

ST. MATTHEW

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH NEWS

May 2022

THE ACTS...of God's People



GROW YOUR SPIRIT

See Pastor's message on what we can learn from the upcoming spring planting season.

National Day of Prayer

May brings warmer temps, blooming flowers, and the fresh beginnings of summer. With May Day celebrations such as Cinco de Mayo and Memorial Day, May is a month worth celebrating (and we can't forget about Star Wars Day). This year the National Day of Prayer is on May 5th (always the first Thursday in May). This day is set aside for all Americans of every religion to celebrate the importance of prayer.

As we enjoy all May has to offer, on this National Day of Prayer, let us all be respectful of all faiths, as well as those that prefer not to pray. It is a day for unity, love, respect, and most of all prayer.



Worship: Sundays, 9:30 a.m.
Address: 1725 S 60th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68106
Phone: 402-556-7030
Email: office@smlutheran.com

SPRING HAS SPRUNG

See story on page 7 for the "Loaves and Fishes" update!

THE WAY BACK...

On page 12 is a message from presiding Bishop, Elizabeth Eaton.

It's here again: Yardwork Season!

(Personal Disclaimer: I don't actually do very much yard work at all these days, but I have deep memories of what it takes, and a very strong sense that what we do in the great outdoors reflects things deep inside of us.)

I couldn't help but notice at the Home Depot the other day that the store was in full spring planting mode. After all, I was there to pick up my own pre-emergent herbicide. Because that's what you do this time of year. You get the lawn ready, you spruce up the flowerbeds, you trim the trees and watch them bloom. After a winter of being cooped up inside four walls, the great outdoors beckons us all.



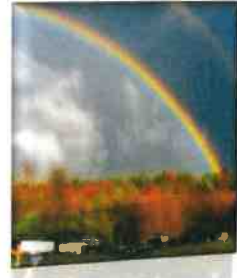
That might not be a bad thing. There is a lot to be gained by engaging with and enjoying the beauty of God's creation. In a world much too full of dead things, we need to spend more time with living things. It is not so much about having a green thumb as it is about having a sincere desire to be a part of this amazing world that God has made, especially because we get too caught up in the things of our own making.

And maybe that's the real lesson. Instead of just seeing this season as simply full of a new kind of chore to do, we have this moment to open up our hearts and our minds and use this opportunity to grow the one thing that really matters: our Spirit.

What can we learn from spring planting season?

1. There is something to be said for a little hard work. Despite all of our technological advances, this season requires a significant amount of personal, physical labor. Maybe (and this is, admittedly a little counter-intuitive) that's what we like most about it. There is something ancient, even genetic in our nature: we like to dig in the ground and get our hands a little dirty. There are few things as satisfying as planting something in the ground and seeing the fruits of our labors. It has always been this way.

Given that we conduct so much of our life as spectators and commentators, it is a good thing for us to be forced off of our couches and given work to do. It is human nature at its worst that we are so good at observing and pointing out others' mistakes, at being critical and cynical. It is human nature at its worst that we truly love complaining most of all. But there is an easy antidote to our sin: stop watching and talking and get to work.



2. It is important to plant things that actually belong. I am constantly amazed by how hard we work against the creation, how much we try to grow things in places they are not meant to be. It is what I find most humorous about lawn care. Why are we so invested growing something that is not indigenous to this land? We spent enormous amounts of effort (and money) and frustration on a plant that is not meant to thrive here. What are we trying to prove?

Perhaps it is just a facet of our nature that we are not good at loving things the way they are and feel constantly compelled to remake the world in our own image. We treat our yards like we treat our neighbors: we have no grace for the world and each other as God created us to be. Much to our own grief. Imagine the joy we might discover if we could learn to enjoy the world just as God made it.

3. Plant some flowers for the bees. Scientists tell us that one of the great environmental catastrophes of this day is the devastation of the insect, and especially the bee, population. Our destruction of natural flora could potentially threaten all agriculture. But how simple the solution! Since we refused to tolerate dandelions (a natural habitat for important insects) it is incumbent upon us to replace what we have destroyed with flowering plants that serve the needs of bees.

It's not surprising that much of what we do for our own benefit is harmful to the world around us. We call that sin. But there is always an opportunity to amend our wrongs and atone our brokenness by doing simply good and right things with an eye on what is more significant and important than our own personal comfort.

