



St. Matthew
Evangelical Lutheran Church

THE ACTS...of God's People

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~September 2020~



It turns out five months is a really, really long time.

When we were children, time passed slowly. Whether we were waiting for the bell to end the school day or enjoying those wonderful never-ending summer days, we had little awareness of the passage of time. Five more minutes was forever. That changed in time. Now it seems like the clock is on steroids it moves so fast. There is never enough time, seasons and years fly by before we even notice. That is why we are so fond of the past. We are afraid we might have missed something.

And then came 2020.

Have there ever been five longer months? (five-and-a-half by the time you read this) It seems forever since we've sat in the church together or shared a cup of coffee in the fellowship hall. I personally have not eaten in a restaurant or seen a movie in the theater or been to a play or a concert or a ball game in what seems like an eternity. The days drag on and on and with the pandemic showing no sign of slowing its spread or any decrease in sickness and suffering. We are surely stuck in our own version of Groundhog Day. Nothing is changing, nothing is getting better, the solution is not near. Time has no meaning.

Time is an interesting idea in the Bible. There are two words used in the New Testament to describe time. The first is familiar – *chronos*, the root of our word *chronological*. It describes time in the way we experience it, moment by moment, day by day, twenty-four hours at a time, 365 days a year. It moves from the beginning to now in a straight line, it has a logic to it and, presumably, an end. This is where faith comes in, that we should know the end merely ushers us into a new timeline.

The other biblical word for time is not so easy to define or understand. *Kairos* means time that is more than time, eternal time, time that has no end or beginning, time that exists in every moment and cannot be restricted by what is finite or mortal. We think of eternity as what begins when *chronological* time is done. But *kairos* is eternity. It is, was and will be. All at the same time.

This is time that matters.

~Continued on Next Page

Pastor continued



This kind of time is what Paul is referring to when he talks about the “fullness of time” (Ephesians 1:9, and really also Galatians 4:4). God sent his Son in the fullness of time, meaning his time, not ours. Not that there was anything specifically important about that moment in our history. The coming of the Messiah is for all time, one historical event that changed everything that had gone before and everything that has and will happen since. For God, for Jesus, the historical date of the resurrection is not the key. The resurrection is happening in this moment just like it happened nearly 2,000 years ago.

And this kind of time is what Jesus is talking about when he begins his ministry. He proclaims, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” (Mark 1:14–15) The Kingdom of God is not waiting for us in some distant time and place. It is inbreaking all around us, real and visible in this moment as it was in the moment before and will be in the next. We believe that we are waiting for our time to enter into the Kingdom. The Kingdom is not waiting for us, it is bursting forth in the world right now.

That is a very different kind of time indeed.

These days it sometimes seems like the Kingdom of God is far, far away. We long for that time when all of this suffering and struggling will be done, when we will either return to the past as we remember it or move forward into the bright and shiny new future. We do not need to. The promised eternity became real for us the day we were baptized, and it awaits for us to return to it any time we want.

The question is, what are we waiting for?

Even as we are stuck at home, limited by the requirements of pandemic, we need not twiddle our thumbs and stand idly by waiting for our opportunity to fulfill our calling. This is the moment of the kingdom – right now, right here! This is our time. As God lives in and beyond all time, so he is in this moment. His kingdom is in our midst today, and our work in that kingdom is now.

Wow. It actually has been going on forever.

~Pastor Glen

☞ When Things Are Hard...



Everything is hard now.

There are lots of reasons why. Some of it is simply the practical implications of living in the pandemic – the needs of distancing, trying to function while wearing a mask, the many ways of doing things that we can't do because they just aren't safe right now. Some of that is beyond our control, which is hard to take. Some of that is because we have failed in our response to the situation and made it worse, and that is also hard to face.

And this moment is demonstrating another truth: sometimes when things are hard they stay hard. No matter how hard you try you just can't magically make them better, make them easier. Of course we are going to try. We're going to be anxious about what we are doing and the results we are getting (or not getting) and we going to get frustrated and angry and sad and want to quit. None of those are good options.

So what do we do? We move forward faithfully.

1. **We don't take out our frustration** on one another. Everybody is trying their best and nobody knows exactly what to do because we've never been here before. We are not enemies in this just because we have different ideas, and nobody is going to get their way all the time. That might be me, but it's not the end of the world. It is important to remember that everyone's anxiety is heightened right now and that is affecting our reactions. We all need to pause and take a breath, remember that we are all in this together, and if one idea doesn't work, we'll try another.

2. **We do our best.** The fact that it's hard is not permission to stop trying. Actually, it means we have to try harder. We need to try new things, learn new skills, build new tools to deal with unprecedented problems. This will require us to be open minded and good listeners and courageous as we venture onto new places. But it is really true that hard times can strengthen us, teach us, make us stronger and better. So this is really going to make us really better, right?

3. **We live in grace.** We have certainly made a few missteps along the way so far, you will probably not be encouraged to hear me say that there are more failures ahead. There are. It is an undeniable truth. But grace is also an undeniable truth, and as God forebears our shortcomings and puts us back on our path, so we must do the same for one another. We need to take full advantage of the spiritual gift of admitting when we are wrong and showing grace to others when they are. This is an opportunity for growth, for each of us personally and for our relationships with one another.

☞ When Things Are Hard... (cont)



I don't write these words easily. But **this is important**, not merely for however long this pandemic affects us but for the rest of our lives. We are not in the midst of a political, social or economic disaster. We are in the midst of a great spiritual challenge. By faith, we will pass through this time and by grace, we will be better for it. The world will be better for it.

