



Remember, Bless, Be at Peace

One of my favorite passages of scripture is Psalm 103, especially the opening verses. Verse 2 reads, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits." To bless, we must remember!

But here's the thing; we're forgetful people. Oh, I know we forget why we went down to the basement until we go back upstairs, and we embarrass ourselves by forgetting the names of people we've known for years when we run into them unexpectedly, but that's not what I mean.

I mean we forget how wonderful life is. We forget how good it is to have people to love, who depend on us. We forget how powerful we are, how one little word can heal or hurt. We forget to notice the people and places that encompass us daily. We forget to look at the faces of our lovers and children. We forget to breathe in the scent of musty fall woods and the hint of lasting chill that's on its way.

We forget that we are not the source of all the blessings we take for granted.

This was what Moses warned against when he prepared the people of Israel to enter the Promised

Land. He told them they would find that land rich and productive; they would be at peace and filled with prosperity. And he told them this was their greatest danger, because in the prosperity of the Promised Land, they would be tempted to believe that they had done it all themselves. (Deuteronomy 8:7-18)

People are the same now as then. Today is an opportunity to remember our blessings, but it is more than that. Today we have an invitation to be grateful for the One who has so abundantly blessed us.

This is more than just a word to make us humble, to remind us that we have received more than we could ever provide for ourselves. This is also a word of assurance and an invitation to the peace that comes to those who trust.

Consider the lilies of the field arrayed in glory by the overflowing creative love of God. Consider all that you treasure, all your blessings. God has provided all this. Be at peace. The blessings that mean the most are not provided by your anxious labor. They are the gift of God's extravagant grace.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Dear Lord:

Today we give thanks for our many blessings as we pray for those in need.

We give thanks for our family and friends as we pray for those who are lonely.

We give thanks for our freedoms as we pray for those who are oppressed.

We give thanks for our good health as we pray for those who are ill.

We give thanks for our comfort and prosperity as we share our blessings with others.

On this day of Thanksgiving, may the love of God enfold us, the peace of God dwell within us, and the joy of God uplift us. Amen.





Our worship service for December 19 will be a mix of scripture, prayer, and song (no boring homily!). The song will be provided in part by our own singing, accompanied by Norm Wahl on the organ, but the bulk of the singing will be performed by the Lake Effect Harmony Chorus. The good folk from Lake Effect Harmony Chorus rehearse in our building on Tuesday evenings and they have generously agreed to participate in our worship service, weaving a concert into worship. After the worship service, we will have a reception in the Fellowship Hall. Please make plans to attend. This would be a great opportunity to invite a guest or two to church!



December Birthdays & Anniversaries

Happy Birthday!

Jeff Rich (12/5), Beth Stormer (12/11), Ron Larson (12/15), Chelsea Kanaley (12/28), Sy LaVett (12/28), Luke Snyder (12/30)

Happy Anniversary!

Brian & Kimberly Snyder (Dec. 6, 2014)
Phil & Gail Vara (Dec. 9, 1995)

Grandparents Bob & Linda Velazquez proudly announce the birth of their granddaughter Drew Charlotte Velazquez born November 4th to their son Andy and Grace Bierl.



On Saturday, October 30, Corrina Lee Hacic was baptized into the family of faith at St. Matthew's. In the photo, she is joined (L to R) by her mom Andrea, her sister Charlie Rose, Pastor Lynn Morgan, and her father Tim. Proud grandparents are Cheryl and Ron Larson.



A special thank you to all the church friends for the many cards and calls of concern during my recent fall and stay at Autumn View for therapy.

Also, many thanks to Pastor Lynn for his visits and to LaDonna for the surprise gift box I received on Veterans Day from Senior Wishes. The eagle throw is especially beautiful.

I'm home now and receiving additional therapy and home care. I'm looking forward to seeing all of you as soon as I'm released to leave the house.

Thanks again, Ken Haberman

Prayer Concerns



Jeff Cotton; Jane Duewiger; Robin Federmann; Ken Haberman; Paul Hayes; John & Karen Kaitanowski; Ron Larson; Jewell McFarland; Jean Roth; Helen Wilson

If you or a loved one is interested in receiving communion at home, please contact Pastor Lynn (866-3085; pastorlynn@stmattsucc.org). He is looking forward to visiting and offering the sacrament.