4. Allow for the weather. Every planter knows that there are always factors which cannot be controlled. Only God can decide if there will be enough rain or enough sun. Only God can protect from storms and disasters. Faith is always an effort to grow something. Faith is always the knowledge that we can grow nothing without the grace of God.

That is the best and most wonderful gift of the season. Graced by God, we do our best with the gifts that he gives us and then wait to see the beauty he brings forth. That is the most important lesson of the spring planting season: be sure that you leave time and space to enjoy its fruits.

☞ A MOTHER'S LOVE

Having children is a blessing from God. Having a good mom is the best. I had a wonderful mom; at least from what I can remember. She died when I was a teenager, and due to an accident my memory was affected. So, every May I would say, "Great. Here comes another Mother's Day." Dread was expected when I would see Hallmark cards and flowers and gifts in stores to celebrate Mother's Day. I just always felt left out.

Then, I became a mom. Even though I still miss my mom every day, it was then that I could truly relate to the love God has for us (his children) because of the way he loves his son. What a blessing!

As a mom, I can recount the many trips driving to and from John's soccer practices, Jolie's dance classes, and Michael's wrestling tournaments, while also wondering where I would find money to give little Sarah for the 50th field trip her student choir was going to (it felt like 50!). Yet, I give everything I have to my kids because I love them, and it is not conditional on whether the dishes were washed and their beds are made when I return home from work (as much as I would like that). So, now I am content because I know that God is love, and as pure love there is nothing that can get between us and his love. Yes. I am happy knowing that. Now, I tell my kids every year I not to waste their money on cards, or flowers, or gifts because they give me the best gifts I could ever receive every day (not just in May) — their love.

- unknown -



☞ COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Congregational Council Meetings are held monthly and are now scheduled for the third Monday of each month, at 7:00 p.m. Please remember to update your personal calendars. See you there!

PRESIDENT: *Scott Albright*

VICE-PRESIDENT: *Brett Fuller*

SECRETARY: *Linda Hill*

TREASURER: *Sue Ties*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: *Margie Magnuson*

AT LARGE: *Dave Sherwin*



☞ MAY 2022 WORSHIP SERVANTS

READINGS WILL BE EMAILED on Mondays (please contact the church office if you do not receive them). 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!

Worship Servant Schedule - May

<i>DATE (Sun)</i>	<i>TIME</i>	<i>LECTOR</i>	<i>COMMUNION</i>	<i>USHERS</i>	<i>CAMERA</i>	<i>ALTAR GUILD</i>
May 1	9:30 am	Michael Waits	Chris Chubb, Lorie Thomas and Shane Waits	Dennis and Margie Magnuson	Derek Copenhaver	Charlotte Jensen and Janet Sievers
May 8	9:30 am	Glen Thomas	Marlys Hansen	Michael Lisko and Kent Ties	Derek Copenhaver	Charlotte Jensen and Janet Sievers
May 15	9:30 am	Scott Albright	Nate Houfek	Dave Sherwin and Terri Yeoman	Derek Copenhaver	Charlotte Jensen and Janet Sievers
May 22	9:30 am	Linda Hill	Deanna Hansen	Randy and Val Cramer	Derek Copenhaver	Charlotte Jensen and Janet Sievers
May 29	9:30 am	Charlotte Jensen	Charlotte Jensen	Nate Houfek	Derek Copenhaver	Charlotte Jensen and Janet Sievers

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes.

-Luke 12:37

Attention Parents and Grandparents!

Now is the time to get your kids and grandkids signed up and registered for church camp at **Camp Carol Joy Holling!** There are a variety



of camps for kids from 1st grade thru high school, and there is even a camp for grandparents! There are also SALT scholarships available if you are interested—please see Margie Magnuson for details! To register (and for more information) go to www.caroljoyholling.org.

2022 Summer Camp Schedule

JUNE 5-10 • Week 1

1st-3rd & 4th-6th • TrailHead • \$405 **FULL**
4th-6th • The Grove (formerly Tipi Village) • \$420
6th-8th • Ranch Camp • \$430
6th-8th • The Springs • \$405
Taste of Camp • Sun - Mon • \$155
J1:9 Camp for Adults with Special Needs • Wed - Fri • \$230

JUNE 12-17 • Week 2

1st-3rd & 4th-6th • TrailHead • \$405 **FULL**
4th-6th • The Grove (formerly Tipi Village) • \$420
6th-8th • Ranch Camp • \$430
6th-8th • The Springs • \$405
9th-12th • Whispering Winds • \$420
Taste of Camp • Sun - Mon • \$155
J1:9 Camp for Youth with Special Needs • Wed - Fri • \$230

