



St. Matthew
Evangelical Lutheran Church

THE ACTS...of God's People

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- ☞ Prayer via Zoom– Wednesday evenings

~April 2020~



If God raised Jesus from the dead and no one saw it, did it really happen?

I don't mean to be glib about such an important thing, but it is a real question that gets at the heart of faith. For in truth, no one saw the resurrection. Just the aftermath. Just the empty tomb.

In fact, the Roman authorities used the lack of eyewitnesses to the actual act of resurrection to try to convince the world that the apostles were lying. (Matthew 28:11-15) Obviously that didn't work as well as they hoped. And do not forget: the first (and only?) ones to find the empty tomb were women, whose testimony was as often disregarded, as it is today.

Yet somehow they believed. Many came to believe. Despite not having seen the event itself, despite the very small number of people who were blessed to see Jesus after the resurrection, many more came to believe. And for 2000 years now, many believe what we can barely comprehend, without tangible evidence or personal confirmation.

All of which is to suggest two things: first, it must have happened, and second, it doesn't have to be seen to be.

If we celebrate Easter and there is no one to see it, will it really happen?

As the entire world moves toward social distancing and personal isolation, the community that we call the church comes into a time of great peril. We cannot come together for corporate worship. We cannot gather for Bible study or fellowship or mutual encouragement. How then can we continue to be a church?

It is a more defined version of the shadow that has been looming over us for some time now. As attendance in churches continues to decline, as resources become scarce and new generations slip away, we worry that the church will disappear from a very different kind of social isolation. Traditions that we grew up on are losing their value. Institutions that we thought defined society are crumbling. The world swirls about us in a great dance of constant change, and we are at a loss to keep up. There is a constant and imminent threat to what we hold most dear.

And if the church meets and there is no one there to join it, will there still be faith?

Of course there will.

Pastor continued



This moment in history that threatens to be our undoing may well be a great benefit. For too long we have defined church as a building, as a liturgy, as well-known hymns and an assortment of customary and much-loved events. For too long we have invested our treasures and our hearts into the church of our own creation, often to the neglect of the one of Christ's making. And there is no better motivation to rebuild and renew something than to witness its demise.

At this writing in mid-March, we are not able to gather in our usual ways, and we have no idea when we will be able to again. In the weeks to come, moments of community will be scarce, opportunities to support and serve one another will be scattered. We have work-arounds, of course, and we will make the most of them. Online, livestreaming, conference calling – we will use these to our utmost advantage. For some, the idea of an online gathering will be strange. (No more so than preaching to an empty sanctuary and a camera!) Some of us have avoided and even rejected social media instruments like Facebook. Some of us are going to have to get over that. Some of us do not have access to the technology that we really need now. Some of us are going to need help, and others of us are going to need to help them.

One way or another, this year we are going to celebrate Easter like we never have before.

All of these tools are only about replacing, to the best of our ability, much needed elements of worship and kinship. The real work ahead of us now is to redefine what a church is. Or rather, what church is. Because church is not a noun, not an institution, not a place or an event. Church is a verb, an act, a doing that brings light into the darkness of the world and opens the door for the Kingdom of God.

Too often we are only church for 60 minutes on Sunday morning. Now that we can hardly do that, perhaps we can fix our vision on being church for the other 167 hours of the week.

This is a new day for us all. It is strange and hard and fearful and tragic and sad. It is also a huge challenge for a Pastor who was not trained nor prepared to do ministry like this. But faith demands that we be hopeful, because only if we are open to this day can we hear the Spirit speaking. I cannot doubt that God is here somewhere like a tiny spark of light in the darkness. Even if I can't see it now.

Join me as we search him out.

Opportunity to Serve



Even though we are not going to be together in our church building on Easter Sunday this year, we want to do our best to share together as we celebrate the Resurrection. To do this well, we need to get communion supplies and Easter Lilies into people's hands. There are two opportunities for you to help:

- ◆ We need a few people to be at the church during scheduled times so that people can come and pick up the supplies they need for Easter Sunday. You can pick your hours / days from April 7th through 11th. **YOU MUST BE FREE OF ANY SYMPTOMS OF THE VIRUS AND REASONABLY SURE YOU HAVE NOT COME INTO CONTACT WITH ANYONE WHO MIGHT BE CONTAGIOUS.** There will be other safety precautions that you will have to observe. For social distancing reasons, we will not schedule more than two or three people to work at a time.
- ◆ We need volunteers to deliver communion supplies and lilies to members who are not able to leave their houses. These deliveries should also happen between April 7th and 11th. Same rules and safety precautions will apply.
- ◆ Not on this list but an idea for you to consider. Doing online worship only reaches people who have the ability to be online. Perhaps you know of someone who needs a little help with the technology - to find the facebook page or website, for example. Reach out and see if you can help!

