



St. Matthew
Evangelical Lutheran Church

THE ACTS...of God's People

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~August 2020~



By the time you read this, there will be Major League Baseball games. Probably.

It does depend on the ability of the teams to create and maintain a safe environment for the players and the coaches. And it will be affected by how many players decide to “opt out” for the sake of their own health and for the well-being of their families. Several have already, and rightly so. It’s likely that many more will too. But in some form there will be baseball. Probably.

That makes me happy I think.

I have missed it. I have missed the game, I have missed the daily distraction and the give-and-take with friends in my rotisserie league. I have pondered the reality that even two world wars couldn’t stop baseball from happening, which really says something about this moment in history.

But I also know that these longings are selfish. I want baseball back for myself, for what it adds to my life and how its absence has deepened the grief I am experiencing in this very strange summer. Thinking about it, wallowing in my sadness is just another feature of the pity party that threatens to engulf us all. The list of all the things we are missing is long. Some of them are important, some not, but they all are founded in the same brokenness: our desperate need to cling to the things of this world and our rebellion against the God who calls us forward into his.

The hard things we are being called to do for one another – to stay at home, to live without so much of what we have long taken for granted, to learn to work in new ways, worship in a new way, connect with family and neighbors in a new way – cannot happen unless we can let go. Will not happen unless we let go. We are not good at sacrificing, and the recent rebound of the disease is proof. How is it possible to call ourselves followers of Jesus when we are so occupied with complaining about what has been taken away from us? This is our cross and we have refused to take it up.

Maybe it would be better if there was no baseball at all. It’s pretty dangerous anyway for all of the people who will be part (voluntarily or not) of it. And what kind of “season” is it really going to be anyway? The length of the season is integral to the nature of baseball. 60 games is just not right.

~Continued on Next Page

Pastor continued



But that's part of the point, too. We are not without options here, there are tools and opportunities to find and celebrate life, to carry on, to make do. It doesn't have to be all or nothing. Faith could teach us the meaning of the word "enough," and that would also be a salvation. Sometimes half a loaf actually is better than none. But with our preoccupation in the things of this world comes a blindness to the very real blessings that surround us, an inability to truly know and experience the grace that lives in every moment. For that, we need to put to work one truly important spiritual gift: gratitude.

That is the real loss. Constantly reminded of what we don't have, what has been taken away, we have sacrificed the ability to be mindful of what we do have. Of course times are bad. People have lost jobs, businesses, time, energy. More importantly people have lost lives. Grief is all around. Our constant struggle in this experience is simply and purely grief, and as is always the case, our vision is clouded and our actions are constrained. We cannot function within these limitations because we have given our spirit over to them.

Are we ready for better?

There is a time in the journey of grief (maybe several times) when a bit of light breaks through the darkness of loss in the form of a happy memory, a friendly voice, a restful night. There is a time when the gratitude for what was outshines the loss. This is the gift we need now, this is the spiritual practice that will break us free. This is how we will find the strength that we need to do what must be done to endure until this also passes.

And it will.

The only question, really, is what will be left of us when that day comes. Will we be merely shadows of God's good work of creation and redemption? Will we be hollowed out by anger and frustration? Will we be bent down by failure and loss? Or will be thriving reminders of grace and hope and life? Here is the surprise: we already are! By the promise of our baptism, we carry all of the good that the world needs within us. We bear the Holy Spirit with all of its gifts, including gratitude. We can transform hearts and heal wounds and light the way to a new day.

By the time you read this, we will already be on the way. Probably.

~Pastor Glen

Update on Services



Dear Friends in Christ;

After prayerful and difficult reflection, the Church Council has decided to not return in-person worship at this time given the recent increase of community spread of the CoVid-19 virus in Douglas county.

You should know that this decision is not made lightly, and we are not all in complete agreement. We know that many people are struggling without our weekly gatherings, and we wish it could be different. But we feel a heavy responsibility to the well-being of our congregation and for the community at large. Unfortunately, church gatherings are one of the most dangerous activities for spreading the virus. The best way we can answer our calling to care for our neighbor right now is to refrain from large in-person gatherings.