JUNE 19-24 • Week 3

1st-3rd & 4th-6th • TrailHead • \$405 **FULL**
4th-6th • The Grove (formerly Tipi Village) • \$420
6th-8th • Ranch Camp • \$430
6th-8th • The Springs • \$405
9th-12th • Whispering Winds • \$420
Taste of Camp • Sun - Mon • \$155
J1:9 Camp for Adults with Special Needs • Wed - Fri • \$230
1st-6th • On-Site Day Camp • Mon - Fri • \$110

JUNE 26 - JULY 1 • Week 4

1st-3rd & 4th-6th • TrailHead • \$405 **FULL**
4th-6th • The Grove (formerly Tipi Village) • \$420
6th-8th • Ranch Camp • \$430
6th-8th • The Springs - *Night Camp* • \$405
9th-12th • *Road Trip Adventure* • \$460
Taste of Camp • Sun - Mon • \$155
Grand Camp • Wed - Fri • \$315

JULY 6-8 • Week 5 Mini-Week

1st-3rd & 4th-6th • TrailHead • \$250 **FULL**
4th-6th • The Grove (formerly Tipi Village) • \$250
6th-8th • Ranch Camp • \$250
J1:9 Camp for Adults with Special Needs • \$230

JULY 10-15 • Week 6

1st-3rd & 4th-6th • TrailHead • \$405
4th-6th • The Grove (formerly Tipi Village) • \$420
6th-8th • Ranch Camp • \$430
6th-8th • The Springs • \$405
9th-12th • Whispering Winds • \$420
Grand Camp • Wed - Fri • \$315
Taste of Camp • Sun - Mon • \$155

JULY 17-22 • Week 7

1st-3rd & 4th-6th • TrailHead • \$405 **FULL**
4th-6th • The Grove (formerly Tipi Village) • \$420
6th-8th • Ranch Camp • \$430
6th-8th • The Springs • \$405
9th-12th • Whispering Winds • \$420
Taste of Camp • Sun - Mon • \$155
J1:9 Camp for Adults with Special Needs • Wed - Fri • \$230
1st-6th • On-Site Day Camp • Mon - Fri • \$110

JULY 24-28 • Week 8 (4 Days)

1st-3rd & 4th-6th • TrailHead • \$335
4th-6th • The Grove (formerly Tipi Village) • \$335
6th-8th • Ranch Camp • \$335
6th-8th • The Springs • \$335
9th-12th • Backpacking Trip • \$460
Grand Camp • Sun - Tues • \$315

Spring has sprung and with it comes hopefully warmer weather!

We were blessed to serve 16 families in April, on the day before Easter. Thank you to ***Charlotte Jensen, Kelli & Bill Stott, and Kent Ties*** for helping serve our guests.



Due to the rising costs of groceries—and the ending of the produce program—we were unable to offer fresh produce last month.

Project Hope has run out of money in their Dairy program, so in order for us to continue to offer dairy to our guests, we now have to purchase it on our own. We usually give each guest 1/2 gallon of milk, 1/2 dozen eggs and a block of cheese. We believe this source of protein is essential to the well-being of our guests. Last month we spent about \$100 on dairy alone. We are hopeful that Project Hope will receive some grants so that they can once again provide us with these dairy items.

We also spent about \$100 on frozen meat, and another \$100 on items such as boxed potatoes, cereal, personal care items, juice and toilet paper. We can continue to purchase items that we are in need of, but donations from our congregation will really help us keep our doors open! Realizing that prices at the grocery store are rising for all of us, any extra help that you can provide is greatly appreciated!

Our most current needs are:

Chicken ramen noodles, tomato soup, saltine crackers or ritz crackers, boxed potatoes, diced tomatoes, bath soap, toilet paper, jelly, ketchup and mustard, Knorr rice or pasta mixes, apple sauce, canned fruit.

Please help us serve our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who suffer from food insecurity. Our legislature has decided to reduce the amount of assistance families in need get for groceries, so the need for pantries like ours can be a life saver to many. Let us remember them when we are out and about, and pick up a can or two for our donation box!

Volunteers are needed to help on pantry days. If you are willing and able, please contact Mary Peters.

