



MARCH 2017 NEWSLETTER

Keeping the Faith
for 40 years
1976 ~ 2016

Sunday Worship – The Season of Lent **Explore the Bible (Matthew, chapters 14-28)**

Our Explore the Bible readings during Lent return to the gospel of Matthew, chapters 14-28, as we follow Jesus to Jerusalem and the cross of our salvation. These passages from Matthew offer a unique and challenging perspective into the last six months of Jesus' earthly ministry. Together, we will discover the true identity of Jesus and the impact He made on the first generation of Christ followers. All the studies and sermons will focus on one particular question about Jesus. Pick up a study guide and gather with 2-3 others and study the second half of the Gospel of Matthew together. Personal study guides again are available in the back for continued study and discussion with others – suggested donation per book is \$10.

March 5 – Matthew 16:13-28 – “Who Is Jesus?” **1st Sunday in Lent**
Jesus is the Christ to whom all of Scripture points.

March 12 – Matthew 17:1-13 – “Is Jesus Fully God?” **2nd Sunday in Lent**
As the Son, Jesus reveals God's glory to humanity.

March 19 – Matthew 19:19-26 – “What Is Required?” **3rd Sunday in Lent**
Jesus offers the gift of eternal life to those willing to follow Him.

March 26 – Matthew 21:1-11 – “More Than a Prophet?” **4th Sunday in Lent**
Jesus fulfilled the prophecies associated with Israel's long-awaited King.

Midweek Lenten Services **Begins on March 1 at 7 PM**

Our Lenten journey to the cross will begin with our Ash Wednesday service on March 1 with the Imposition of Ashes. Our theme this year is **At the Crossroads** where we will meet many of the characters involved in the story of the Passion of Christ who came to a crossroad and had to decide which way to go. Some chose well, some did not, and the stories of each of these experiences at various crossroads will help us know what to do and what not to do when we encounter similar crossroads in our own lives. In the end, each service in the series will reveal in some way how Christ and his cross lead us to decide the path of God's will for us.

March 1 – **Confession** (King David) **ASH WEDNESDAY**

In this Ash Wednesday service the psalmist David reaches the crossroads of confession and confesses his sins to the Lord. We are called to confess our sins to the Son of David and find forgiveness in Him.

March 8 – **Betrayal** (Judas Iscariot)

Tonight Judas Iscariot comes to the point where he must either listen to Jesus or listen to the devil and he chooses to betray Jesus. When we are tempted by Satan to betray our Lord, we gain strength from our Savior to say “No” to the devil.

March 15 – **Judgment** (Pontius Pilate)

Tonight Pontius Pilate is called upon by the crowds to make a judgment call about Jesus, and his decision not to decide results in the death of Jesus. We look to the cross of Christ as we make definitive judgment calls in our lives.

March 22 – **Compassion** (Malchus)

Tonight Jesus is taken into custody and He chooses to show compassion to a wounded participant in the arrest (Malchus). We are called to show compassion, not anger, even to those in our midst whom we might consider our enemies.

March 29 – **Declaration** (Peter)

Tonight Peter is asked to declare whether or not he knows Jesus and he decides to deny his Savior. When questioned about our Lord, we are called to boldly declare our faith in Christ.

Each Wednesday will begin with a meal served in the fellowship hall between 6:00 and 6:30 p.m. with our worship service and crossroads theme at 7:00 p.m. Easter Sunday this year is April 16. Please join us as we once again take this important journey to the cross!

Lenten Offerings

As the Season of reflection and penance begins again on Ash Wednesday, March 1, Pastor Matt will be offering the following opportunities for you to come, grow, focus, and ponder God’s grace and love in your life. These will continue through the celebration of Holy Week.

Daily Morning Prayer (Matins): Matins will be celebrated **daily Monday through Friday** (with exceptions noted on the calendar when Pastor Matt will not be available) from **7:00 to 7:30 a.m.** in the front of the sanctuary. This will begin promptly at 7:00.

Daily Evening Prayer (Vespers): Vespers will be celebrated **Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday** (with exceptions noted on the calendar when Pastor Matt will not be available) from **5:30 to 6:00 p.m.** in the front of the sanctuary. This will begin promptly at 5:30.

Individual Confession and Absolution: Individual Confession and Absolution will be offered every **Thursday from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.** in Pastor Matt’s office. Please come into the Fellowship Hall; if the office door is open, please come in at your leisure. If the door is closed, please wait for the person before you to exit. As you wait, prayer and reflection for yourself and life are always a good place to begin.

