

Newsletter Lent, 2017

BELLRINGER



*"ENGAGED IN JOYFUL SERVICE
IN GOD'S WORLD THROUGH
FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST"*

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
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Holy Week Worship Schedule

- Maundy Thursday, April 13 at 7 p.m.
(We will celebrate 1st Holy Communion during this service).
- Good Friday April 14 at 7 p.m. Tenebrae Worship
- Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 15 at 10 a.m.
- Easter Sunday Worship April 16 at 7:30, 9, 10:30 a.m.
- Easter Breakfast April 16 at 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

First Holy Communion

As Lutherans we commune the baptized which means that there is no set age at which one may receive 1st Holy Communion. Traditionally St. Matthew's has celebrated 1st Holy Communion in 2nd grade. Our 1st Holy Communion classes are designed for 2nd graders but as parents I encourage you to decide when your child is ready to receive communion.

We are offering 1st Holy Communion classes on Sunday March 26 & April 2 at 11:30. It is important to attend both classes. And we ask that at least one parent attend the classes with their child.

We will celebrate 1st Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday April 13 at our 7 p.m. worship service and on Sunday, April 23 at the service of your choice.

Please contact the church office to register your child for the class. We will need to know your name, your child's name and their age or grade in school. I look forward to sharing this time with you and your children. Pastor Tina

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Mission In
James Davis-Property
Skip Craft/Anita Uhl-Outreach
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Staff

David Mackie-Music Director
Sandy Elkins-School Director
Sheila Lanzalotto -
Joint Youth Director
Audrey Subhan-Church Adm.
Kyle Dewees-Sexton



One of the gifts of the gospel of Matthew is the sermon on the mount found in chapters 5, 6 & 7. We are using the sermon on the mount as the basis for our 2017 theme – How to Be a Follower of Christ. We will explore this theme through sermons, spiritual exercises, our Lenten disciplines and outreach project.

Our sermons to date have focused on Jesus' statement to his disciples that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Jesus says we, as followers, are already salt and light. As salt, we are called to be Christ's presence sprinkled throughout the world. As salt, we are agents of God's love working to make the Kingdom of God real. As light, we are called to shine so that others can see God's glory in the way we live our lives.

As one of our spiritual exercises, you are invited to take pictures for display in our Christian Life Center of people, places, events that speak to you about the light of the world or the salt of the earth. You can email your photos to the church office at office@stmatthews-church.org or post them on the church's Facebook page. As we continue through the year we will request photos that reflect other aspects of life as a follower of Christ. Throughout the year our faith formation students will color pictures and create other pieces of artwork to express the life of a follower of Jesus. At the end of this year we will collect our photos and children's artwork into a book.

In the sermon on the mount Jesus calls us to love God, neighbor, self and our enemies. The seeds of God's love have been planted in our hearts, yet to love as God loves takes practice. During Lent, we will practice love by practicing some of the different qualities of love – generosity, humility, joy, kindness, patience, peace, poverty of spirit and self-control. Lenten calendars are available with a daily challenge to practice one of these qualities of love. You are encouraged to pick up a calendar in the Christian Life Center. The calendars are also available to load into your personal calendars. The necessary links can be found on the website and in our weekly Around the Church email.

Just as the seed of Christ's love is already planted in us, we will plant seeds to grow as we grow in Christ's love this Lenten season.

Our Lenten devotional, *The Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus* by Adam Hamilton, is an opportunity to pause and meditate as we follow Jesus through his life and ministry. The devotional is available in the narthex. The cost of the book is \$12.

So join us this year as we reflect on life as a follower of Christ.



St. Matthews Outreach Ministries Serving God's People

LENTEN FOCUS: TANZANIA

Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University

North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania



The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod has been involved with the dream of Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University (SEKOMU) since the beginning. Nearly 10 years ago, in partnership with our Global Mission partners, the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania, churches in our area came together to help launch this incredible ministry.

The dream for SEKOMU began with a need. *Education is of critical importance today in Tanzania – often providing the only path for young men and women to rise out of poverty and pursue a better life.* Although education in Tanzania is improving, it still falls far behind what we are used to. *More importantly, it is often the most poor and vulnerable people who are left behind.*

SEKOMU was founded to change this, providing specialized training for people serving those with special needs, intellectual disabilities, and physical disabilities. They are changing the equation in Tanzania for its most vulnerable citizens – and we are a part of this story.

