



This son
of mine
was dead
and is
**alive
again!**

LUKE 15:24



St. Matthew

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Where the welcome is wide
and the love is real.

Welcome! Whether you are a long-time member of St. Matthew, a first-time visitor, or somewhere in between, we are thankful you are here today. If you have questions or any needs, please let a name-tagged usher know. We hope that you experience God's love during worship today.

Our Purpose:

Welcoming all as we share God's love.

Our Core Values:

Embracing one another as God created us

Celebrating together in worship

Deepening our faith in Jesus

Engaging children and youth

Walking with our neighbors

Our Goals:

Enliven faith through worship and learning

Cultivate shared leadership as disciples of Jesus

Connect with children, youth, and families

Bridge the gaps with home-insecure neighbors

Build authentic relationships across difference

About today: *We gather as a community for worship around word, wine, and water. Put another way, in worship we meet Christ in scripture proclaimed in speech & song, in the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism celebrated or remembered, and in community gathered together.*

Our regular weekend schedule includes Saturday worship at 5 p.m., Sunday indoor worship at 8:30 a.m., and Sunday indoor worship at 10:30 a.m. (livestreamed).

YOU belong
HERE!

The psalm sets the tone this day: “Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is put away!” Happy are those who have “become the righteousness of God” in the merits of Christ Jesus. Happy are those for whom the forgiveness of God has “rolled away . . . the disgrace” of former times. Happy is the father at the return of his prodigal son. Happy are we that our sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake. Rejoice!

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 30, 10:30 a.m., 2025

All We Need. ©2025 Barn Geese Worship. Used by permission.

Adapted for St. Matthew by Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt and Pastor Kathy Vitalis Hoffman.

PRELUDE

Hear Our Prayer / Lord, Be Our Light
Youth Choir

Patterson

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please stand as you are able.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: People of God, what do you need today?

All: Change that brings new life.

Pastor: Then come, let us worship God,

All: who teaches us the way we should go,

who ushers in a new creation,

who can change our circumstances and our hearts.

Pastor: We gather in the name of our ✝ Triune God,

our Maker,

our Redeemer,

and our Reconciler.

All: Amen.

OPENING HYMN

The Church of Christ, In Every Age

ELW#729
Green/Knapp

(Next Page)



1 The church of Christ, in ev - 'ry age be - set by
2 A - cross the world, a - cross the street, the vic - tims
3 Then let the ser - vant church a - rise, a car - ing
4 For he a - lone, whose blood was shed, can cure the
5 We have no mis - sion but to serve in full o -



change, but Spir - it - led, must claim and test its
of in - jus - tice cry for shel - ter and for
church that longs to be a part - ner in Christ's
fe - ver in our blood, and teach us how to
be - dience to our Lord; to care for all, with -



her - i - tage and keep on ris - ing from the dead.
bread to eat, and nev - er live be - fore they die.
sac - ri - fice, and clothed in Christ's hu - man - i - ty.
share our bread and feed the starv - ing mul - ti - tude.
out re - serve, and spread his lib - er - at - ing word.

APOSTOLIC GREETING

Pastor: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: **And also with you.**

Please be seated

HOLY BAPTISM

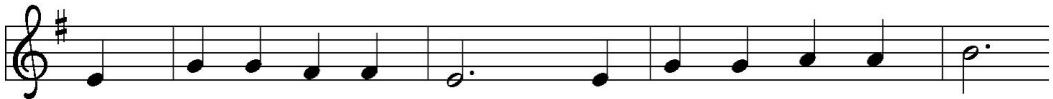
At certain points during the service of Holy Baptism, the congregation will be invited to respond following the Pastor's prompts.

Pastor: Let us welcome the newly baptized.

We welcome Tara, Layla, and Kyah into the body of Christ and into the mission we share. Join us in our mission by welcoming all as we share God's love.

During the singing of the Kyrie, Children second grade and under are invited to meet our children's leader at the baptismal font at the front of the Nave. She will take the children for Children's Church at the "Pray-ground" in the Fellowship Hall. They will hear a Bible story from this week's lectionary in an age-appropriate format and spend some time exploring their faith and creativity together. They will return during the passing of the peace.

KYRIE



- 1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.
- 2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.
- 3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.
Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.
Re - new us with your sav - ing pow'r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Renewing Christ, in you, everything old has passed away, and new things come into being! Ease our suspicion of change and our growing pains; teach us to embrace the transitions that help us and this world reveal you more fully. In Jesus' name we pray,

All: Amen.

