, our reasonable response to what God in Christ Jesus accomplished for us by His death and resurrection. Through this, we have forgiveness of sins, a new life in Christ, and eternal salvation. And through this worship, the grace of God is made manifest in His saints – for the church and the world.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship

Members often ask how we are paying our bills when our offerings are often short of our budgeted needs. The short answer is that we need to budget for all expenses we are obligated to pay. At the end of each month, we will show how our offerings are actually being spent. Any surplus funds at the end of our fiscal year (June 30) will be used to pay down the church mortgage (\$603,160 as of March 31, 2022).

Church Operating Expenses Paid:	January	February	March	Total
Salaries	16,932	16,595	17,528	127,900
Benefits	4,828	3,398	4,469	41,116
Debt Payments	6,883	6,883	6,883	61,947
District/Synod Support	2,500	2,500	2,500	22,002
Electricity	1,180	1,807	1,564	9,753
Christian Education	48	-	24	2,674
Church Property	2,195	2,506	2,335	12,760
Office	1,008	1,911	1,381	13,174
Worship	1,114	242	1,726	7,355
Youth	-	-	-	-
HRA	-	-	254	4,209
Heating Fuel	3,175	3,109	2,010	12,233
Repair and Maintenance	270	318	780	8,637
Outreach/ Missions	-	-	-	840
Conferences	-	-	944	944
Insurance	-	-	-	(372)
Other	565	803	-	1,988
Total	40,698	40,072	42,398	327,160
Budgeted Needs	36,228	36,228	36,228	326,052



Women Inspired LWML

The Women Inspired group met Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 6:30 pm in the Fireside Room.

Nine members were present.

Pat Johnson opened with prayer.

The meeting was called to order by Pat Johnson.

The Treasurer's report was approved.

No Correspondence.

Business:

On April 27th the Confirmation professions of faith will be held. It was decided that members would provide made-at-home desserts and cool whip for this event for about 125 people. Punch ingredients will be purchased.

Announcement:

April 30th is the Spring LWML Rally at Christ Lutheran in Superior.

We will carpool from St. Matthews at 9:30.

Registration 10-10:30, \$5 registration fee.

Pastor Thompson of Hope Lutheran, Munger will speak on the theme: "Follow Me".

There will be an ingathering for the Ruth House in Superior: Bring any of the following; toilet paper, paper towels, Dawn dish soap, Kleenex, plastic wrap, aluminum foil, canned goods, pasta, cereal, boxed food.

The next meeting will be May 10, at 6:30 p.m.

The mite devotion was on the LWML mission grants, *Educating Pastors in Africa Mission Central, supporting Seminaries and Missionaries in East and West Africa*, and *Propelling the Gospel LAMP Ministry Inc., The Word Takes Flight*

Mites were collected.

The Bible Study was from chapter 25 in our book "*Love Rules; a Study of the Ten Commandments*" the seventh Commandment – Don't Steal, Shopping and Prozac.

We joined in a closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Nelson
Secretary



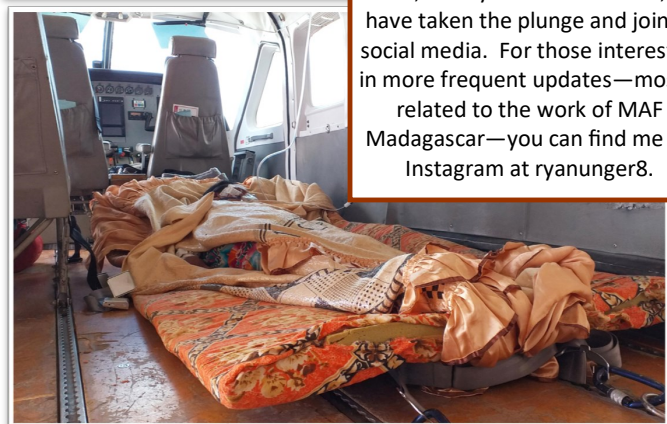
Pictured above is a bush ambulance on its way to meet the airplane. In front, you can see the patient on a stretcher made of wooden poles, with the oxygen concentrator tied on, as well as a pole to support the IV. Bringing up the rear is the power supply (a noisy generator) to run the concentrator.