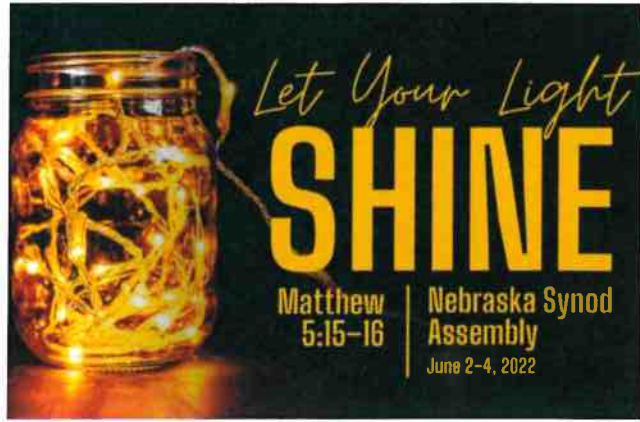
Thank you for your continued generosity.

Sue

The 2022 Nebraska Synod Assembly

The 2022 Nebraska Synod Assembly will gather in person this year.

Voting members from congregations across the state will gather in Kearney, NE to engage in conversation, vote on resolutions, elect synod council and committee representatives, and vote on any other assembly business. All participants will have opportunities for continued learning, fellowship, and learn more about the ministries of the Nebraska Synod. Voting members are elected by their congregation and gather at Synod Assembly to make decisions about the synod's governance, finances, and mission. In the ELCA, voting members are just that—members of a body (the assembly) with the privilege of voice and vote.



The gathering this year is under the theme of 'Let Your Light Shine' (the theme verse comes from Matthew 5:15-16). It is under this theme that we remember and celebrate all that is made possible as God's people and through God's work with our hands, minds, hearts, and whole selves. Registration for the 2022 Nebraska Synod Assembly is now open and is available for registrations until **May 1, 2022**.

For more information, please contact Pastor Glen.



AMAZON SMILE

Do you shop at Amazon? You can donate to St. Matthew at the same time! Just use the Amazon Smile feature and St. Matthew will receive a donation at no extra cost to you.

To get started with AmazonSmile, visit smile.amazon.com on your web browser, and sign in with your "Amazon.com" credentials. Choose St. Matthew / Omaha to receive donations, charity and start shopping! To join AmazonSmile from the mobile app, open the app and find "Settings" in the main menu. Tap on "AmazonSmile" and follow the on-screen instructions to turn on AmazonSmile on your phone.

Thanks for your support!

☞ FINANCIAL REPORT

~ MARCH 2022 ~

Beginning Balance: \$ 29,302.28
Receipts: \$ 21,162.10
Payments: \$ 20,246.33
Transfers: \$ 10,428.92
Ending Balance: \$ 40,646.97

Benevolence Offerings:

Receipts: \$ 1,337.40
Dispersed: \$ 2,928.14

Hunger Offerings:

Receipts: \$ 100.00
Dispersed: 0.00



☞ 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.



The World Herald posted this picture and asked its readers to creatively caption it, and our own Pauline Burke's submittal was the winner.
Congratulations Pauline!



*“Quit staring at me.
It wasn't my idea to wear this.”*
Pauline Burke, Omaha

May 2022

June 2022

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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
May 1 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Coffee Fellowship	2 9:00am Tanzania Treasures (Classroom 4 & 5)	3 9:00am Sewing for Babies (Art Room)	4	5 1:30 pm Coffee and Devotion with Pastor Cinco de Mayo USA National Day of Prayer	6	7
8 *Mother's Day* 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Coffee Fellowship	9 9:00am Tanzania Treasures (Classroom 4 & 5)	10	11	12 1:30 pm Coffee and Devotion with Pastor Glen	13	14 Donald Hall Memorial Service (Time TBD) 9:00am Jochebed Circle
15 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Coffee Fellowship	16 9:00am Tanzania Treasures (Classroom 4 & 5) 7:00pm Church Council Meeting	17 9:00am Sewing for Babies (Art Room)	18	19 1:30 pm Coffee and Devotion with Pastor Glen	20	21 *Armed Forces Day* Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry Day
22 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Coffee Fellowship	23 9:00am Tanzania Treasures (Classroom 4 & 5)	24 7:00pm Phoebe Circle	25	26 *Ascension Day* 1:30 pm Coffee and Devotion with Pastor Glen	27	28 12:30pm Deborah Circle
29 9:30am Sunday Worship 10:30am Coffee Fellowship	30 *Memorial Day* 9:00am Tanzania Treasures (Classroom 4 & 5)	31	Jun 1	2	3	4



Presiding Bishop Eaton

THE WAY BACK TO OUR CENTER

587 B.C.E. was not a good year. The [siege of Jerusalem](#) ended with the destruction of the city, its walls and Solomon's temple. Many died of starvation during the siege. The Babylonians at the direction of King Nebuchadnezzar II, brutally removed the population of Jerusalem to exile in Babylon.