✠ THE WORD ✠

THE READING: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

One way to describe the gospel is the promise that in Christ everything is transformed into newness. All mistakes, all deliberate sins, all old history is reconciled with Christ's resurrection. This is Paul's strong message to the congregation in the city of Corinth.

Lector: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

THE READING: Psalm 32 (Read Responsively)

¹ Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven,
and whose sin is put away!

² **Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt,
and in whose spirit there is no guile!**

³ While I held my tongue, my bones withered away,
because of my groaning all day long.

⁴ **For your hand was heavy upon me day and night;
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.**

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not conceal my guilt.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.

⁶ **Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of trouble;
when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.**

⁷ You are my hiding-place; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

⁸ **"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go;
I will guide you with my eye.**

⁹ Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding;
who must be fitted with bit and bridle, or else they will not stay near you."

¹⁰ **Great are the tribulations of the wicked;
but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.**

¹¹ Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD;
shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

Lector: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Please stand as you are able.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,



slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the 15th chapter.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

HOLY GOSPEL: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Jesus tells a parable about a son who ponders his father's love only after he has spurned it. The grace he receives is beyond his hopes. That same grace is a crisis for an older brother who believes it is his obedience that has earned his place in the father's home.

Pastor: The Gospel of our Lord.

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

Please be seated.

THE MESSAGE

Pastor Kathy Vitalis Hoffman

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Apostles' Creed

Leader: Let us confess our faith with the words of the Apostles' Creed.

**All: I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**

**born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS

Leader: Each petition concludes, *“God, in your mercy,”* and the congregation responds, *“receive our prayer.”*

PEACE

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

All: And also with you.

(The congregation is invited to greet one another with the words “Peace be with you,” and gestures respecting personal space and comfort levels.)

Children return from Children’s Church.

MUSICAL OFFERING

***How Beautiful*
Bobbi Little, Flautist**

Paris/Raney

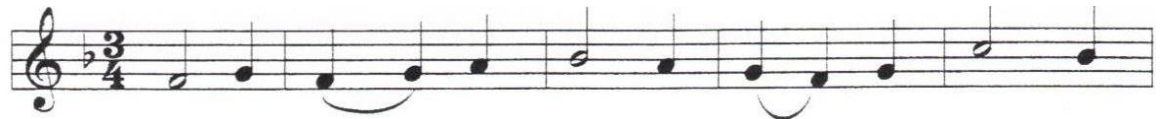
GENEROSITY MOMENT

We celebrate God's generosity embodied in this community's time, talents and treasures shared with one another. **Thank you for your presence** in worship today. **Thank you for offering** the "first fruits" of your finances. Offerings may be placed in the baskets near the entrances/exits of the worship space or through online giving on our website. **Thank you for sharing** your spiritual gifts with our church, local, and global communities

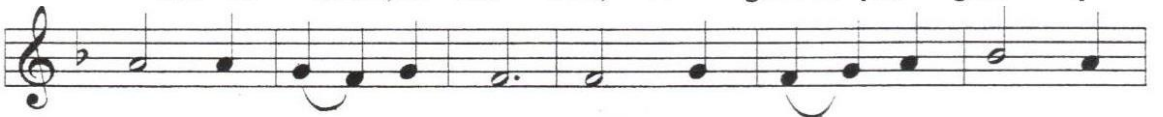
Please stand as you are able.

OFFERTORY

Lenten Offertory



Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give you glad - ly



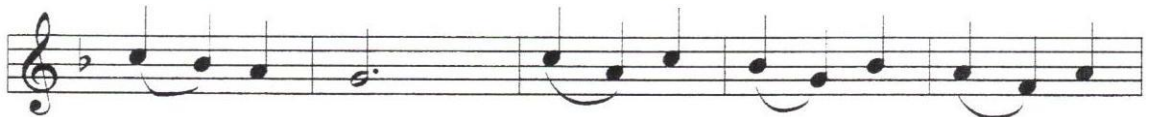
free - ly of Your own. With the sun - shine of Your



good - ness melt our thank - less hearts of stone. Till our



cold and self - fish na - tures, warmed by You at



length be - lieve that more hap - py and more



bless - ed 'Tis to give__ than to re - ceive.

THE OFFERTORY PRAYER

Leader: As we make our offerings, we pray:

All: God, you gave us what we needed today.

Now we offer a portion of these gifts,

A harvest of the love you planted.

Now bless our gifts and use them in your service.

Amen.

✠ THE MEAL ✠

GREAT THANKSGIVING

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is not only right, but even needful
for us to thank you, God,
for the cosmos overflows with your goodness.
You open your hand to satisfy the needs
of everything that you have made,
and all of creation sings its thankful praise.
And so we join the echoing song.