It had been almost three years since we last landed at this airstrip, so there was a bit of a concern as to its condition. How long will the grass be? How deep are the ruts from all the oxcarts that use the airstrip as a road? Will there be piles of rocks where kids have made soccer goals? Thankfully, despite all the rain we received in February, the airstrip was good and I could land to bring the patient back to Tana.



It was a 50-minute flight instead of a full day (or more) by road—if there is a 4x4 available, and if it doesn't get stuck or break down on the way.

I've posted a video and some photos of this flight on Instagram. Yes, after years of hesitation, I have taken the plunge and joined social media. For those interested in more frequent updates—mostly related to the work of MAF Madagascar—you can find me on Instagram at ryanunger8.



Speaking of February rain, we've had five tropical weather systems pass through Madagascar this year. Three tropical storms and two cyclones. While they brought much-needed rain to many places in the interior (especially the south where there has been extensive drought), large sections along the east coast were flooded and hit hard by wind damage. We did many hours of survey flying after the storms to assess the extent of the damage. We hope that the information gained from the surveys will help the agencies responding to make wise decisions as to where and how to help.



In the midst of medevacs and cyclones, we also had a request from some friends at YWAM to visit the south. Remember Deborah, the OM missionary from Ambovombe who we evacuated to Tana a year ago? Our friends with YWAM went to visit and teach in the churches that Deborah and her colleagues with OM have been faithfully working alongside for many years. Seeing these kinds of partnerships—between organizations and between nations—is always very encouraging. For YWAM to get there and back would have meant a week on the road. Instead, it was a two and half hour flight to the south with MAF, and then they drove the five hours to the closest city for the flight back with the local airline. For some great videos from their trip, you can follow the links on the next page.

**Thank you for all of you who continue to pray and support the work of MAF in Madagascar.
To God be the Glory!**

It's been a while since we've given a proper update on our kids...

Caleb is in Sixieme—Grade 6—which means he spends an hour or two on the bus everyday heading to the middle/high school on the other side of town. This was one of the big reasons we hesitated to send him there. We tried an online school for a few months, but Caleb is incredibly social and this just didn't work. So we decided to give the French school a try. He comes back home in a good mood almost every day with something interesting from the day to share with us. After years of theatrics from him, we always pictured him on a stage. So when he was given the choice between Theater or Latin, we couldn't believe that he was considering the latter! Quid est?! One of his teachers described him as "perfectly bilingual"—in French that is. He's certainly more artistic than either of his parents and enjoys drawing. He is progressing well in piano. I might even say he has some natural talent even though he "hates it". He loves reading too, and has read *The Lord of the Rings* three times.

Renée is in CM1—Grade 4—and is the most kinetic of our kids. She's been a bouncer/rocker since before she could walk and has a natural athleticism. She is part of a "circus" after school activity and loves it. We wish she could get into gymnastics, but it isn't offered here, so she meets her need for bouncing and being upside down on our trampoline and a fabric swing in her room, and by doing handstands and cartwheels in the garden. Renée tolerates piano and has to work harder at it than her older brother, but it makes the success that much sweeter. She's recently gotten into art and loves creating beautiful scenes with pastels. She's fairly shy and likes her comfort bubble, but has found some good friends at school, including a new missionary kid in her class (not common at our school, so a huge blessing).

Joel is in CE1—Grade 2—and has expressed a love of math several times. He's very enthusiastic about piano, despite showing signs of being tone deaf (he'll happily play in perfect sync with his practice tracks, just in the wrong key). He can entertain himself for extended periods of time with just a stick and his imagination (and sound effects) in the garden, but can also be incessantly whiny for screen time. Joel plays soccer with friends (often vs dad) almost every afternoon in our yard and is developing decent skills. In last weekend's game of family soccer (we play regularly with a few other families at the nearby synthetic field), he first put a ball off the post and then a few minutes later scored his first goal. His eyebrows nearly left his forehead in surprise that turned to joy that turned into a big hug for his dad. "That was my wish!" he said.

And yes, in case you're wondering, I'm still married to an amazing woman who also deserves a column to say what she's been up to, but that'll have to wait until our next letter. ☺



Ryan Kristen Caleb Renée J OEL

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Driving around the south—people, landscape, sandy roads:

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