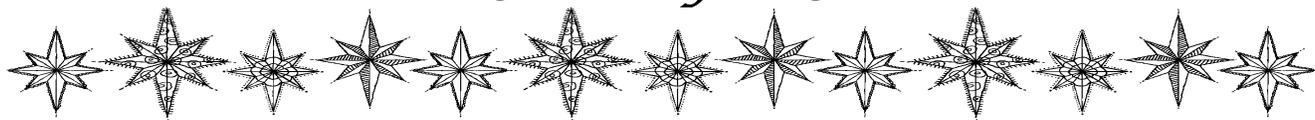


St. Matthew Lutheran Church

1505 Dover Street, Worthington, MN

January 2015



FROM THE PASTOR BRECH

**The article below, written by LCMS President Matthew Harrison, was printed in the November 2014 issue of The Lutheran Witness, a publication of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*

Unworthy Servants

The maddening fact is that the Missouri Synod has been in a slow numeric decline since about 1970. The last time a district of the Synod had any increase in its number of baptized was in the late nineties. There was a decrease in membership in 1977, due to the break off of the AELC (which became the catalyst in the formation of the ELCA). But the decline since 2000 has been even more pronounced. (We are down 12 percent in the past ten years.) Why the decline?

On my visitations of each district (First Vice-President Mueller and I have divided the number of districts between us and then taken along the regional vice president), I am sharing my statistical findings. We have analyzed the performance of each district over the past decade. Several factors emerge. The trend line for every district is the same: decline. Districts in the most secular areas of the country have declined most rapidly (down 25 percent or more in just ten years).

It is very clear that districts with significant urban populations also tend to have declined significantly. The top-performing district over the past decade is South Dakota, down only 4 percent. Several Midwestern/rural districts follow at declines of 6–7 percent. Even in districts that have had a significant increase over 40 years in the number of congregations (especially Texas and Michigan), there is still significant membership decline. The total number of congregations in the Synod declined slightly since about 2000, rebounded ever so slightly by the end of the past decade and has remained steady.

It is evident to me that historically the greatest source of growth in the Missouri Synod (and especially following WWII) had been procreation. The single most significant factor causing our decline has been that fact that we have largely adopted the prevailing cultural attitudes toward marriage and reproduction. Our young people are marrying later, if at all, and are having far fewer children. (There are today, for instance, only 48 percent of the number of high school youth who were in the Synod in 1980.) Second, we have not reached out to non-Anglo people to make up for the decline in the number of children among our traditionally Anglo constituency. Thus, while Roman Catholics in America have increased 43 percent since 1970, we are down 18 percent.

Why? Because Roman Catholics have benefited greatly by the influx of Spanish-speaking people. Finally, our church planting has not been sufficient. One district president told me recently, “It’s time for repentance. We haven’t started a mission in a predominantly Anglo neighborhood for over 15 years.”

Are we shrinking because of close(d) Communion? Hardly. The places in the Synod that are declining most rapidly are the places one is least likely to find the Synod’s doctrinal position on this matter strictly adhered to. Is the answer simply contemporary worship or more consistent use of the hymnal? I wish it were that easy. Iowa East has few praise bands and much more uniform use of the hymnal. Iowa West is clearly more moderately disposed in these areas. Decline? Both districts are down precisely 12 percent in 10 years. The stats show, I’m convinced, that the reasons we use to beat one another over the head about decline are simply unfounded. They might make us feel good about ourselves or give us the rhetorical advantage, but they are bogus.

How do we compare with other denominations since 1970? Among Christians, the Roman Catholics have fared the best (up 43 percent). The Southern Baptists are up 42 percent. The “old-line” churches have fared the worst: the United Church of Christ, down 48 percent; the Episcopal Church, down 42 percent; Presbyterian Church USA, down 36 percent; United Methodist Church, down 30 percent; ELCA, down 27 percent. Shockingly, if you believe the numbers for the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses (and I don’t doubt them), they claim increases of 218 percent and 254 percent, respectively. The Assemblies of God claims an increase since 1970 of 396 percent. Yet, even the Southern Baptists have in recent years begun to decline.

It’s clear to all of us that Christianity in America is in decline. There is theological atrophy in the mainline/old-line churches, which no longer teach that the Bible is God’s infallible Word. There is rank heresy (as usual) in the televangelists who gather their thousands (and millions of dollars!). But there’s no consolation in this for us. What’s the answer?