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of
 pow-er and might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
 san - na in the high-est. Blessed is he who comes in the
 name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER WITH WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Pastor: Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Please be seated.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

All are welcome to the Lord's Supper. The meal is served in three ways. Choose what is appropriate for you.

Individual packets are available for those wishing to remain in their pew.

If you are unable to come forward, but would like communion served by the pastor, please let one of the ushers know and the Sacrament will be brought to you at your seat.

Continuous manner – Come forward at the direction of the ushers, take the wafer from the pastor, “The body of Christ, given for you”, and eat it. (Gluten-free wafers are available) Then move to the next station and take one of the cups of wine (red) or grape juice (white) “The blood of Christ, shed for you”, and drink it.

Children who do not yet receive communion are invited to come forward to receive a blessing.

IN-PEW COMMUNION (WITH PACKETS)

Pastor: The body of Christ, given for you.

All: Amen. (Eat wafer)

Pastor: The blood of Christ, shed for you.

All: Amen. (Drink wine)

LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

COMMUNION MUSICAL OFFERING *In Christ Alone*
SoulFire

Getty/Townsend

COMMUNION HYMN*Restore in Us, O God*

ELW#328

Dawn Jr./Hopson



- 1 Re - store in us, O God, the splen - dor of your love; re -
 2 O Spir - it, wake in us the won - der of your pow'r; from
 3 Bring us, O Christ, to share the full - ness of your joy; bap -
 4 Three - per - soned God, ful - fill the prom - ise of your grace, that



new your im - age in our hearts, and all our sins re - move.
 fruit - less fear un - furl our lives like spring - time bud and flow'r.
 tize us in the ris - en life that death can - not de - stroy.
 we, when all our search - ing ends, may see you face to face.

Please stand as you are able.

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

Pastor: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you
 and keep you in his grace.

All: Amen.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Leader: Let us pray,
 O Jesus, you have fed us
 with the bread that has no price
 the precious gift of your own self.
 By your Spirit strengthen us to serve all in need,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

✠ **SENDING** ✠

BLESSING

Pastor: Now may God,
 who revivifies the earth each spring,

who creates us anew in every act of reconciliations,
who changes us from glory into glory,
bless you and sustain you.
Today God has answered your need,
and now the Spirit sends you out
to answer the world's need.

All: Amen.

SENDING HYMN

My Life Flows On in Endless Song

ELW#763

Lowry



1 My life flows on in end - less song; a - bove earth's lam-en - ta - tion,
2 Through all the tu - mult and the strife, I hear that mu - sic ring - ing.
3 What though my joys and com-forts die? The Lord my Sav-ior liv - eth.
4 The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a foun - tain ev - er spring-ing!



I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new cre - a - tion.
It finds an ech - o in my soul. How can I keep from sing-ing?
What though the dark - ness gath-er round? Songs in the night he giv - eth.
All things are mine since I am his! How can I keep from sing-ing?

Refrain



No storm can shake my in-most calm while to that Rock I'm cling-ing.



Since Christ is Lord of heav-en and earth,how can I keep from sing-ing?

DISMISSAL:

Leader: Go in peace, serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

arr. Edwards

St. Matthew Ringers

* * * * *

Please note: Music for this service is covered under CCLI # 1000682 –
Also #A-708989 *One License.net*

Our warm thanks to all those assisting in our worship services this morning:

- Musicians Bobbi Little, Flautist; Youth Choir; SoulFire; St. Matthew Ringers
- Altar Flower Delivery Doris Deitzel
- Altar Guild Doris Deitzel, Anna Marchio
- Assisting Minister.....Charley Lidard
- Children’s Church Leader..... Missy Smith
- Communion Assistants Bobbie Lidard, Randy Kline
- Communion Preparers..... Diane Hoffman-Neail, Nancy Oppedal
- Couriers Randy Kline, Ellen Shenk
- Greeters Lori & Barry Unger
- Lector Bobbie Lidard
- Live Stream Doug West
- Ushers Team 1 – Tom Shultz, Bob & Kit Curlen, Sean Huston, John Mancini
- Welcome Place Shelley Zumbrum

THE ALTAR FLOWERS have been given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Betty L. Wildasin by daughter Linda Gladfelter and son Randy Wildasin and families; in loving memory of Raymond J. Kline Jr. by Randy and Deb Kline.

THE BULLETINS have been given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Betty L. Wildasin by daughter Linda Gladfelter and son Randy Wildasin and families; in loving memory of Raymond J. Kline Jr. by David, Jenn, Carrie and Logan.

