

St Matthew's Matters

April 2006

SPECIAL ONLINE EDITION

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PASTOR'S NOTE

“Explore Your Faith”

Written by Pastor Anthony J. Iovine

More than a year ago, Saint Matthew's came together around a new church evangelism process that was centered in the need to tell others the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our congregation spent a lot of time, effort, and money into devising an evangelism plan to begin the process of reaching out to our community stressing the importance of faith in Christ. The strategy had many facets to it, including reaching out to our senior and youth populations, providing options in terms of worship times that would make worshipping our Lord “more time convenient,” and enhancing our lives as Christians by strengthening our faith around God's Word and Sacraments.

When I arrived here at Saint Matthew's, I was thrilled while at the same time a little nervous – having a plan ready to reach out to our neighbors was wonderful, but I didn't know enough about the congregation or even our surrounding community to properly ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of this Vision outreach. I needed to take some valuable time to talk and figure and order (in my mind) the plan put forth by our evangelism group, Saint Matthew's Vision Team. In January, with the time that I needed to evaluate not only the Team's work and focus, and with a “little impetus” from the committee's chairman, Ed Geiger, we began the implementation of the congregation-committed working plan.

The focus of this evangelism plan is to fundamentally restructure the life of our church around the gifts of God – His Word and Sacraments – while striving to reach out to members of our community who are in need of hearing the Gospel of Christ. Part of this restructuring is expanding the times and dates of our worship, some of which has already been implemented. In January, we formally started a weekly Wednesday night Divine Service with the Lord's Supper beginning at 7:30P. If you have been able to attend our Lenten services on Wednesday evenings, you have already gotten a taste of what these Midweek services entail, namely offering God's gifts for the benefit of His people. So each week, we offer two Divine Services for God's people to attend: Sunday morning at 10A and Wednesday night at 7:30P.

But that's not all – we also offer a daily Morning Prayer service at 7:15A where God's children can start the day with a short prayer service that includes hearing God's Word and asking Him for guidance and comfort for the coming day. And it won't end there --- starting in the later half of 2006, our intention is to begin a Saturday night service. We are in the early discussion stages of structuring this worship opportunity (after a couple misfires on my part last year about starting this new service here at Saint Matthew's). However, when it starts, we will offer three weekly Divine Services.

Our Vision Team is also working on a number of different ideas that will help expand the reach of our church into our community. Included in their list is an informational public relations campaign that actually kicks off the week of April 2nd with a newspaper advertisement promoting our Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter services; the creation of seasonal banners promoting our church and service times;

establishing a new “prayer chain” for our members; creating a new church directory; building up our church website; working with me to create new bible study opportunities to reach out to some of the younger members of our community; enhancing our weekly bulletin by increasing its page size for easier reading; working with our church committees to strengthen fellowship opportunities while ‘opening our church’ to new outside groups; establishing a summer-time youth camp here at Saint Matthew’s; and building our evangelism outreach around our congregation’s mission statement and new theme: “Explore Your Faith.”

However, that’s just the beginning! The Team is also reviewing many different ideas to open our church to our community by investigating the establishment of a pre-school/nursery school at our facility; greater enhancements to our church grounds by establishing a ‘meditation garden;’ publishing special reading materials relating to our bible studies and offering them to the community; creating a church “Christmas card” that members and others can purchase; and many others.

What this shows is that our evangelism team --- Our Vision Team --- is working hard to make the Vision that our congregation committed to last year a reality. This is a Vision of outreach to others but also a Vision to work inside our church to remind ourselves the importance of our coming to the Lord’s house to hear His Word and receive His body and blood for the strengthening our faith in Him who died and rose and ascended for us! That is why it is essential that in each of our household that we think about those in our lives who have either put off coming to church for personal reasons or have stopped coming because church is perceived to be too boring. We need to stress the importance of being fed by His Word and His body and blood because our faith can lag and become weary and very easily be weakened, thus opening the door to the falsity of our societal’s “anything goes” theology. This is our private Vision project: spread the Good News in our homes and let our Lord do His work.