Wonders for the Dead

Psalm 88:10 asks God, “Do you work wonders for the dead? Will those who have died stand up and give you thanks?”

Reading that question in the context of the whole psalm, what the psalmist is really saying in plain English is this: “Hey God, I’m in trouble here! I’m asking for your help and I’m eager to give you thanks and praise when you get me out of this pit I’ve fallen into. But, you know, the longer I wait the more I wonder if you’ll ever get me out of this pit. If you don’t get around to helping me in this life you won’t be getting any thanks from me because (as everyone knows) the dead don’t stand up and give you thanks.”

Except they do.

“Do you work wonders for the dead?” I’m convinced God pretty much only works wonders for the dead.

Jesus said, “those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, will save it” (Mark 8:35).

The paradox of the Gospel is that life comes out of death, and only out of death. Jesus’ resurrection is not just some panacea to calm our anxiety about mortality. He shows the paradigm of Gospel living. To make way for God to give you new life, you have to die to the life you have.

The spirituality of AA gets this just right. Do you want to be made new? Admit that the life you can make for yourself is dead-end. Accept that there’s no way up from rock bottom on your own and consign yourself to God.

See how God works wonders for the dead. To know new life in Christ, you have to relinquish the old life that you were living for yourself. That’s what it means to be re-born.

But this is more than a conversion experience. Every experience of new life and growth requires that we loosen our grip on what we have now. Seeds kept carefully in their packets on the shelf may be safe and warm, but they yield no fruit. It’s only the seeds that get buried that have any hope of being raised.

Prayer: I have no life in myself except as a seed buried in hope of new life. Surprise me. Work wonders for the dead. Raise up something new, something alive in me. Amen.

Meet Our Newest Members



On November 14, we welcomed Chrissy Mellerski and Kerry Shearer to the faith and fellowship of St. Matthew's. Chrissy and Kerry have transferred their membership to St. Matthew's from the Croydon Uniting Church, in a suburb of Melbourne, Australia. Kerry is not only a new member of St. Matthew's, she is also a new citizen of the United States. A native of Australia, she recently retired from a career in the Mercy Health System, where she was director of risk management. Chrissy was born and raised right here in West Seneca. Chrissy's professional expertise is in care for those with memory impairment; she worked 20 years at ECMC. Kerry and Chrissy were married in 2014. They don't have any children, but they do have 2 dogs, Honey and Ginger, who are also recent immigrants from Australia.

Gnome Craft Day



What a wonderful turn-out for yet another fun craft day! Devon and Vanessa did a great job teaching this new craft - adorable gnomes!!! Also, thank you to Vanessa and Marilyn for providing the delicious soup lunch that everyone enjoyed! -Linda Ferraro

Special thanks to Kurt (Rich) for setting/cleaning up and all-round kitchen duty.



Annual Meeting Update

The following items were voted on at our Annual Meeting last Sunday, November 14: the Annual Budget, the slate of committee members; and additional funds were approved for both the upgrade of our live streaming capabilities and replacement of the carpet in the Sanctuary and Parlor.

We welcome a new member on Council, Corey Wilson, and thank Bill Hamm for his leadership on Council as his term is over. Also, Beth Stormer joins the Nominating Committee and we thank Dawn Goetz for her service on that committee.

Honoring Veterans with Hero Boxes from Senior Wishes



Three of our veterans at St. Matthew's received Hero Boxes from Senior Wishes. LaDonna Painter and Senior Wishes Executive Director Wendy Bachman presented the boxes to Steve Jankowski and Clayton Errington during the worship service on November 7th. LaDonna presented Ken Haberman with his box on Veteran's Day at Autumn View.



All Saints Celebration

The worship service on October 31 was one of thankful remembrance for the saints of St. Matthew's whose names have been engraved on the monument at the entrance to the Memorial Pavilion. During the worship service 30 candles were lit from the Christ candle, reminding us how their lives radiated Christ's light and love. The service concluded at the monument where representatives of the families placed flowers on the stone as we offered a litany of thanksgiving for each person's life.