RECOMMENDED SCRIPTURE READINGS for the week beginning March 30:

Sunday: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Thursday: Philippians 2:19-24

Monday: Revelation 19:1-8

Friday: Philippians 2:25-3:1

Tuesday: Revelation 19:9-10

Saturday: John 11:45-57

Wednesday: Luke 9:10-17

A SERVICE OF CELEBRATION AND CHRISTIAN BURIAL was held for Joyce Raubenstine here at St. Matthew on Wednesday, March 26. Though we celebrate the departure of her life to be with the Lord, we also include in our prayers of support the members of her family and all who are bereaved.

A SERVICE OF CELEBRATION AND CHRISTIAN BURIAL will be held for Joe Markle at the Kenworthy Funeral Home on Monday, March 31 at 11:00 a.m. with a visitation at 10 a.m. Though we celebrate the departure of his life to be with the Lord, we also include in our prayers of support the members of his family and all who are bereaved.

PRAYER LIST: In our intercessory prayers we pray for individuals who have offered permission to have their names included. These names will be listed up to a month unless otherwise requested. After that time, prayers will continue for each person through our prayer chain. Newly added names will appear in bold. If you would like to be included in the prayers of the prayer chain **but not listed** in the bulletin, you may contact Beth Koontz at bethk9245@gmail.com or by calling the church office at 717-637-7101.

Bobby Porter

Bert Elsner

Chuck Ehrman

Ethan Conner

Conner Thompson

Lucas Cherry

Shirley Moncrief

Ron Hansford

Nancy Leister

DEATHS: Joe Markle



RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM on Sunday morning are Tara, Layla, and Kyah. We welcome them into the earthly body of Christ with membership here at St. Matthew Lutheran Church.

In approximately two weeks, they will begin tearing up the carpet in the whole 2nd floor in preparation for the new flooring to be put in. The 2nd floor will not be usable for a couple of weeks while this remodel is in progress.

We apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for your cooperation.

SIGN-UP FORM

Please fill out the pertinent part(s) for you, tear off this page and put in the offering basket or email the church office at *info@stmattlutheran.org*, listing what you are signing up for and the information requested. See Announcements Page for more details.

_____ I'd like to receive _____ e-mail updates and/or _____ newsletter in the mail. (Provide name, e-mail, and/or mailing address)

_____ I am a member of St. Matthew and below is updated contact information.

Name Phone Number

E-mail

Mailing Address



EGG CASSEROLES NEEDED! On Easter Sunday, April 20, all are invited to stop in Fellowship Hall for an Easter breakfast at 9:30 to 10:20. Egg Casseroles and pastries will be served. We need several people to donate egg casseroles. Can you help in this way? We also need help setting up and cleaning up. You can let Lori Unger know what you can help with by completing the tear off sheet. Thank you!

I can help with:

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Egg Casserole (how many): _____

I/We can help set up: _____ I/We can help clean up: _____

EASTER GARDEN: Members and friends who wish to honor or memorialize a loved one by donating to the Easter Garden are asked to complete and return the form below with **\$10** per listing to the church office by **Monday, March 31. After the 10:30 service on Easter Sunday**, those who have paid for honorariums or memorials for the garden can take a flower for themselves or to give to someone. If you are unable to be here after the 10:30 service, you can stop in Tuesday thru Thursday of Easter week, between 9:00 and 1:00 p.m. to pick up a flower.

After the cost of the plants is met, the balance of the memorials/honorariums will be sent to the local Tender Care.



I would like to sponsor an Easter flower in the church:

In honor of _____ In memory of _____

Name(s) being honored or memorialized (Please print clearly):

Given by: _____

Envelope Number _____ Amount Given \$ _____

Please include \$10 per listing. Make checks payable to **St. Matthew Lutheran Church** with "Easter Garden" in the memo line. Deadline is **March 31**.

Transitioning Online Giving Providers

Last weekend, we announced that we are switching our online giving provider. Our mission is to better steward every gift contributed to our church, and that's why, as of this week, we're beginning to use Breeze as our new online and text-giving platform, replacing Vanco. We truly appreciate that many of you took advantage of Vanco, either through one-time or recurring gifts, and we're excited to transition over to Breeze for future online and text donations.

A lot of thought went into switching giving providers, and ultimately, because of all the benefits that come with using Breeze, we decided it was the right move for us. First, we recently **began using** Breeze as our church management system, and online and text giving is built-in. This means we don't have to pay a monthly fee for giving software and we can put that money back into the church. Plus, it helps us consolidate tools and manage all gifts in one secure system making daily admin tasks much easier.