Please contact Pastor Glen at gthomas@smlutheran.com or call 402-740-6395 if you can help or have questions.

IF YOU WANT AN EASTER LILLY YOU WILL NEED TO ORDER IT BY APRIL 6TH. Call or email Pastor Glen.

This is a good time for us to make an investment in one another. I hope you will prayerfully consider how you might help.

Facebook



Like and Share our St Matthew Facebook page! You will find updates and news throughout the month!

www.facebook.com/St-Matthew-Evangelical-Lutheran-Church-191409984237851/

WELCA Lenten Project



WELCA (Women of the ELCA) welcomes you to donate any unneeded eyeglasses, sunglasses, accessories or hearing aids during the Lenten season. Box located in the narthex.

Lenten season:
February 28-April 12, 2020

Food Pantry



We want you all to know that during this trying time of COVID-19 pandemic, we were open for business as usual. We did however, have to modify how we usually do things to comply with the social distancing mandates. We served 10 families on Saturday, March 21st. We had our guests stay in their cars and we had runners who took the registration materials and food selection forms to them. Once completed, their requests were filled by a team of five and then returned to their cars. It went very smoothly and everyone was very appreciative and thankful that we were open. If our situation does not change, we will run the pantry in April much the same way.

I would like to thank Kent Ties, Andrew Rouillard, Brent Thomsen, Bill & Kelli Stott and Jacob for their help in making the pantry run smoothly. They have all even agreed to help in April!! So thankful for our generous volunteers and contributors to our food supply.

We recognize that some of our congregation members may be affected by job layoffs and closings. With that being said, if you are experiencing difficulties during this time, please be assured that the pantry is available to you. If you are in need of assistance, please call Pastor and he will contact me. We can make arrangements to meet at the church to help you out.

If you would like to contribute to the pantry shelves, we can make arrangements to collect your donations on Friday, April 17th. Please call ahead to 402-871-9166 to make arrangements. **THANK YOU!!!!**

I pray that we all stay safe and healthy through this trying time.

Your faithful servant,
~Sue Ties

Calendar of Events @ St. Matthew

APRIL



~SUNDAY, APRIL 12~
WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30 AM



MONDAY, APRIL 13

ACTS Newsletter Articles
Due in the Office Today

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15
8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom



SATURDAY, APRIL 18
10:00 am Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry

~SUNDAY, APRIL 19~
WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30 AM



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22
8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

~SUNDAY, APRIL 26~
WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30 AM



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29
8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

All in-person worship services and events at St. Matthew are suspended until further notice. This calendar includes only days with events during this time.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1
8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

~SUNDAY, APRIL 5~
WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30 AM



MONDAY, APRIL 6
Easter Lily orders due

TUESDAY, APRIL 7
Pick-up & Delivery of communion supplies and Easter lilies

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8
Pick-up & Delivery of communion supplies and Easter lilies
8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

THURSDAY, APRIL 9
Pick-up & Delivery of communion supplies and Easter lilies

FRIDAY, APRIL 10
Pick-up & Delivery of communion supplies and Easter lilies

SATURDAY, APRIL 11
Pick-up & Delivery of communion supplies and Easter lilies



🌀 See(k) First

Seek

On Facebook, I can “follow” as many people as I want, viewing their messages, photos and activities. But I can choose only 30 to “see first” — that is, to prioritize in my news feed. As of this writing (Facebook changes often), if my “see first” list is full and I want to add someone new, I must “unprioritize” someone else.

That leads me to ponder bigger matters: I often claim to follow Jesus, but what might I need to “unprioritize” to make him not just a priority but *the* priority in my life? To what do I devote time and attention but ought to let go to follow Christ more closely? What activities, behaviors and values do I need to not just bump from my “see first” list but “unfollow” or “block” entirely? Perhaps they are antithetical to discipleship or simply take too much time away from prayer, Scripture and service.

This dilemma isn’t unique to the digital age. Facebook parlance is about what we “see first,” but in Matthew 6:33 Jesus says, “*Seek* first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (ESV, italics added).

—Heidi Mann

🌀 Sunday Mornings



We are still church!

Sunday morning at 8:30 am

Online worship will be at 8:30 am via the church website www.smlutheran.com or on our Facebook page or anytime afterwards.

Hope to "see" you!

🌀 Sympathy To

Family and friends mourning the death of Robert “Bob” Schellhase on March 23rd, 2020. A memorial will be held at a later date.



Easter Sunday



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Food Pantry



~Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry~ Items Needed

Sugar	Pancake Mix
Boxed Potatoes	Boxed Pasta
Saltine Crackers	Canned Chicken
Corn Muffin Mix	Canned Fruit– pears, pineapple

🌀 Worship Servants & Donations



As the Covid-19 virus spreads throughout our community and across the globe, we must make difficult and painful choices in order to respond to this situation appropriately.

