



"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



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!

~CONTACT INFORMATION~

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

~WORSHIP SCHEDULE~

Sunday @ 9:30 a.m.
Holy Communion Every Week

~SUNDAY COFFEE AND FELLOWSHIP~

10:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall

ST. MATTHEW

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWS

April 2022

THE ACTS...of God's People

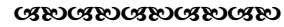


ACTS

See Pastor's message on page 2 about a love that has neither a beginning nor end.

HOLY WEEK

As Holy Week approaches see page 4 for a list of upcoming events as we revisit the great story of God's love.



GOOD NEWS

Everyone loves good news! Let's share happy times. See page 9 for details!

We believe that everyone is a child of God, and we welcome all to join our table for worship and fellowship. The love of Jesus commands that we provide amazing hospitality to everyone regardless of color, age, marital status, citizenship, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

With Divine Love, we stand as friends, allies, and supporters of all whom the world has marginalized or oppressed. I am a friend of God, He calls me friend.

With Divine Friendship, we receive the gifts of all people as members and leaders in our community in whatever role or vocation God assigns them.

Worship: Sundays, 9:30 am

Address: 1725 S 60th St. Omaha , NE 68106-2149

Phone: 402-556-7030

Email: office@smlutheran.com

ACTS – Pastor Glen

In human culture, the ring is a symbol of love because it has neither an ending nor beginning. It is a metaphor for the promise of love - that it exists before we seek it and remains long after we have given up on it.

As we come to the end of our Lenten journey, we gather around the story of a love which has neither a beginning nor ending. That's good for us; because we are so bad at both.

We are terrible at endings, although we are obsessed with them. Our hearts are full of grief for all that used to be, for all those whom we have loved and lost, for all the treasured memories that we cannot recreate, for a vision of a past that does not exist any longer and will never be again. We are terrible at saying goodbye and so we never do. In that way, we are constantly prisoners of a past which will not let us go.

But we need endings. Amidst all that we wish we could keep forever, there is much that must end. Past mistakes become lifetime habits, old grudges destroy relationships and tear communities apart. The cross is the death with all that is broken in us and in our world, and there are so many things that need to die on a cross. Old prejudices need to die on a cross. Old rivalries and old corruptions need to die on a cross. Old addictions and old grievances need to die on a cross. Old guilts and old shames need to die on a cross. Old sins need to die on a cross.

Because if they do not, there can be no new beginnings.

Not that we are so much better at new beginnings. Beginnings are frightening because they point to a future we cannot see or control. It is no wonder that the women ran from the empty tomb in fear. How could they possibly have known what it meant or what it pretended? For the most part we are “put your toe in the water to test it first” people. We are hesitant about what is uncertain, and all new beginnings are always wrapped in uncertainty.

That fear of course is the enemy of real growth. Without new beginnings we are the same old sinners living the same old sinful lives, day after day, year after year. We cannot win: we are stuck in a past that is destroying us and we are unable to move toward a future that might save us.

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor ~ Glen Thomas
Music Director ~ Ric Swanson
Organist ~ Kim Hansen
JuBELLation Ringers Director ~ Ginger Britt
Office Administrator ~ Lena Johnson
Custodian ~ Jack Wiese

CHURCH OFFICE INFORMATION

OFFICE HOURS ~ Monday through Friday 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

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 to our new Office Administrator, Lena Johnson. She will be happy to assist you!

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 **20th of each month**.

PAPER RECYCLING ~ We recycle church bulletins and other printed items once no longer needed. You may leave your Sunday bulletin in the box on the table in the narthex when the service is over.

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church
1725 S. 60th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68106-2149
402-556-7030



As part of St. Matthew's participation in the Nebraska Synod Congregational Vitality Initiative, the team interviewed members of the congregation as part of getting a sense of "who we are" as a church. We are still collecting data; these are the key takeaways from what we have heard so far in our internal interviews (January 2022):

- Weak congregational identity: Most respondents were unsure or didn't know our church's vocation.
- Low energy: Words used to describe the congregation: stale, tired, low energy, lacking creativity
- Need to grow the congregation: This was mentioned in every interview.
- Youth ministry has declined and needs to be strengthened: Responses specifically mentioned having a paid staff member and a preschool. Many listed vibrant, thriving youth ministry as the 'most alive' time in our church.
- We currently have a leadership void: Much concern over the lack of identified leaders in the church and who will step up to move things forward and the impact of covid and health concerns on the pastor and his long-term ability to continue full time in his role.
- Need to be open to doing things differently and radical change: Respondents recognize the need to try different approaches, even if difficult.
- We have hope for the future! Congregants truly care about our church and want to see it continue to serve God and our neighbors.