PASTOR STEVE'S LETTER: "LENT: A TIME FOR CLARITY AND FOCUS"

Never before in the history of the Church has the Church needed clarity and focus. All around us the world is clamoring for this and that, each one seeking our attention and activity. As a result our calendars and lives are full with little time to seek a true focus in life. In the midst of all our daily demands we continually try to "balance" our lives between work, family, and friends. However, balancing one's life depicts a life God never intended for us. Balancing life involves verbs of action like managing, controlling, striving, juggling, hurrying and fragmenting. Balancing your life is still full of distractions. What if your life had clarity, focus and a daily rhythm that renews your spirit instead of draining it? The purpose of Lent is a time to regain our clarity, focus and daily rhythm again! Jesus lived a "focused" life. He knew His purpose. He knew His mission and ministry. He knew His Father's will for His life and He always lived for that purpose. And what was His purpose in coming to earth? Simply put – the CROSS. He came to die on the cross for the sin of the world, to set the human race free from the bondage of sin, and to see us free to live the life God originally intended us to live. In fact, when Jesus had finished His public ministry in Galilee (the fulfilling of the prophecy by Isaiah 9:1 & 2 where the people who are living in darkness have seen a great light and those who are living in the shadow of death a light has dawned – see Matthew 4:15-16), Luke shares one of the most important verses in the Bible. Luke writes, "*As the time approached for him (Jesus) to be taken up to heaven (the cross), Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem*" (Luke 9:51). Some Bible versions translate this verse saying Jesus set His "face" toward Jerusalem, meaning His focus is now set on one thing – the cross. From this moment on, Jesus' focus is heading to Jerusalem to suffer, be betrayed and die. The devil will try one more "last-ditch" effort to divert Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and one last try by the taunting of the religious leaders, the crowds standing by, and one thief on the cross to save Himself and come down off the cross. But Jesus had set his "face" toward Jerusalem with clarity and focus. Nothing would deter Him doing the will of the Father, not even those closest to Him.

As we enter another season of Lent, let me ask you an important question: "Does your life have clarity and focus OR are you just trying to find balance in your life?" In the movie *City Slickers*, Billy Crystal's character, Mitch, has signed up for a cattle drive with two others friends—all who are trying to rediscover their purpose and meaning in life. In one scene, Mitch is riding his horse alongside the trail boss, Curly, where Billy Crystal asks Curly the secret of life and Curly lifts up one finger on his hand and says: "One thing!" Find the one thing and you will be happy all your life. And Billy Crystal asks Curly: "What is the one thing?" And Curly replies, "You need to find it out yourself." Well, Jesus defined the one thing for our lives when He told us to become His disciple and follow Him. Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, "Whoever (*that's you and me*) wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Jesus told us to pick up the cross and follow. So what is the cross? Doing exactly what Jesus did. He went on to say that cross-bearing requires clarity and focus. Jesus said if we want to save our life (keeping up our hectic schedules with doable balance) we will lose our life in the end. But if we lose our life for Jesus and His Kingdom we will find clarity and focus. If we do not find clarity and focus we will lose our very souls (sanity, health, relationships, etc.—you fill in the blank).

I recently attended a retreat where we discussed living a more focused life versus a balanced life. Several questions were presented for us to contemplate. Below I have listed these questions. Perhaps they can help you learn what it means to take up the cross, follow Jesus and become a disciple of His.

- What pace do you run at? (all paces are not the same—are they comfortable?)
- Does your schedule have margins?
- Are you moving at the speed of your relationships (what's appropriate for each?)

- Do you view your life as a “solo” or integrated?
- Do the “competing” parts of your life energize or empty you? (complexity is a given)
- What do you find yourself really caring about?
- How are you doing with your “yes” and your “no’s”?
- How would you describe the “good” tired versus the “bad” tired?
- Are you in your life assignment and what opportunities lay there for you?
- Are you living your life as a “shared” or “isolated” life?
- How “rich” or “poor” are you relationally with others? Are you a lone ranger or a long ranger?
- Do others really know you?

As you seek to answer these important questions, seek to find a rhythm in your daily life that refreshes and energizes you. A rhythm in life is full of energizing verbs of action like relaxing, responding, composing, listening, aligning, focusing and finding wholeness.