Helping Refugees Start a New Chapter in their Lives

Our Mission Committee announces a new way you can share Christ's love and welcome a refugee family seeking a better, safer, healthier, more prosperous life in Buffalo. We are partnering with Journey's End Refugee Services (JERS) to help one family upon their arrival by gifting them with a Welcome Kit.



Most individuals and families arrive with very little and are ill-prepared to begin living in a foreign country - different culture, language, daily routines, weather, etc. Together, we can help support a family by providing them with the basics needed to set up housekeeping, including bedding, kitchen supplies, bathroom supplies, and cleaning items.

Journey's End has provided us with a list of items to purchase for the Welcome Kit. There are a couple of ways you can see the list of items and choose which one(s) you'd like to donate: online and posted in the church on the landing.

Please place your donations in the Mission Collections room (near the Fellowship Hall). We would like to have all items by year-end.

Call the office if you'd like to see the list or if need someone to pick up your donations.



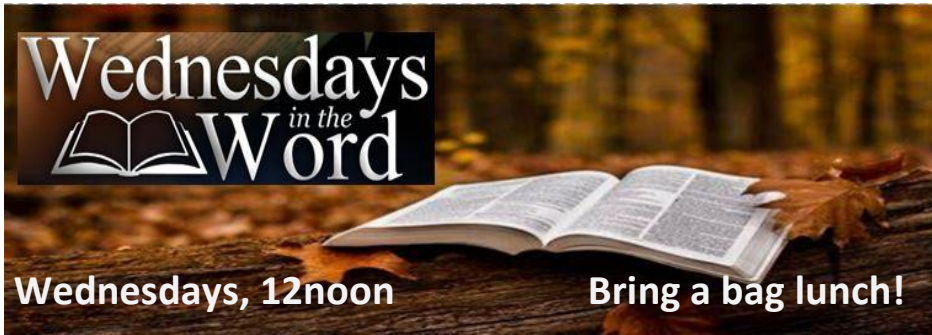
“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Matthew 25:35

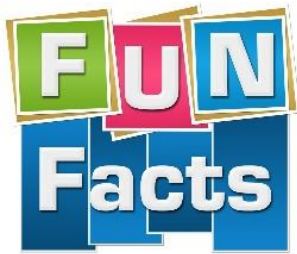
On behalf of Journey's End Director of Community Outreach Kathy Spillman and the family who will receive this generous gift of welcome...

THANK YOU!





Come share a time of fellowship and discovery as we continue to delve into the book of Romans. Each Wednesday at noon you can bring your lunch and your curiosity about Paul's most intriguing letter. Feel free to drop in whenever your schedule allows.



There is a museum dedicated to failure. Boasting "one of a kind international collection of more than 100 innovation failure," The touring Museum of Failure features displays of such bad ideas as Harley-Davidson perfume, Colgate beef lasagna and Google glasses equivalent to the iPhone. Some failed Oreo flavors were Cinnamon Bun, Blueberry Pie, and Waffles & Syrup.

The American football huddle was invented in 1892 by Paul Hubbard, a quarterback from an all-deaf Gallaudet University, to stop the opposing team from reading their signs.



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The pilot for Gilligan's Island was filmed in November 1963. On the final day of production in Hawaii, the cast and crew learned of John F. Kennedy's assassination. There is a small, subtle reminder of this historical incident seen on the series. In the opening credits of the first season, as the Minnow pulls out of the harbor, the U.S. flag can be seen flying at half mast.

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A jockey once won a race after he had died. In 1923, Frank Hayes was hailed the victor at a race at Belmont Park in NY. The only problem - the jockey had suffered a heart attack and died in the middle of the race.



Special UCC Offering

Your donation brings relief and hope to those who have dedicated their lives to serving our churches

Special envelopes will be in the bulletin on December 12, and collected the following Sunday, the 19th.

Thank you for your continued generous support of the day-to-day operations and ministries of St. Matthew's.

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Christmas
BLESSINGS