For three generations Judah lived in exile. Babylon was powerful. Babylon was wealthy. And Babylon was cruel. We hear in [Psalm 137:1-3](#): “By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion!’”

With the temple and Jerusalem destroyed, the identity of the people of God was shaken. Who were they now? Where was the Lord now? This was more than a political, military or economic crisis. This was an existential crisis.

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel took this head on. This exile wasn't about the faithlessness of the Lord. Quite the contrary, it was a demonstration of the Lord's unwavering faithfulness, compassion and fierce love. The people and leadership of Judah had trusted in their own agency quite apart from depending on the Lord, as humankind too often does to terrible consequences.

So there in Babylon, the people carved out a life for themselves while remaining faithful and resisting assimilation. The Torah, the living word of the Lord, held them together. The prophets, through chastisement and comfort, gave hope. And, I imagine,

they often thought of home—the beauty of Jerusalem and the majesty of the temple.

This was more than a political, military or economic crisis.

This was an existential crisis.

My cousins and I spent a good part of our childhood with my maternal grandparents. They were both immigrants from Transylvania and, with much hard work, built a life, raised a family and founded our family's beer distributorship. Our grandparents' house seemed palatial. The living room ceiling was two stories high, and each year there was the most amazing Christmas tree. Often, I go over every corner of that house in my memory, and I long for it. It was a shock when I drove past that house a few years ago and saw how small it was.

Back to Babylon. A new power arose in the region. Cyrus, king of Persia, defeated Babylon and decreed that the people of Judah should return home and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah gives the account. In 52 days, withstanding violent plots by enemies, the walls were rebuilt. And then the people gathered to hear the Torah.

I was surprised to hear that they wept. Why? Some say that when hearing the Torah they were grieved by their disobedience. I think it is much more than that. Not everyone came back to Jerusalem. The city of their memory was destroyed. It wasn't grand anymore. They were utterly spent from repairing the walls. There was exhaustion, relief, grief and hope. Their long years in exile imagining the return to Jerusalem were not met with reality.

We have been in this pandemic for two years. We have been longing for the "Before Times" that in our imagination seem as magical as my grandparents' house. The return to a post-pandemic world, like the return of circulation, is initially painful. We will need to rebuild those structures necessary for a healthy society—compassion, respect, sacrifice for the greater good, the celebration of diversity, justice.

And we will need the word of the Lord—the Word that calls us back to our center, which is the steadfast love of God, law and gospel, judgment and promise.

We will weep with exhaustion, relief, grief and hope. And there, drawn by God who is our center, we will find each other again.

- *“Thank you for your thoughts, prayers, get well cards, and your visits that I received during my stay in medical care. I was there for over 2 months, but am happy to report that I was able to go home in time for my 93rd birthday, (which was celebrated April 22)! Thank you all!”*

-Rogene Foy



Regarding “Delivering Hope to Victims of Human Trafficking”

- *The Women of the ELCA “thank you so much” for the many donations of socks and T-shirts (and many other donated items) they received this past month. Because of your donations and time volunteered, they are able to provide survivors 50 adult survival bags and 50 survival bags for the children of survivors. The adult bags include items such as blankets, towels, socks, etc., and the children’s bags include crayons, small toys, toothbrushes, shampoo, a child’s book, and many other items. Together, with the NSWOWomen of the ELCA, Saved to Serve Opportunity with Magdalene Omaha, they are proudly serving our community by helping those in need. Again, thank you all so much for your kindness & generosity!*
- *Thank you to those of you who purchased Easter Lily Plants to honor a special person in your life, in memory of a loved one, or to help beautify the church. Your lilies made the Sunday worship service very special.*
- *Thank you to the unsung heroes who donated their time, efforts, and expertise to set up the display of lilies and cared for the lilies until those who purchased them could take them home. You are appreciated.*
- *Thank you to all who helped support this year’s Easter egg hunt celebrating the Risen Christ. Many children and their families enjoyed the celebration. The generous support of the congregation makes events like this possible. Christ is Risen!*

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 Lena Johnson, our Office Administrator. 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



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

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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 (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