Does this sound like a struggle or hard work? At first, maybe it will seem that way. But with time and seeking to live a life of discipleship you will soon discover the joy and fulfillment of life that Jesus gives. I invite you to journey to the cross with Jesus again this Lenten season. Listen to the words of Jesus as He enters Jerusalem. Listen to the conversations we will be having with key biblical characters on Wednesday nights as to the various crossroads each person faced and decided to take. Each crossroad had a definite bearing on each life.

On the way to the cross again with Jesus,

Pastor Steve

PASTOR MATT'S LETTER

*“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.” **Isaiah 46:9-11***

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” **Romans 8:28***

*“pray continually;” **1 Thessalonians 5:17***

March is the season of luck; though it seems as if all year is the season for luck as you hear Christians and others wish one another “Good Luck” amidst everything from tests at school to medical surgery, from athletic competitions to taxes, and so many other permutations. (Heck, luck even seems to run into Karma, Juju, and Kismet, to name a few terms, but each of these is part of a religious flowing outside of Christianity). So, as a Christian in a broken and chaotic world pluralized by “religious tolerance,” should I be wishing others “Good Luck” for anything? Does wishing someone good luck undermine a clear understanding of who God is and a reminder of what it means to live in the blessing of such a benevolent and sovereign God? We know already that the Valentine’s Day holiday skews Love from God’s demonstration of love to a fancy box of chocolates. So what about luck?

To wish another good luck is to say in a rhetorical nature, “Well, it’s all up to chance anyway, so I hope that, by chance, it all turns out on the good side for you.” Chance; the random spin of a wheel, dice on the board, lottery balls in the shoot when applied to the things of life as wrapped up in God’s will and grace means that in everything, God is playing craps with you and I. It is as if God can’t wait to see what the outcome is going to be either, and additionally He will be just as surprised as you no matter how it all turns out. Or to take this to its furthest and worst extent, it says that if God gets a wee bit frustrated or angry with me, and like any “reputable” gambling establishment and He loads the dice against me, I will lose. Or in reverse, if He favors Joe Blow over me, He stacks the deck in Joe’s favor so he wins, I lose. In this reality nothing is fair, and life *would* look pretty miserable for sure.

But, for the Christian (just one more benefit of a faithFull life) we can come to grow and know God’s character and will so well that we understand that God does not work in chances, luck or happenstance. The randomness of chaos projected on human life would be too much to bear for anyone for any length of time. This is why at every age we need to move always more fully into a relational life with God; to come to understand deeply in our heart that the God of Creation, the God of the Bible, is not a random game player with the world and all of its inhabitants. This is witnessed in truth from the beginning, as **Genesis 1:2** from the Hebrew says the ground was in *confusion, full of emptiness and darkness*; and God created, and in creating He took chaos and subdued it into order, took emptiness and gave it form and function, and cast to the back corners darkness with His own light. And that was GOOD – but there was no luck involved. It was intentional, willful, purposeful and measured. Sadly, as creatures we ruptured and destroyed that creation and so we live in a world once again bearing chaos. BUT GOD . . .

At the cross God planted His ultimate reminder that He is the Creator and the Redeemer, and that the outcome and end of life and life's troubles ALL is resolved in that cross. In His benevolent and sovereign will, the Father put death and darkness under the footstool that Jesus rests His feet on as the King and Ruler of all; and there is no luck here either as this act, too, was intentional, willful, purposeful and measured. So as a Christian I live under God's benevolence, grace, will, reign and watchful eye, as a sheep of His own hand and flock. There is no luck but there is God, God's will and purpose, and in knowing God I know the promise of **Romans 8:28**. There are things that won't go my way. There will be things that will be bad. There will be things that come out of nowhere and shock and dismay even, but as a Christian I will never say that they are unfair. After all, what makes me out of all creation so special as to not have to suffer the consequence of sin in this world?