First, repentance. While it is true that the Lord promises that the masses will follow false christs and prophets in the end times (Mark 13:14), there is plenty for us to repent of as well. If the false gospels of Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses (who both deny Christ, the divine Son of God, and the blessed Holy Trinity) motivate their evangelists to hit every door in the country, shouldn’t the full freeing Gospel of the Scriptures—*sola fide, sola gratia, solus Christus*—propel us to become people on a mission? If the cults can canvas a whole town, might we as individuals be able to invite a neighbor who needs Jesus to church?

It’s also time for us to repent of uncharitable language directed toward one another and focus our efforts on speaking about Christ to all around us. Christ tells us that Church will be a “little flock.” Always has been. Always will. But that’s in the mystery of His working, not by our intentions or inventions.

Look to the Gospel. “On this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). We have Christ’s promises. We have the powerful word of the Gospel. Human nature is the same, but there are times in the history of the world when men close their minds and, like Pharaoh, then God finally closes them for good. We all have the sense that we are entering such a time. Nevertheless, “God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (Tim. 2:4). And Christ’s blessed mandate to His Church (all of us, pastors and laity) remains: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).

Let’s up our game. First, let us encourage one another (1 Thes. 5:11), not tear one another down. Let’s hit the street (i.e., get visiting). Visitation looks different in different circumstances, but it’s the way of Jesus, the way of Paul, Peter, Barnabas and all the apostles. Read Luther’s preface to the “Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony” of 1528 (Luther’s Works, volume 40, pages 269–320). A bishop or pastor is a visitor! He doesn’t go on “walk about” just for fun or the joy of taking a walk, says Luther. He goes to proclaim Christ, to admonish with the Law, to console with the Gospel, to care, to intercede, to pray, to set things in order, to plant, to return to the church planted, to see “how they are” (Acts 15:36). Let’s encourage our laypeople to own the mission, to be certain of their God-pleasing vocations as the context for sharing Christ and inviting folks to church. Let’s get to work on our preaching, pastors. We can all improve. Let’s hold one another accountable for clear, compelling, biblical and Law/Gospel sermons. And let’s plant churches, looking for opportunities among the people whom God has brought right to us.

Finally, after we have done everything, we must confess, “We are unworthy servants.” (Luke 17:10). We know we shall bear the cross in this life, and as Christianity continues to fade from our nation (even as it blossoms elsewhere in the world), the soil will become harder here. But it still remains that God works through means, and He is even now working through us, and the message on our lips, to bring to Himself the full number of the elect. “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

CHURCH RECORDS

Baptisms

- Hunter Sage Slinger, son of Raymon Slinger & Erika Anderson was baptized on November 22, 2014
- Wren Ellen Thier, daughter of Ryan & Stephanie Thier was baptized on November 30, 2014.

Deaths

- Eugene Howard Barber passed away on November 25, 2014; funeral services were held on November 29, 2014.
- Harold Robert King passed away December 7, 2014; funeral services were held on December 12, 2014.
- Marvin Wesley Philipp passed away December 10, 2014; funeral services were held on December 13, 2014.
- Katherine Lynette Knigge passed away December 13, 2014; funeral services were held on December 18, 2014.
- Robert Biff Nutt passed away December 18, 2014; services will be at a later date.

Transfer Out

- Barbara Tischer

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

by Roxann Leckband

Mom's /young women's group will meet on January 9th, 16th 23rd, and 30th from 10:00-11:30AM in the Fireside Room. Moms/women will be reading and praying through "The Power of the Praying Parent." Yes, once a parent-always a parent no matter the age of the child and the age of the parent. The children will be meeting in the classroom across the hall from the Fireside room. The children will have a Bible story, crafts, games, singing and snacks. Please join us. We would love to have you. Please feel free to give Roxie a call @ 376-6168.

Young Family night will be on January 18th from 5-6:30PM. Pizza will be the main entrée served that evening. Please bring a dish to pass. The adults will have a devotional time and a time of fellowship. The children will be supervised for an evening of games and fun.

Noon Fellowship will be on January 12th at 12:00 noon. The menu is meatloaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, and a dinner roll. Please join us. You may bring a side dish to pass, a free will offering, both or just yourself. Come for good food and a time in God's Word and wonderful Christian fellowship.

