

Pastor's Report to Congregation Council
June 18, 2024

This past month felt for me like Summer arrived. No, not because of the sweltering heat wave we're currently living through, but for a combination of reasons. First, we finished off holding 2 worship services on a Sunday morning and made the switch to the summer schedule (1 service) the first Sunday of June. My hope for these 3 months is that the trend continues to reflect the first 3 weeks' attendance numbers. It's SO nice to have a crowd filling the sanctuary on a Sunday morning! Additionally, I was able to finally take a week of vacation (the latest I've ever waited to enjoy my first week of the year) to visit with my daughter and her fiancé in Charleston, SC. It was nice to spend time with family, enjoy the change of scenery and routine, and most importantly experience some refreshment and renewal for the busy weeks ahead. One of the events from this past month included a bicycle ride and cookout at my home. Although there was a threat of rain that kept some people away, those that showed seemed to enjoy themselves, the abundance of food, and were treated to a relaxing and cool breezy evening in my backyard. Finally, 30 of us gathered (a week early) to celebrate Father's Day by sitting on the large outside patio at Ignite Brewery in Brunswick for food, fellowship, and a beer. Summer has arrived!

Related to worship, this past month included a graveside funeral for a non-member (but a Lutheran without a congregation), the baptism of Olivia Evelyn Naysmith, and the recognition of ordination anniversaries (Deacon Lindsay's 6th and my 20th). Additionally, I was able to purchase a new liquid-filled paschal candle that will start being used in the coming year thanks to the memorial funds given in memory of Leitheia Obermeier.

As a congregation, many of us gathered on Saturday the 18th to perform some much needed outside church maintenance. Trees and shrubs were trimmed, mulch was laid and spread, and a dead bush was removed. It was hot and challenging work ... but helped beautify the grounds for the summer. Additionally, the Evangelism and Communication Committee hosted another successful Loads of Love, to the point that the funds have been exhausted for that ministry. They plan to raise funds for the future.

Another new member class began on June 2. Fifteen people (10 adults and 5 youth) have expressed interest in membership and becoming a part of the mission and ministry of St. Matthew. We've met to discuss the history of St. Matthew, the Lutheran Church, the various ministries happening, stewardship, discipleship, as well as the joy of just getting to know each other a little better. A "join date" is getting worked out, as the summer schedules of the various families haven't yet aligned.

Visitation continues to go well with those that don't get out, as well as with those who are hospitalized. It seemed like this past month had more surgeries than what's been normal most months. Thankfully all people seem to have had successful procedures and are recuperating.

I also attended a Medina City School Board meeting May 21. I was asked by Rev. Luke Lindon from the Medina UCC church to attend in support of him and a few others that had prepared statements against the LifeWise organization, which is attempting to infiltrate its way into the school day here in Medina. After researching the organization, its methods,

and what it teaches to young people about Christianity and others in society, I chose to attend to support him and all others that understand and live out our faith differently.

Lastly, Deacon Lindsay, Teri Uttech, Kristine Neate, and I all attended the Northeastern Ohio Synod Gathering on June 1, representing St. Matthew and helping to perform the work of the larger church. At the assembly we experienced worship (of which I helped as a group singer), participated in continued discussions around the Isaiah Project, connected with others from other congregations, and participated in the Synod work sessions. At the Gathering I was elected to represent the Northeastern Ohio Synod as a “Clergy at large” position for the ELCA National Church Gathering, which will be held in Phoenix, AZ July 2025. It’s an honor to have been elected and I’m excited to experience “Churchwide” for the very first time, especially since it will include the election of a new Bishop of the ELCA!

In Christ, with Christ, for Christ!

Pastor Steve Mahaffey