

Report to Congregation Council  
May 20, 2025

I have to admit ... when I looked back over the past month, I was shocked to see that it included Holy Week! Seriously, it feels like that happened ages ago to me. I need to think about why it feels that way. And yet, the calendar doesn't lie. Holy Week went off smoothly, with all services well attended. Given that this was my third year of Holy Week at St. Matthew, I made/suggested a couple of little tweaks to the worship space and some procedures. For example, the front of the sanctuary was "simplified" by removing items that are normally out, symbolizing how we are encouraged during Lent to remove those items that get in the way of our walk with God. I also suggested adding purple cloth to the front cross for the season of Lent, much like we drape it with black on Good Friday. Procedurally, I suggested the altar guild use "both" doors while stripping the altar area on Maundy Thursday to help it "flow better." Many commented on how much smoother it worked this year and how much they liked the simplicity of the worship space.

Although the week following Easter was intentionally left a little "lighter" in planned activities, the weeks that followed picked right back up with the busy schedule we keep here at St. Matthew. These weeks included the usual weekly items (staff meetings; committee meetings; Bible & Brews; office time for administration and planning), but also additional activities, for example: using my Thrivent Action Team dollars to identify [with Rachel Knaggs help] the purchase and retrieval of 6 new music stands for our music program; hosting and leading worship for the Cleveland West conference of clergy here at St. Matthew; attending a continuing education event at Trinity Seminary at Capital University with Deacon Lindsay; supporting our membership through attendance at the Medina Community Chorus Spring concert, attending graduation celebrations and a high school baseball game, fellowshipping with 30+ members at Bent Ladder; and spending a Saturday morning in the annual Synod Gathering.

Our worship services following Easter Sunday were also more full than usual. We welcomed Juliana Cirincione, Walker Kirschner, and Tucker Davis as our newest sister and brothers in Christ as they passed through the waters of baptism; we celebrated the accomplishments of our high school and college graduates; included a litany for mothers on Mother's Day; and blessed around 13 motorcyclists and their bikes. And although there weren't any funerals or memorial services that happened this past month (praise God!) I nevertheless met with a member to plan for an upcoming one.

Lastly, these last few weeks have brought a resurgence of visits with our membership. As I always tell those with whom I visit, there are periods during the church calendar year (Lent and Holy Week being one of them) when I am out visiting less frequently due to the busier than normal schedule. Although I am always available for hospital and other emergency situations,

my normal rotation of getting out to visit slows dramatically. With that said, it was great to get back out of the office this past month, seeing some whom I hadn't seen for a while, and visiting "in the homes" of a couple of our members for the first time. It's wonderful to continue to walk together in faith, and to grow in our life together where we live our daily lives.

As we're about to enter the Summer months in June, we know that many families will travel and be away for weeks at a time. I encourage everyone to reach out to one another when we notice someone is missing, to check-in with them and let them know that they are noticeably missed (with one worship service starting June 1 it's a little easier to notice). It's important that we know we matter to our faith community. With that said, like everyone else, I too have plans to be away. May 28 & 29 I will be "making up" a couple of vacation days that I was pulled back from while exercising my first week of vacation for the year back in February. June 30 -July 6 I'll be exercising my 2nd week of vacation. At the end of July, the 27th through August 3rd, I'll represent the NEOS as a voting representative at the ELCA Churchwide Gathering in Phoenix, doing the work of the larger church. Although there will be two more weeks of vacation available to me, as well as a couple weeks of continuing education, those will take place in the Fall months ahead, so those dates will get shared in a future report.

In Christ, with Christ, for Christ!

Pastor Steve Mahaffey