Ten years ago, Lutheran churches across Southeastern Pennsylvania raised over \$500,000 to make the dream of SEKOMU University a reality, even sending a team missionaries to help clear the land for the site of the future university. Now, as their impact and work has continued to grow – the need is still real.

THIS LENT... you are invited to help SEKOMU take its legacy into the next ten years – a legacy of advocacy, education, and support for those living with special needs and intellectual disabilities across Tanzania!

HOW CAN I HELP?

Option A: Make your check payable to St. Matthews. Put “SEKOMU Support” in the memo line to designate your contribution.

Option B: Take a “bank” home for Lent. You can then make “deposits” during the days of Lent and return it later to the church. The banks are available in the Christian Life Center (CLC).

Worship on Wednesdays



During our Wednesday evening Lenten services, we will explore how we experience God present through our senses. We will use several of the Psalms to spark our discussions.

Wednesday 3/8. Psalm 118. Touch and Know that God's Love Endures Forever.

Wednesday 3/15. Psalm 36. Sight – In God's Light See and Understand that God's Love Surrounds Us.

Wednesday 3/22. Psalm 34. Taste and See that the Lord is Good.

Wednesday 3/29. Psalm 62. Hearing – Once God Has Spoken; Twice Have I Heard.

Wednesday 4/5. Psalm 141. Smell – Let My Prayer Rise Before You Like Incense.

If you are able join us for a meal (5:45) and worship (7:00).



Lenten Take-out Meal



Once again this year, we are planning to a meal before each Lenten Wednesday night worship service. This will be a take-out meal that will last from 5:45-6:45 p.m. and you are welcome to come at any point during that time to receive this wonderful meal. This will be a great opportunity to meet other people at St. Matthew's and enjoy some wonderful food. Please feel free to invite friends and family members who are not yet connected with St. Matthew's. We hope you make it part of your Lenten discipline to join us for a meal at 5:45 and then worship which will begin at 7 pm.



The New Year is off to a great start and with more than six months under my belt I am still feeling blessed by the support that everyone has shown for this new joint youth ministry. Thank you to all the parents that have helped out in some capacity to contribute to the success of the program. My thanks go out to my co-workers and my support team as they have been by my side as we have embarked on this adventure. The youth are excited to be meeting new friends and spending time with existing friends.

One great example of joint congregational support for the Youth program in 2017 was the chili cook-off fundraiser that was held at St Paul's in January. We raised over \$900 for the program with 23 chefs participating and almost 150 in attendance. Many middle school and high school youth, as well as some adults, volunteered their time to help out. Others made desserts and/or contributed beverages.

The young youth (through 5th grade) enjoyed a trampoline outing in January and Sundae Sunday in February with 25-30 kids for each event. In March they will be gathering at Painting with a Twist to make a beautiful cross painting for Easter.

Our 6th-8th grade youth played laser tag in January and went to the trampoline park for some February fun. They continue to meet twice a month for confirmation classes. In early March, 17 middle school youth, 10 high school youth and 6 adults from both congregations will be going to Harvey Cedars for a synod wide retreat. The topic is Who's Your God? It should be a meaningful weekend for all.

Twenty high school youth participated in a 30 hour famine in early February which was hugely successful and raised approximately \$3400 for World Vision, which is enough to feed one child for seven years! We spent our waking hours doing service projects such as making cookies and assembling care packages for approximately 50 college students and decorating/assembling 300 snack bags for several organizations supported by the Chester County Food Bank. Both congregations were very supportive of this great cause and my thanks to the adults that also volunteered their time and their cookie baking skills.

Our high school mission trip (current 8th-12th grade) will take place June 18-23 and we have 28 youth signed up and hope to have 6 adult volunteers come along for this life changing experience. If you would like to volunteer please see me as soon as possible, as I still need two more adults. You do not need to have a youth going on the trip in order to help out.

We will be taking the middle school youth (completed 6th-8th grade) on a mission trip July 16-20. Please sign up to attend as soon as possible so that we can finalize our numbers. We will be going to Washington, DC and are looking forward to another great service trip. Middle school youth (completed 5th-8th grade) will also be doing daily local mission work June 27-30.

Please join our Facebook group at St Matthew's/St Paul's Youth Group and follow us on Twitter and Instagram at smspyouth. Also, stop by and take a look at the pictures that are displayed on a rotating basis on the bulletin board and on social media.