So when the good happens, I can and should praise God for His mercy and blessings poured out upon me; and when the bad times happen, I should praise God for His mercy and grace and seek to ask for His blessing for patience and endurance because He is allowing something to happen, which will be in the long run for my good, as for all who love Him. The best thing to do is listen to Paul's advice and pray continuously, so that I might seek to know God better so that I would come to know what is His will, "*His good, pleasing and perfect will*" is for me. (**Romans 12:2**)

So as I send off another, or hear of one of those moments where several directions might come to a crossroad, or I face "the challenges and changes of life" I don't wish upon me or anyone Good Luck (happy happenstance), but rather I say God's blessings, God bless you, God's will be done, God's peace be with you. So that no matter what the outcome, good or bad by a human categorization, I know and wish God's presence in it all because in God's presence all will come to good for those who love Him. The greatest unfairness is that God has granted me, a poor miserable sinner, life and forgiveness in Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; and that wasn't blind luck for me (or for you) . . . it's personal! Remember – "*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*" **John 16:33**

God's blessings in each new day to you all.

Pastor Matt

YOUTH CALENDAR

Ash Wednesday Fundraiser Dinner for the Youth Group

On **Wednesday, March 1**, the Youth will be holding one of their few fundraisers this year. Please join us for a meal and fellowship prior to Ash Wednesday worship beginning at 6:00 p.m. The Youth Group will provide a dinner of: Roast pork loin, stuffing, bacon ranch whipped potatoes, gravy, green beans, rolls, desserts and beverages. Please come and join us for a meal.

6th Annual Chili and Soup Cook-off and Cribbage and Pitch Tournament

THANKS to ALL who came, dined, and played for fun. It was wonderful to see so many new faces among the participants and to share an evening of Christian fellowship and fun. This year's winners included:

Chili: Margaret Svitak, Gina Krohn, Michelle Anderson

Soup: Kris Lee, Fern Zechmann, Danita Broders

Pitch: Don Knee and Nell Finkral

Cribbage: Linda Cyboron, Gina Krohn, Mary Lund

Sunday School Exploration of the Bible

A time of Gathering happens from 8:45 to 8:50 a.m. in the fellowship hall and then all the classes break out into their learning areas. This year as we continue digging deeper in the Word we are moving our focus to look into more of the Epistles beginning in 1 Peter. We want to thank all those who are serving the kingdom giving their time and talents to pass on the faith to our youth. Please thank these individuals for their service to Our children:

Sunday school superintendent: Amanda Cyboron

3- and 4-year-olds and Kindergarten: Fern Zechmann, Kristy Rosberg;
teacher assistant Micheyla Anderson

1st through 3rd grade: Amanda Cyboron

4th through 6th grade: Judy Carstens, Patrick Olson

Jr. High and High School: Mary Weich, Greg Moen, Charlie Skoglund, Brian Anderson

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Beginning **Sunday, March 5, at 9:00 a.m.**, "The Church Year: a Study" will be offered for junior and senior high students as well as adults of any age who want to grow to understand the basics of the Cycle of the Church year, its meaning, power, teaching ministry, and its flow. Each student will learn how the church year fits together and how it is intended to help move us closer to our Lord and His second coming.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

BIRTHDAYS

3/2 Kelcie Hall
3/5 Sharon Koepp
3/7 Carol Olson
3/9 Susan Thompson
3/11 Jo Roberts
3/16 Colin Broders
3/16 Mona Jean Roberts
3/18 Steve Jessen
3/18 Maddie Moen
3/18 Mary Weber

BIRTHDAYS (cont'd.)

3/20 Scott Greve
3/21 Dorothy Monson
3/22 Devon Beed
3/24 Stacy Jones
3/26 Leonard Zechmann
3/27 Alvina Heller
3/31 Rhonda Piske

ANNIVERSARIES

3/3 Jim and Orlene North
3/12 Rich and Kay Jaeger

PASTORAL ACTS

Baptism of Harper May Hopkins (Feb. 5, 2017)

ST. PATRICK'S DAY MEAL

Friday, March 24th at 6:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Tickets will be available from Tara Peters, Mary Weich, Louise Skoglund, Nell Finkral and Darla Jessen.

HELP WANTED

Two people needed to count offerings the 4th Sunday each month. Training will be provided. Contact the church office.

NEW ADDRESS

Cody Shaffer will leave for Germany on Feb. 27th and will be there for 9 months. Cards and letters will reach him at:

SPC Shaffer, Cody A.
B Co 277 ASB, 10th CAB
APO, AE 09140

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

On Sunday, April 2, after worship, we will hold elections and hear reports from our Ministry Teams.

THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who delivered Meals on Wheels in February: Warren Bennett, Marsha Burke, Linda Cyboron, Nell Finkral, Doug and Pat Witte, Pastor Matt and Pastor Steve. An average of 85 meals were delivered daily.