To learn more about the Vitality Initiative, go to the St. Matthew web page, www.smlutheran.com, and look under the "About Us" tab.

We are desperate for answers to this unanswerable question. We need a different journey to travel. We need a better story. Which is why we tell this story every year at this time, and by the grace of God every day in our own lives.

We experience the events of Holy Week in a linear fashion: the Triumphal Entry, the Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection. We are, after all, creatures locked in time. We measure life from one moment to the next. We add up our days like an accountant, grasping for a grand total of pluses and minuses that we believe will bring us to some grand summation. That's why we miss out on the gift of love which is the passion of our Savior.

This is a story which has neither beginning nor end. Because this is the story of love.

Yes, the grace of God is an ending. It is the end of all that is wrong and broken and self-centered about us. It is the wiping clean of all about us that keeps us from the Kingdom of God. But God's grace, like the Easter dawn, is the rise of something new. It is the dawn of a new day, and unforeseen day, of potential and possibility, of life and light. The cross is not an arbitrary ending, but a purposeful transition to something not just greater but completely different.

But the true gift of the love of God is that it exposes both endings and beginnings as the frauds they are. The life of faith is lived in the trust and hope that we are defined by neither. We are not what we have been. We have yet to fully become what we will be. And in the intersection of beginnings and endings is a moment that we call life. This is where we abide. This is where we must remain. The past is gone, and only God can write the future. Instead we are called as followers of

Jesus to let go of both. We are called to put to death our past and to put into God's hands our future, so that we might be fully present in the world which we are called to serve.

Our uneasy relationship with beginnings and endings only brings us anxiety, frustration, and misery. Now we come to remember again the story of love that is neither, a story that defines us, that frees us, that creates this moment in which we live every day.

☞ HOLY WEEK

HOLY WEEK is the time every year when we revisit the great story of God's love in the crucifixion and resurrection of our savior Jesus Christ. We come not merely to hear the story but to put ourselves in the middle of it, that it might define our lives, show us our path, and light our future. These worship services are the core of our faith, and everything we do is but a replaying of these important days.

Sunday, April 10 – 9:30 am worship. Palm Sunday. *Join us for a special brunch after church as we wish Brent Thomsen and Andrew Rouillard Godspeed and Farewell.*

Thursday, April 14 – 6:30 pm worship. Maundy Thursday. *We observe the Last Supper. Holy Communion will be served at the altar rail for all who desire it.*

Friday, April 15 – 6:30 pm worship. *Our shared Good Friday observance with our Metro Lutheran family congregations will be held this year at Trinity Lutheran Church, 6340 N 30th Street.*

Sunday, April 17 – 9:30 am worship. *The Festival of Easter comes with a new hope for life!*



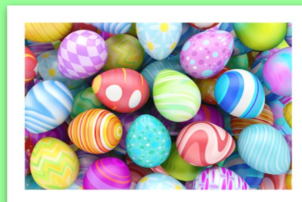
☞ EASTER LILLIES

ADD BEAUTY TO OUR EASTER WORSHIP SERVICES by donating Easter Lily Plants, which you may take home with you following the 9:30 a.m. service on Easter Sunday. Complete the information on the enclosed form, and place it in the offering plate or turn it into the church office **no later than Sunday, April 10th**. The cost this year is \$15 each.



☞ EASTER EGG HUNT

The Easter Egg Hunt for kids is scheduled for April 17th, immediately following the 9:30 am service meet on the front lawn. Bags will be provided, or feel free to bring your own Easter basket/bag. See you there!



☞ LUTHERAN WOMEN OF OMAHA MEETING

Tuesday, April 12, 2022
12:00 noon

Place: Augustana Lutheran Church, 3847 Lafayette
Cost: \$7.00 Lunch provided
Program: Hannah Wyble: Restoring Dignity
Free Will Offering: Restoring Dignity

*Reservations to Mardelle Gocek - (402) 292-1328
by Sunday, April 10, 2022*

☞ SOCK SUNDAY

In co-operation with NSWOWomen of the ELCA Saved to Serve Opportunity Retreat with Magdalene/Omaha, we are gathering socks for women and children in need. We are also in need of plain T-shirts, sizes Large to XXX. Please leave your donations in the marked box located in the narthex.

Thank you all for your kindness & generosity!

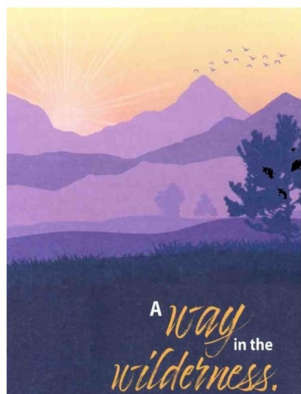
☞ SHARE GOOD NEWS

Is it your birthday this month? Do you have something to share or celebrate this month? Please let us know! Everyone loves good news, so let's share photos and stories with one another! If you have a celebration story or photos you wish to share, send them our way!