Thank you to all who have made the switch! Here's how to get started:

For **One-Time Gifts**: If you would like to give a one-time gift, simply give using Breeze instead of Vanco by going to <https://stmatthewlutheranchurch.breezechms.com/give/online> following the instructions on the page. You can also access this webpage by going to our website, www.stmatlutheran.org, click **ONLINE Giving** in the center of the page, and click on the https link. It takes you directly to the giving page.

(More Information on Next Page)

Or, **text the amount** you'd like to donate (example: 50) to **(717) 613-6204** and follow the prompts for a one-time set up. In the future, you'll simply be able to text the gift amount to our giving number and hit send! To text a donation to a specific fund, text the amount and then (example \$25 PM):

PM – Parish Ministry

WM – World Mission

SN – Special Needs

FCI – Future Capital Improvements

PCK – Personal Care Kits

Next Steps for **Recurring Givers**: **First cancel your recurring giving through Vanco.**

- Then, go to
<https://stmattlutheranchurch.breezechms.com/give/online>
- Enter the amount you'd like to give
- Click the dropdown that shows the words "one time gift" and select a different frequency from the menu (weekly, every two weeks, monthly, yearly)
- Select your Payment Method and click "Continue"
- Now, enter your Contact and Payment Information and choose if you would like to cover the processing fees
- Click the "Give \$" button

If you have questions as you go through any of these processes, please do not hesitate to reach out. Colleen Dubs, our Financial Secretary is usually in the office on Monday and Thursday mornings. If you leave a message with the office staff, she can return your call. Or you can reach her at cdubs@stmattlutheran.org. I also can answer some questions regarding Breeze and you can reach me in the office, 717-637-7101, ext. 226 or at info@stmattlutheran.org.

We truly appreciate your help as we make this transition. It is through your generous gifts that we're able to make a real impact in our community when people need it most. We're so grateful for your continued support which allows St. Matthew Lutheran Church to be faithful to our mission.

PERSONAL CARE KITS PROJECT

When you leave home for church, don't forget your coat, car keys, wallet and towel for the PCKs!



The Women of the ELCA and the Intergenerational Faith Connections will be collecting items to assemble **Personal Care Kits** for Lutheran World Relief. People who must flee their homes quickly due to disasters or safety often don't have time to pack essential items. Personal Care Kits help those in need maintain personal

hygiene while living away from their homes. The Kits also contribute to a new start for those who can't return home. LWR is expanding to reach our neighbors in need in the United States, as well as world-wide as they have before. That means that kits will now comfort families here in the U.S. and abroad!

Each Personal Care Kit includes:

- *One new bath-size towel (approx. 52" X 27"), dark color recommended
- *Two bath-size bars (4-5oz) of soap (must equal 8-9 oz.) in its original wrapping
- *One adult-size toothbrush in its original packaging
- *One sturdy, wide-toothed comb
- *One metal nail-clipper

You may drop off items in the designated boxes located in the elevator lobby, the Gathering Place, or the church office. Monetary donations may be made to be used to purchase bulk items (checks should be made payable to *St. Matthew Lutheran Church* with "Care Kits" in the memo line). \$10 will cover the cost of the items and help with shipping costs. The Women of the ELCA and the Intergenerational Faith Connections are combining their efforts for this event. The packing of the kits will take place on **Sunday, May 18, in Fellowship Hall at 9:30 a.m.** during Faith Connections.

**Can St. Matthew meet the goal? 1,000 kits!
Together, we can do anything...**

St. Matthew Lutheran Church
www.StMattLutheran.org
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717-637-7101
General Mailbox: 221
info@stmattlutheran.org

Rev. Kathryn Vitalis Hoffman, Lead Pastor, ext 231
pastorkathy@stmattlutheran.org

Rev. Alex Sheppard-Witt, Associate Pastor, ext 229
pastoralex@stmattlutheran.org

Rev. Faye C. Snyder, Visitation Pastor, ext 225
nicksong@comcast.net

Benjamin Boellner, Minister of Music, ext 235
bboellner@stmattlutheran.org

Deb Smith, Associate Minister of Music, ext 236
dsmith@stmattlutheran.org

Tim Peck, Youth Ministry, ext 230
youth@stmattlutheran.org

Melissa Smith, Children & Family Ministry, ext 232
msmith@stmattlutheran.org

Hannah Chiacchierini, Communications Administrator, ext 222
hannahc@stmattlutheran.org

Connect With Us!



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www.StMattLutheran.org



Scan for
E-Giving

FIRST READING: Joshua 5:9-12

The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

¹⁰While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. ¹¹On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. ¹²The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Psalm 32**SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

GOSPEL: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus]. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³So he told them this parable:

^{11b}"There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled

to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' ³¹Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

Next Sunday's Readings: Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8.

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