MERCY MEALS

Mercy Meals will be packaged Monday, March 6th at 6:30 p.m. at 701 Madison Ave. Please sign up as they will need a head count.

SPRING GATHERING

Women of Christ the Servant
Saturday, March 4, from 10:00 a.m. to noon
Join us for brunch and crafts!

March worship servants

	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Ushers	Acolytes	Lector	Coffee
5	Margaret & Lonnie Svitak	Chuck & Jeanne Nicholson	Mike & Nell Finkral	Katelyn & Hallie	Gina Krohn	Skoglunds
12	Becky Bahnfleth & Tara Peters	Connie Atkinson	Gary & Mary Weich	Elizabeth & Delilah	Linda Cyboron	Boelmans
19	Linda & Amanda Cyboron	Doug & Pat Witte	Jo Roberts & Steve Morton	Zach & Colin	Greg Moen	Andersons
26	Mary Weich, Darla Jessen	Rich & Deb Olson	Al Boelman, Danita Broders	Katelyn & Hallie	Connie Atkinson	Finkrals

Please make your own trade if you are unable to serve when scheduled, then notify the church office.



March Altar Guild: Mary Ann Knee and Mary Lund (communion bread)

March Membership Care Team: Arlis Lind and Marilyn Nickols

April worship servants

	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Ushers	Acolytes	Lector	Coffee
2	Michelle & Micheyla Anderson	Danita Broders & Family	Dennis & Linda Miller	Elizabeth & Delilah	Steve Morton	Holly Heller
4/9 Palm Sunday	Bob Lutz and Linda Miller	Amanda & Linda Cyboron	Steve & Julie Freese	Zach & Colin	Judy Carstens	Hoffarts
4/16 Easter	Lonnie & Margaret Svitak	Steve & Darla Jessen	Chuck & Jeanne Nicholson	Katelyn & Hallie	Richard Hillrichs	YOUTH GROUP
23	Scott & Gina Krohn	Mick & Doreen Kullbom	Rich & Deb Olson	Elizabeth & Delilah	Jo Roberts	Koepes
30	Charlie & Louise Skoglund	Mike & Nell Finkral	Warren Bennett, Danita Broders	Zach & Colin	Connie Atkinson	Mary Lund

MARCH 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Mondays = Pastor Matt's day off Fridays = Pastor Steve's day off Tuesdays = staff meeting at 10:30 a.m. </div>				
5 <i>1st Sunday in Lent</i> 8:45 Sunday school 10:00 worship 11:15 fellowship 6:30 Youth Group	6 6:30 Mercy Meals	7 6:30 Childcare meeting	8 5:00 FLYTE, Confirm. 6:00 meal 7PM Lenten service	9 9AM Agape Circle	10 9AM PieceMakers 6:30 MOPS steering committee meeting	11 10-12 Women of CTS Spring Gathering 1-5PM Bridal shower (fellowship hall)
12 <i>2nd Sunday in Lent</i> Daylight Saving Time begins 8:45 Sunday school 10:00 worship 11:15 potluck 6:30 Youth Group	13 6:30 Welcome & Hospitality team meeting 6:30 Embrace Grace	14 6:45 Mission/Ministry team meeting	15 5:00 FLYTE (no Confirmation) 6:00 meal 7PM Lenten service <i>Pastor Matt gone March 15th thru 19th</i>	16 2PM Card Club 6:45 MOPS/MOMISnext	17 ST. PATRICK'S DAY 5:30 PM Girl Scouts 	18
19 <i>3rd Sunday in Lent</i> 8:45 Sunday school 10:00 worship 11:15 fellowship no Youth Group (Pastor Matt gone)	20 SPRING BEGINS  6:30 PM Board of Administration 6:30 Embrace Grace	21 6:30 PM Board of Spiritual Oversight	22 5:00 FLYTE, Confirm. 6:00 meal 7PM Lenten service	23 2PM Card Club 6:45 MOPS/MOMISnext	24 6:30PM St. Patrick's meal (fellowship hall)	25 ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LORD
26 <i>4th Sunday in Lent</i> 8:45 Sunday school 10:00 worship 11:15 fellowship 6:30 Youth Group	27 6:30 Embrace Grace	28 7PM Worship Committee meeting	29 5:00 FLYTE, Confirm. 6:00 meal 7PM Lenten service	30	31	