LENT VESPERS

Worship: 6:30 pm, Wednesdays



Join us on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm for Vespers and take a few moments each week for prayer and reflection. Services will be in-person and livestream. Stay for a time of fellowship following worship.

The season of Lent grounds us in a time in the wilderness. In Lent, we wander with our ancestors, longing for new life in a land of promise and opportunity. We are reminded of our dependence on God and the many ways that sin separates us from one another, from God and from the future we are promised. Yet we are reminded that, even

as we journey toward that promised ending, we are not alone. We cling to God's promise: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (Isaiah 43:19).

Through the Lenten season, we will reflect on the ways God's promise sustains and challenges us and our church. We will search for signs of God at work in our world, making a way in the wilderness still.

Join us Wednesday evening April 6th at 6:30 pm for Vespers and take a few moments this week for prayer and reflection. The service will be in-person and livestream, and stay for a few minutes of fellowship following.

SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT

ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIPS are available for St. Matthew members studying at any post-secondary educational institution. The amount of the scholarship may be up to \$500, depending on number of applicants and available funds, and may be renewed for up to four years of post-secondary education. Applications are available from Pastor Glen (or the church office), and they are due by May 31st.

FINANCIAL REPORT

April's financial report will be included in our May issue.

APRIL 2022 WORSHIP SERVANTS

READINGS WILL BE EMAILED on Mondays (please contact the church office if you do not receive them). Communion Assistants' duties are temporarily suspended during the Omicron surge. They will continue when the surge has subsided. If you cannot make your scheduled service, please attempt to find a substitute, and contact the church office if you cannot. Bless you for your faithful service!

DAY / DATE	TIME	LECTOR	COMMUNION ASST	USHER	CAMERA TECH	VIDEO TECH	ALTAR GUILD
Sunday April 3	9:30 am	Lorie Thomas	Chris Chubb	Curt Losee	Glen Thomas	Naomi Kirkvold	Marlys Hansen & Mary Peters
Sunday April 10	9:30 am	Michael Waits	Marlys Hansen	Dennis/ Margie Magnuson	Derek Copenhaver	Shane Waits	Marlys Hansen & Mary Peters
Thursday April 14	6:30 pm	Nate Houfek	Nate Houfek Lorie Thomas	Dave Sherwin Michael Lisko	Derek Copenhaver	Glen Thomas	Marlys Hansen & Mary Peters
Sunday April 17	9:30 am	Linda Hill	Deanna Han- sen	Randy/Val Cramer	Derek Copenhaver	TBD	Marlys Hansen & Mary Peters
Sunday April 24	9:30 am	Charlotte Jensen	Charlotte Jen- sen	Nate Houfek	Derek Copenhaver	Kent Ties	Marlys Hansen & Mary Peters

COUNCIL OFFICERS ELECTED

The Congregational Annual Council Meeting was held March 15th, and our new church council was elected. Please join us as we welcome the incoming church council members for 2022:

PRESIDENT: *Scott Albright*

VICE-PRESIDENT: *Brett Fuller*

SECRETARY: *Linda Hill*

TREASURER: *Sue Ties*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: *Margie Magnuson*

AT LARGE: *Dave Sherwin*

April 2022

April 2022						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

May 2022						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Mar 27	28	29	30	31	Apr 1	2
3 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Coffee Fellowship	4 9:00am Tanzania Treasures (Classroom 4 & 5)	5 9:00am Sewing for Babies (Art Room)	6	7	8	9 9:00am SPRING CLEAN-UP DAY
10 PALM SUNDAY 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Brunch - After worship ((for Andrew 12:00pm Easter Lily	11 9:00am Tanzania Treasures (Classroom 4 & 5)	12 12:00pm Lutheran Women of Omaha (Augustana Lutheran Church .)	13	14 6:30pm Maundy Thursday Worship (Sanctuary)	15 6:30pm Good Friday Worship (Trinity Lutheran Church 6340 N 30th St.)	16
17 9:30am EASTER SUNDAY (New hope) 10:45am EASTER EGG HUNT (Follows worship)	18 Tax Day (United States) 9:00am Tanzania Treasures (Classroom 4 & 5)	19 9:00am Sewing for Babies (Art Room)	20	21	22	23 1:00pm Matinee Musicale (Sanctuary/Lounge)
24 9:30am Sunday Worship	25 9:00am Tanzania Treasures (Classroom 4 & 5)	26	27	28	29	30