

Pastor's Report to Congregation Council
April 16, 2024

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

This past month was a special time for the Church, as we traveled through yet another Holy Week and celebrated the miraculous joy of the Resurrection. We concluded a very enjoyable Lenten season during which we partnered with St. Paul's Episcopal and Medina UCC congregations for the study of *Short Stories by Jesus* by Amy-Jill Levine. For Deacon Lindsay and me, Holy Week also included the annual Synod-wide "renewal of ordination vows and blessing of the oils" worship service at Trinity Lutheran in Kent. Here at St. Matthew, Holy Week had us gather for a moving Maundy Thursday service, as the altar and sanctuary was "stripped" of everything, which then led into another powerful worship service on Good Friday, where we witnessed the Living Cross tradition and heard a moving anthem sung by the choir. Upon reentering the church on Easter Sunday, we were greeted by the smells of flowers, and breakfast being prepared and served by the Luther League. The sight of Alleluia banners, brass playing from the balcony, and the smiling faces of church friends, family, and new friends help to create a wonderful Easter morning!

In addition to the Holy Week worship services, some from the congregation attended a "church safety" seminar at the Medina fire station offered by the federal and state departments of homeland security that week. It was an informative event at which we learned a great deal and made connections for future guidance to help make our church as safe as possible for everyone in the future.

As I've said before to our members, our church is anything but traditional. I say that because the weeks following Easter traditionally "slow down" and provide a break in which to catch our breath. This doesn't happen here at St. Matthew! Committees and ministries continue to operate, meet, and move forward. This past month the Worship Team met to review the past worship services and look ahead to what's coming, and a few of us on the team actively met with a three organ companies to obtain their assessments of our instrument and provide us with quotes as to how to bring it back to good health. The Youth Advisors and Rostered Leaders met twice, first for a mandatory parent meeting for those with youth attending the gathering in July, and a second time for the preparatory meeting in which the youth join together for dinner and learning/preparation. Deacon Lindsay and I also started yet another "first communion" class for six young youth of the church. Additionally, the College Care package team met to assemble yet another round of goodies to be sent in love and support to our young adults. The Personnel Committee met to finalize the job description for an "associate musician" position and to discuss all things personnel. A new "Fun Fellowship" committee came together for the first time to resume the planning of fellowship opportunities for the congregation. The LGL Samaritan Fund had their monthly meeting to distribute the funds they receive each month which help those in need of assistance. Bible and Brews resumed meeting after a few weeks off for Easter. The Men's breakfast group came together again at Yours Truly for a morning of food and fellowship. And the Hat ministry continued to meet weekly on Sunday mornings, which has grown from a one-person ministry to a ten-person ministry! Lord knows I'm probably

forgetting something ... so please forgive me if I have! But as you can read, things don't slow down here at all!!

Although not directly church related, but certainly related to God's majesty and the awesomeness of God's good creation, this past month also included the Total Eclipse of the sun, which impacted us all in this area of the country. I know for me, it surpassed all my expectations of what it would be like. We closed the office that Monday so our staff could be at home with their families to enjoy what can sometimes be a once in a lifetime event. I, for one, am glad to have had that opportunity ... and found it deeply moving. I know lots of us did.

As I look ahead to the next month, and to the months that follow, I don't see things slowing down. Although some of the activities may vary and new ones may get added, many of the ministries and events are ongoing, monthly occurrences. The Summer months will be filled with fellowship events, the Youth Gathering, weddings, and vacations. We are an active congregation ... it's part of our identity ... and that's a good thing!! God continues to bless us with new disciples, and with actively faithful members. I praise God for each of you, and for this congregation.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

In Christ, with Christ, for Christ!

Pastor Steve