The council will revisit the question when we have seen a decrease in cases in Douglas county for three weeks.

But **DO NOT BE AFRAID!** Church is still here for you. We will continue to stream our online services (with our brand new amazing camera system!) via Facebook and the church website (www.smlutheran.com) as well as share fellowship via Zoom following the worship service. The service is available anytime afterwards as well.

We will continue to share the 8:30 am traditional service, and we will be adding the 10:30 Boundless Joy worship service in August.

There are several other opportunities for us to strengthen our faith in this time of social distancing, including Compline (a time of prayer and reflection) on Wednesday evenings at 8:00 pm. Our 1:30 pm Thursday Bible study group is meeting via Zoom, and Pastor Glen is LIVE on Facebook every morning at 8:00 am to help you start your day. **WE ARE NOT CLOSED!** There is a word of grace and hope available for all of us for these challenging days.

If you are having problems accessing these programs, please reach out to Pastor Glen – we can help you.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Pastor or any member of the church council.

Don't Social Distance from Faith



No, we are not closed

There are many opportunities to connect with one another even as we are physically separated because of the pandemic. We are gathering on Zoom for Compline prayers on Wednesday evenings at 8:00 pm, followed by some fellowship time. Consider joining the Thursday Bible Study group via Zoom or telephone. Virtual Coffee Hour on Sunday mornings following the online worship service (about 9:15 am) Please don't let the technology shut you in - we can help you learn to take advantage of these great tools. *And if you would like to spend a little time with family and friends, let us help set up an online place for you.* Take advantage of these gatherings so we can help and encourage one another in faith.

Compline - Wednesday, 8:00 pm (via Zoom)

Bible Study (via Zoom) - Thursday, 1:30 pm

Online Worship - Sunday, 8:30 am (or anytime after). Link on church website www.smlutheran.com or on our Facebook page

Virtual Coffee & Fellowship Time - Sunday (about 9:15 am via Zoom)

Sunday Mornings



We are still church!

Sunday morning at 8:30 am– Worship

9:15 am– Virtual Coffee Hour

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!

Facebook



Like and Share our St Matthew Facebook page! You will find updates and news throughout the month– and find links to our remote services!

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

Calendar of Events @ St. Matthew

August

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.

~SUNDAY, AUGUST 2~ WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30

9:15 am Virtual Coffee Hour



TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

6:00 pm Worship Ministry Team

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

7:30 pm Children & Youth Team Mtg

8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6

1:30 pm Adult Study via Zoom

~SUNDAY, AUGUST 9~ WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30

9:15 am Virtual Coffee Hour



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12

8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13

1:30 pm Adult Study via Zoom

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

10:00 am Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry

~SUNDAY, AUGUST 16~ WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30

9:15 am Virtual Coffee Hour



MONDAY, AUGUST 17

ACTS Articles Due

7:00 pm Council Mtg

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19

8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20

1:30 pm Adult Study via Zoom

~SUNDAY, AUGUST 23~ WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30

9:15 am Virtual Coffee Hour



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27

1:30 pm Adult Study via Zoom

~SUNDAY, AUGUST 30~ WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30

9:15 am Virtual Coffee Hour



Check out the St. Matthew podcast:

The Uncertain Gospel

Find it on Podbean or follow the links on our facebook page, website or weekly email.

Patient Attention



For many people, the coronavirus pandemic has been a test of patience — or worse. Medically vulnerable people face an anxious time of hypervigilance. Furloughed workers wait on hold or in lines for assistance. Special events have been canceled or rescheduled.

Those not impacted directly deal with assorted frustrations and inconveniences. Many people are learning the benefit of slowing down, being present (even virtually) to others and practicing patient attention.