All worship services and events at St. Matthew are suspended until further notice. This is at the recommendation of the civil authorities and of our Bishop.

We are livestreaming a worship service at 8:30 am on Sundays. You can join live or watch anytime on our Facebook page.

🌀 Easter Traditions



Easter traditions are important, but they vary widely. While Americans dye hardboiled eggs, Kenyans carve soapstone eggs and present them as gifts in banana-fiber boxes. In Bermuda, locals fly homemade kites on Good Friday — a tradition that began when a teacher illustrated Christ's ascension to heaven using a cross-shaped kite.

Ethiopian Christians observe a 56-day fast from meat and all animal products. On Easter, they dress in white to worship in churches decorated with handmade fabric. Then they feast with non-Christians on roast chicken, goat and rice.

In France, church bells are silent between Holy Thursday and Easter to observe Jesus' Passion. According to legend, the bells grow wings and fly to Rome to be blessed, returning on Easter with chocolate and presents. In one town's main square, chefs make a giant omelet with 4,500 eggs to feed 1,000 people!

🌀 Availability



Office hours will be erratic for a while. Pastor Glen will be reducing his time in public as much as possible without neglecting his call. **IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF A PASTORAL PRESENCE HE WILL BE THERE FOR YOU!** Call him and he will be there— of just call to talk!

Pastor Glen Cell (402)740-6395

Church Staff



Pastor ~ Glen Thomas
Administrative Assistant ~ Carrie Conley
Communications Coordinator~ Jacob York
Bookkeeper ~ Veda Keebler
Custodian ~ Jack Wiese
Music Director ~ Ric Swanson
Organist ~ Kim Hansen
JuBELLation Ringers Director ~ Ginger Britt

Church Council



Glen Thomas ~ *Pastor*
Brett Fuller—President
Bill Stott—Vice President
Randy Cramer— Secretary
Tammy Nelson—Treasurer

Teri Yeoman - Financial Secretary
Luke Compton— Faith Formation
Dave Sherwin— Community Care
John Hollenbeck— Property
Veda Keebler - Worship and Music

Church Office Information



OFFICE HOURS ~ Monday and Wednesday 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.,
Tuesday and Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon, and Friday 9:30 am -
10:30 am. Occasionally staff will not be in the office during these times;
therefore, please call before coming to make sure we are available to assist
you as needed. If no one is available, leave a message and we will call you
back as soon as possible.

CALENDAR ~ All events, activities or meetings planned to be held at St.
Matthew need to be placed on the church calendar. To schedule an event,
activity or meeting call the church office and speak with Carrie.

WEEKLY BULLETIN ~ All information for announcements need to be in the
church office by **Wednesday at noon**.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER ~ All information for the monthly newsletter “The
Acts” is due in the church office on the **second or third Monday of each
month**. Specific date listed on the monthly newsletter calendar page.

PAPER RECYCLING ~ We collect all office related paper items, catalogs, and
books for recycling. Cardboard products are not included in this recycling
program. The recycling waste containers are located in the secretary’s office.

Financial Report

~February 2020~



General Fund Activity

Beginning			Transfers	Ending
Balance	Receipts	Payments	In (Out)	Balance
8,788.05	14,075.76	18,362.63		24,281.18

Benevolence Offerings

Hunger Offerings

Receipts	Dispersed	Receipts	Dispersed
1,405.00	2,800.00	211.69	205.26

Women of the ELCA

Service Project ~ Toothpaste/brushes



~Daily Devotional “Daily Grace”~

Women of the ELCA website: www.womenoftheelca.org

You can go to the free site (above) to access short daily devotions as you wish, or subscribe for daily emails.

Electronic Giving

~Enjoy the convenience of electronic giving!



OUR church offers electronic giving, which allows you to make donations on a scheduled, automatic basis. It’s very convenient for you and provides much-needed donation consistency for our church. You will no longer need to write out checks and prepare envelopes every week. Even when travel, illness or other circumstances prevent you from attending services, your electronic contributions will continue to be received on an uninterrupted basis.

To set up electronic donations, simply complete the authorization form available at church and return it to the church office. Donations can be debited automatically from either a checking or savings account.



"Empowered by God as committed disciples, we boldly care for and serve our congregation, our community and our world."

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church
1725 S 60th Street
Omaha, NE 68106-2149

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



~CONTACT INFORMATION~

Office Phone (402) 556-7030
Email: office@smllutheran.com
Web Site: www.smllutheran.com

~WORSHIP SCHEDULE~

Sunday @ 8:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
Holy Communion Every Week

~SUNDAY COFFEE AND FELLOWSHIP~

9:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall

~SUNDAY SCHOOL~

9:40 a.m. - 10:20 a.m.

A journey for everyone from 2—102!

This newsletter is now available on our church website and is emailed to our members and friends. To help decrease the cost of printing and postage, please notify the church office of your current email address. Thank you!