Attention Parents: Sunday school will resume in the New Year on January 11. Please make every effort to have your children here for Worship and Sunday school. As we reflect on those Baptismal promises we as parents have made and the blessings our children receive when we bring them before the Lord on Sunday mornings.

Sunday School offering: Parents, please reinforce to your children the importance of giving back to the Lord during our offering. The Sunday school classes are having a competition to see who can have the largest monthly offerings. In the month of November we collected \$200.00 to help stock the Love INC cleaning supply closet. In December we have collected \$75 (as of Dec. 14) and this money will be used to purchase 1-2 goats to help families in Haiti to feed their children. The goats are used to provide milk, breeding stock etc. Thank-you for encouraging your children in this important life-long principal of giving back to the Lord (tithing). God be with you in your Christian parenting.

Confirmation students: Confirmation class will resume on January 7th at 5:30PM for supper. Please make sure you are getting to worship. Do not forget your sermon notes = 3 for 7th-8th grades and 2 for 5th-6th grades. If you are behind check with Roxie for recordings of previous worship services and sermon notes may be written from the recordings. Sermon notes are a requirement for Confirmation. Please contact Roxie, the Elders or Pastor Brech with any questions you may have.

ALTAR GUILD NEWS

Serving in January will be: Alice White and Sue Flesner for the 8 a.m. worship services. If you would like to be a part of the Altar Guild, please contact Velma Cortright, 376-5600 or Sandy Meyer, 376-6290.

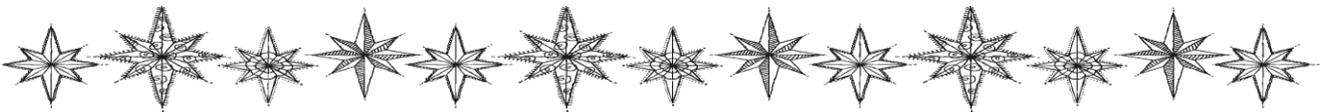
LWML NEWS

NO LWML Meeting in January. The coffee hour on Sunday, January 18th will be hosted by the Sarah Circle.



SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE FELLOWSHIP

You are invited to the Coffee Fellowship each Sunday morning following the 8 a.m. service. A free-will donation is received to benefit the various church projects. **On the first and second Sundays of the month, there is opportunity for those church committees/groups wishing to host a coffee hour.** Please sign up on the sheet in the church basement when you plan to host the coffee hour. ***Please sign-up at least two weeks in advance.*** The third Sunday of the month, the LWML sponsors the coffee hour. Proceeds are given to a Seminary Student. The fourth Sunday of the month the youth sponsor the coffee hour. Proceeds go to support their various activities and their mission trip.



EVANGELISM NEWS

BANQUET: St. Matthew congregation will be serving a noon meal at the Banquet in Sioux Falls, SD on Saturday, January 31, 2015. The Banquet is a volunteer ministry that feeds the poor and homeless. This ministry involves preparing, serving, and cleaning up after the meal; and visiting with those to whom the meal is served. It is a wonderful opportunity for each of us to share the love of Christ and give back, in some way, for the many blessings we have been given. 40 volunteers are needed for the January 31st Banquet ministry and volunteers must be 7th grade or older. Time commitment for 6 volunteers to prepare the food is 8:30am-1:00pm; time commitment for the other 34 volunteers is 10:45am-1:00pm. **A sign-up sheet is posted, on the bulletin board, in the North entrance, for those who wish to help serve at the Banquet.** Volunteers may also call the church office to sign up or contact Bev Kness at 376-4460, (Cell 360-3241) or Mary Krueger at 507-683-2459. **THANK YOU** to those who have already volunteered to serve on January 31st. May God BLESS YOU as you share the Love of Christ in this way.

Advance notice: The Evangelism committee will be sponsoring the church coffee hour on Sunday, January 11th, to help support the Banquet.

PRAYER INTERCESSORS: During this season of Gratefulness and Gratitude the Evangelism Committee wishes to thank each of you for being a blessing in the lives of our Confirmation students. Please continue to pray for your student's needs on a daily basis and affirm him/her with an occasional note of encouragement. Do not identify yourself and no gifts are necessary. May God richly bless each of you as you uphold these young people in prayer. A simple way to pray for the needs of your youth is to use the word "BLESS": B-bodily needs, L-labor (school work), E-emotional, S-spiritual and S-social. Your prayers will powerfully impact the lives of St. Matthew's Youth!