May we live in God's blessings every day.

☞ Donation Changes– Project Hope



IMPORTANT NEWS!!!!

Project Hope has made the decision to focus on Food Insecurity during this pandemic and is no longer offering clothing to their guests. With this decision, they are no longer accepting donations of new or gently used clothes or shoes. They do not accept household items of any kind.

We at St. Matthew do not offer clothing to our guests. We don't have the space to store these items.

When you are cleaning out your closets or downsizing your wardrobes, please take your donation items to another source i.e. Good Will, Salvation Army, Wounded Veterans....they will appreciate your donations.

The donation box in the narthex should be used for food items only.

Thank 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

September

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.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

6:00 pm Worship Ministry Team

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

7:30 pm Children & Youth Team Mtg
8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

1:30 pm Adult Study via Zoom

~SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6~ WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30

9:15 am Virtual Coffee Hour



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

1:30 pm Adult Study via Zoom

~SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13~ WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30

9:15 am Virtual Coffee Hour



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

1:30 pm Adult Study via Zoom

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

10:00 am Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry

~SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20~ WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30

9:15 am Virtual Coffee Hour



MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

ACTS Articles Due
7:00 pm Council Mtg

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

1:30 pm Adult Study via Zoom

~SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27~ WORSHIP LIVESTREAM 8:30

9:15 am Virtual Coffee Hour



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

8:00 pm Compline Prayer via Zoom



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.

Project Hope Fundraiser



The “Bread for Life” event is still scheduled for Sunday, September 27th at noon. However, due to the ongoing COVID -19 pandemic concerns in our community, the fundraising committee has decided to change this from a live in-person event to a virtual event.

All participants in the Omaha area will be provided with a wonderful event box filled with food for your Sunday brunch, champagne and juice to make your own Mimosas, a loaf of fruit bread, and a gift item. This box will be delivered to your home on Saturday, September 26th between 1:00-4:00 pm and will include the event program with instructions for logging into the event.

If you have already registered, you are already on the list to receive your event box and gift item. Each box will serve two people. If you have not already registered, now is the time to complete your reservation! You can mail in a registration card or go to www.projecthopeomaha.org to register. Contact Veda Keebler via email at projecthope.execdirector@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Direct Your Dollars



~Save Your Family Fare Receipts!~

Through Direct Your Dollars, we have an opportunity to help raise money to support this Project Hope purchase food for their pantry and assist with operating expenses..

Direct Your Dollars is a receipt-based program, meaning that we can raise money simply by doing something we all do each week – going to the grocery store!

Every time you shop at your local Family Fare grocery store, just save your receipts – and encourage your friends and family to do the same. Once we’ve collected \$150,000 in receipts, we can turn those receipts into a \$1,000.00 check for Project Hope to purchase dairy products! Project Hope has encouraged all their donors to support this program and all receipts collected will be combined to reach the \$150,000 requirement.

You can turn your receipts into a special box in the Narthex labeled “Direct Your Dollars” or mail your receipts to Sue Ties (19011 Lake St. Elkhorn, NE 68022). Please make sure that you include the entire receipt!

It’s easy, it doesn’t cost you anything more and it will help our guests receive dairy products we otherwise could not offer.

Food Pantry



~Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry~ Items Needed

Knorr Pasta & Rice side dishes

Canned Fruit– pineapple & peaches

Canned Tuna and Chicken

Laundry Detergent

Dish Soap

Pasta– Rotini

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.

Events & Services



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)

Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry



It has been a while since I last gave an update on the Pantry. We continue to offer a choice pantry every third Saturday of the month. We have been averaging 10 households each month. Some of these folks are new but most are recurring regulars.

We are still serving our guests from their cars. They arrive and are given a grocery list of the items we have in stock. They make their choices and then we fill their order and return it to their car. We have been able to maintain this method of service with the help of Brent Thomsen, Andrew Roulliard, Kelli & Bill Stott and Kent and myself. Upon occasion Jennifer Schell and Margie and Dennis Magnuson have filled in. Veda Keebler comes each month to register the guests.

Our partner, Project Hope also provides each month milk, cheese, and eggs as part of their dairy program. (This is funded partly by the Direct Your Dollars receipts you donate). We have also been the recipients of boxes of produce from Saving Grace, a food rescue company that goes to local groceries and convenience stores and collects the close to "sell by date" merchandise. Bread is also donated through Project Hope. Our guests are quite pleased with the groceries they receive on each visit.

It is with great thanks and appreciation to all of you who continue to provide items to keep our shelves stocked with a variety of foods for our guests to choose from. Monetary donations are also very much appreciated and have allowed us to purchase meat and frozen items that we can add to their bounty.

For our pantry in September we are seeking donations of:
Knorr Pasta and Rice side dishes, Canned fruit (pineapple and peaches), Pasta - Rotini, Canned tuna and/or chicken, laundry detergent and dish soap.

You can drop your donations off at the church or if you need someone to come pick them up for you, you can always call me and I will make arrangements with you.

Thanks again for your continued support of the Pantry. It certainly takes a village!!

~Sue Ties

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

~July 2020~



General Fund Activity

| Beginning | | | Transfers | Ending |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Balance | Receipts | Payments | In (Out) | Balance |
| 41,062.77 | 11,477.00 | 13,133.49 | | 39,406.28 |

Benevolence Offerings

| Receipts | Dispersed |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1,206.00 | 1,532.00 |

Hunger Offerings

| Receipts | Dispersed |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 105.00 | 125.00 |

Women of the ELCA

Service Project ~ Soup

~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!