Interestingly, scientist Isaac Newton did some of his best work when the plague forced Cambridge University to close. At home, the inquisitive student invented calculus and developed groundbreaking theories of gravity and optics. Later Newton called 1666 his *annus mirabilis* (“year of wonders”) and reportedly said, “If I have made any valuable discoveries, it [owes] more to patient attention than to any other talent.”

What have you discovered during the Covid-19 crisis? What appreciations have you developed for aspects of life you may have previously taken for granted? What has social distancing taught you about the value of neighbors, church, community volunteering?

During the pandemic, what have you learned about persistence and God’s presence? What empathy do you now feel for writers of words such as “I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope” (Psalm 130:5, NIV)?

Learning on the Fly



Faced with the sudden move to livestreamed church services, many pastors and worship leaders had to learn new technology quickly during the pandemic. As they were “winging it,” bloopers and bobbles added levity to the tense time.

For instance, a fake tree fell on a drummer while a worship song was being broadcast from Georgia. After getting too close to a candle, a vicar in England had to pause to extinguish flames from his sweater. And several preachers appeared on screen with cartoon-like features after inadvertently turning on social media filters.

“This wasn’t planned,” wrote the pastor about the falling ficus, which didn’t cause injury but quickly went viral. “But God used it to bring laughter to the hearts of many. For that, we are thankful.”

Food Pantry



~Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry~ Items Needed

Canned Veggies– beets, baked
beans, canned potatoes

Pancake Mix

Saltine Crackers

White Sugar

Corn Muffin Mix

Condiments– Ketchup, Mustard,
Salsa, BBQ Sauce

Cream of Mushroom Soup

White– All Purpose Flour

Jelly

Boxed Potatoes

Opportunity to Serve

New technology means new opportunities to serve!



As we add streaming capability to our worship services, we will need more willing servants to make this happen! Soon we will begin training for our current video technicians and adding a new group of camera operators.. Both of these jobs are simple enough to do. The most important skill is being able to follow along the service and pay attention to what is coming next. If you are contacted and invited to join this team, **please say yes!** and prayerfully consider how you can help us in this important new outreach ministry for St. Matthew.

Shine On!



Friendship is one of the greatest gifts a human being can receive. It is a bond beyond common goals, common interests or common histories. It is a bond stronger than sexual union can create, deeper than a shared fate can solidify and even more intimate than the bonds of marriage or community.

Friendship is being with the other in joy and sorrow, even when we cannot increase the joy or decrease the sorrow. It is a unity of souls that gives nobility and sincerity to love. Friendship makes all of life shine brightly.

—Henri Nouwen

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.

Please join us for these online events:

Compline - Wednesday, 8:00 pm (via Zoom)

Bible Study (via Zoom) - Thursday, 1:30 pm

Online Worship - Sunday, 8:30 am (or anytime after). Link on church website www.smlutheran.com or on our Facebook page

Virtual Coffee & Fellowship Time - Sunday (about 9:15 am via Zoom)

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

Both Pastor Glen and Carrie have been returning to the office. Pastor Glen will be in the office on Wednesdays and Carrie will be in the office on Thursdays. PLEASE call or email before coming into the office, as we will still be trying to limit our exposure to groups or anyone who is not feeling well.

Thank You



2020 Lenten Project

St. Matthew's Women of the ELCA (WELCA) would like to thank those of you who donated your unused eyeglasses/sunglasses and cases during our 2020 Lenten Project (February 28-April 12, 2020). We collected 29 eyeglasses, 21 sunglasses and 40 eyeglass cases. They will be donated to the Lions Eye Bank of Nebraska. Here's Looking at You!!

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

~June 2020~



General Fund Activity

Beginning			Transfers	Ending
Balance	Receipts	Payments	In (Out)	Balance
43,192.66	14,659.50	16,789.39		41,062.77

Benevolence Offerings

Receipts	Dispersed
1,532.00	1,491.00

Hunger Offerings

Receipts	Dispersed
125.00	105.00

Women of the ELCA

Service Project ~ Hand & Bath Soap



~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."



~CONTACT INFORMATION~

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

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!