WEEKDAY BIBLE STUDIES FOR WOMEN

The Martha Circle will meet on Thursday, January 15th at 1:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room. Information was not received from the rest of the Circles. Please watch the weekly bulletins for updates.

MUSIC AND WORSHIP NEWS

“Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!”

Grace and Peace to all of you as we begin a new calendar year at St. Matthew Lutheran. As we reflect on this past year, we are very grateful to the countless people who have made our jobs as music directors at St. Matthews such a joy. To all who have provided special vocal and instrumental music during this past year, a sincere “thank you”. Thank you to our adult and bell choir director, Louise Clausen for the wonderful music her groups provide. Thank you to Linda Lang, our choir accompanist and substitute organist for sharing her talents with us. Thank you to our Praise Teams and Worship Band members. Thank you to our Sunday School Students for sharing in Word and song the wondrous story of the birth of our Savior and Lord, and to our Sunday School song leaders. Thank you to our sound technicians, who help everyone sound their best.

A special thanks to the support of our other staff members, Bev, Roxie, and Andy, and to our Board of Elders, Council, and Trustees. And a special thank you to Pastor Brech for ministering to us faithfully in Word and Sacrament as we wait on the Lord to provide us with a full time Pastor. And finally, thank you to our St. Matthew family as you encourage each of us in our music ministries.

May God richly bless each of you in the coming year.

In Him,

Lorenda Glade, Interim Director of Traditional Music

Susan Hansberger & Amy Khamphanh, Interim Directors of Contemporary Music

THANK YOU NOTES

We would like to thank everyone for all of the generous donations made in memory of Gene. We also appreciated all of you who attended the wake and funeral service. A very special thank you to everyone who helped serve the meal. It is comforting to have so many supportive church friends.
The Gene Barber Family

I would like to thank my church family for your kind expressions of sympathy in Harold's passing. I am grateful to the prayer team and congregation for the many prayers offered for him.
Blessings to all,
Rosemary King & Family

Thanks to everyone for their prayers, cards, and visits during my heart surgery. And a special thanks to Pastor McDonald for his home visit. God Bless Everyone!

Nancy Bustad

We would like to thank Pastor Brech for the special prayer for our 60th wedding anniversary and thank you to our St. Matthew's family for all of the cards and well wishes we received also. It was very much appreciated. God bless you all.

Bill & Phyllis Henderson

Y.I. CLUB CHALLENGE

From Jan. 25 to Feb. 14, 2015, a 10-question quiz with basic stewardship and finance questions will appear online at lcefuppermidwest.org/yichallenge. Congregation members and Sunday school students of all ages can take the quiz online. The higher our percentage of participation and correct answers, the better our chances of winning! Note, while you may take the Y. I. Challenge multiple times to improve your score, only one top score from each participant will count toward our church final GPA.

At the end of the quiz period, based upon the quiz results, one congregation/school in each participating district will win \$1000 from the district LCEF to use for ministry!

Let's set a goal of 100% participation! Parents, you can help your youngsters by encouraging them to take the quiz. Talk about the questions with them and they can take it more than once. And moms and dads, grandpas and grandmas, don't forget to take the quiz yourselves!

Remember - January 25 is the start date.

MOBILE MEALS

St. Matthews will be doing the Mobile Meals for the month of February. Sign-up to help deliver meals will begin around January 15th. Watch the weekly bulletins for more information. Contact Pat Arnt, 360-8717 with any questions, or to sign-up.

Highlights from the December 19, 2014 Council Meeting:

Treasurer's Report – General income for November was \$47,915.45 with expenses of \$26,848.64, leaving a surplus of \$19,482.35. Memorial Funds balance is \$14,251.01. The Scholarship Fund balance is \$627,783.76. The Building Fund Loan Balance is \$197,620.82.

Roxie Leckband – Family Night ministry group went caroling to The Meadows, Homestead and Golden Horizons. Sudanese Ministry has expanded to include those from Ethiopia. Mom's Group, Youth Program, Confirmation classes are going well.

Lorenda Glade – The Pipe Organ was tuned in November. Repairman noted that approximately \$2,000 of additional repairs will be needed to the organ in the near future. Sanctuary keyboard has been cutting in and out. Cords have been switched to try to solve the problem. Linda Lang has joined the organist rotation.

Elders – If Pastor Brech is unavailable during the winter, services will still be held as Elders have the sermons Pastor has prepared. Communion would not be served at services if Pastor is not present.

Trustees – Discussion of a Family Restroom has taken place. Still looking at the options for this. Public utility office contacted us about high water usage for two months and it appears to have

been due to the irrigation system. Will move forward for a security system for the north door which will include a surveillance camera and motion sensor. Will contact Grothe Cleaning to clean the basement carpet.

Board of Education – November Sunday School offering of \$200 will be donated to Love INC.

Evangelism Committee – Coordinating details for the Banquet on January 31, 2015. We need 40 volunteers. Prayer Intercessors for 7-8th grade confirmands established.

Human Care: 6 bags of mitten from our Mitten Tree were given to Community Christmas Baskets; 1 soldier package mailed; 30 shut-in bags assembled; Caring Tree done.

Board of Youth: Wednesday night gatherings will resume in January.

Old Business: Lay delegate for convention in June – David Roslansky willing to serve. Will approve at the January Voters' Meeting. John Galstad was suggested as the alternative.

New Business: President Mike Traphagen announced that he and Patty have purchased a home on the lake in Alexandria, MN. They close on the house on May 1st; will continue to serve St. Matthew's until then, but a new president will be needed.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS –
Our next regular VOTERS MEETING
will be on Sunday- January 25, 2015
at 11:45 a.m. in the basement.
Watch the weekly bulletins for more information!**

ALTAR FLOWERS – if you would like to provide flowers for the altar on a specific Sunday please sign up on the flower calendar in the Narthex. Please sign up at least two weeks in advance. Altar flowers are now ordered from McCarthy's Floral for \$25. If you have any questions, please contact Ruth Ramert, 372-7225 or Bev in the church office, 376-6168.

OFFERING ENVELOPES – if you haven't already done so, please stop into the Great Hall and pick up your 2015 Offering Envelopes. Contact Bev in the church office if you have any questions.

Please Keep Your Contact Information Up-To-Date – To help us save on postage, please remember to inform the church office if you have changed your mailing address. Also PLEASE let us know if you have changed your phone number. It helps keep our records current. Thank You!

The Front door (former wooden doors) and steps will NOT be used during the winter season. Please use the north entrance, drive-up entrance or the side entrance off of McMillan street. Thank You.



**PLEASE TAKE NOTE: WHEN THE WINTER WEATHER IS QUESTIONABLE -
HOW DO I FIND OUT IF CHURCH SERVICES HAVE BEEN CANCELLED?**

To find out if worship services have been cancelled, please tune into the following Worthington radio stations for announcements:

- FM Stations 95.1, 93.5 and 104.3
 - AM Station 730 (KWOA)
-

Worship Service Helpers for January 2015

ACOLYTES

Jan. 4	(8 AM) Kaylee Gerdes	(10:30) Alexis Bosma
Jan. 11	(8 AM) Cayla Ling	(10:30) Autumn Drahota
Jan. 18	(8 AM) Austin Heimgartner	(10:30) Gabriel Dorschner
Jan. 25	(8AM) Carter Hokeness	(10:30) Nayeli Perez-Blas
Feb. 1	(8AM) Jennifer Preuss	(10:30) Turner Rogers

NURSERY (10:30 service only)

Jan. 4	Alyssa Bosma
Jan. 11	Jasmine Ling
Jan. 18	Jessalyn Broesder
Jan. 25	Ruby Cardenas
Feb. 1	MacKenzie Meyeraan

Nursery Adult Supervisor

Beth White
Jessica Larson
Val Wolford
Heather Knigge
Gail Holinka

** Please be sure to mark your calendars. If you cannot fulfill your scheduled date, please find a replacement and **call the church office with the change.***

THANK YOU

GREETER SCHEDULE for January 2015

**If you are unable to fulfill your scheduled time, please try to find a replacement and call the church office with the change. Thanks for serving.*

Jan. 4	8 a.m. – Dan & Laurita Roos 10:30 – Voris & Sandie Spittle
Jan. 11	8 a.m. – Tom & Eileen Schultz 10:30 – Dale & Vickie Larson
Jan. 18	8 a.m. – Jim & Eloise Langseth 10:30 – Bill & Karen Knigge
Jan. 25	8 a.m. – YOUTH 10:30 – YOUTH
Feb. 1	8 a.m. – Dave & LuAnn Philipp 10:30 – John & Jessica Widvey