And what better time to talk about spreading the Word of God than during Easter!

Pastor Iovine

Holy Week Service Schedule

Palm Sunday – April 9th @ 10:00AM

Monday – Friday: Special Morning Prayer @ 7:15AM

Monday – Wednesday, April 10th – 12th: Evening Prayer @ 7:30PM

Thursday, April 13th: Maundy Thursday Service @ 7:30PM

Friday, April 14th: Good Friday Tenebrae Service @ 7:30PM

Saturday, April 15th: Easter Vigil Service @ 7:30PM

Sunday April 16th: Easter Service @ 10:00AM

Saint Matthew’s Matters is a monthly newsletter published by Saint Matthew’s Lutheran Church in New Milford, New Jersey. Saint Matthew’s is a congregation of the New Jersey District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

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Mozart and Da Ponte: The 18th Century's Rodgers & Hammerstein

Written by Warren Born, Saint Matthew's Minister of Music

When he received the commission to compose *Don Giovanni*, Mozart turned again to Lorenzo Da Ponte who had provided the libretti for *Così fan tutte* and *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Da Ponte, a Venetian, had trained for the priesthood, had taught literature at the seminary in Treviso, had been forced to flee on several occasions because of his unorthodox opinions and "ways with women" and, when contacted by Mozart to write the libretto for *Don Giovanni*, was the official Poet to the Italian Theaters in Vienna. Later he became a book seller and fugitive from justice in London, a green grocer in New Jersey(!), a wine merchant and real estate salesman in Pennsylvania, a pamphleteer and impresario in New York and Columbia University's first official professor of Italian.

At all times, to judge from his *Memoirs*, he was in love with life, literature, laughter and love. He was an adventurer in the mold of Casanova, who supposedly gave Da Ponte specific suggestions about the libretto for *Don Giovanni*.



APRIL MEETING NOTICES

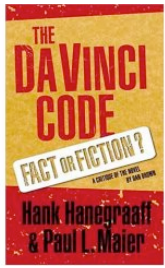
Ladies Aid Meeting --- Thursday, April 6th at 1:30PM in Fellowship Hall

Voter's Body Meeting --- Monday, April 10th at 7:00PM in the Upper Classroom

Vision Team Meetings --- Tuesday, April 4th & 18th at 7:00PM in the Library

Sunday School Notes

- Sunday School is taking a good chunk of April off --- our next meeting date will be Sunday, April 23rd at 9:15A. However, that doesn't mean church is closed! Please bring your children and grandchildren to our worship services throughout this month, especially April 2nd, our Fellowship and Family Eucharist Sunday; April 9th, Palm Sunday; April 14th, Good Friday; and April 16th, Easter Sunday!
- A hearty thank you goes out to Laura Williams for purchasing the wonderful Easter crafts that our Sunday School made during the month of March. Thank you, Laura!
- Don't forget --- our annual SMYG Easter Egg Hunt is on Saturday, April 15th beginning at 11:00A!



Mark Your Calendars Now...

Our Circuit 1 of the New Jersey District of the LC-MS will be hosting Dr. Paul Meier, a Vice President of the LC-MS, on May 10th. He will be discussing his book, *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction*. The timing for his visit is perfect: the “Da Vinci Code” movie starring Tom Hanks will be released in movie theaters in May. We will have more information on Dr. Meier’s visit in the coming weeks.

IMPORTANT NOTES!!

Mark Your Calendar NOW!!

Saint Matthew’s Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, April 15th

11:00AM

Bring a friend!

For more info, call our church office at
(201) 262-5092

Sponsored by the SMYG’s

Sunday Morning Bible Class

After our Easter break, we will once again kick off our Sunday Morning Bible Class on April 23rd following our worship service in Fellowship Hall. Our topic:

The Apocrypha

Ever wonder if there are other so-called “biblical” writings that never made our canon? Well, there are! We are going to read through and comment on some of these extra biblical books, some of which have been used to further church heresies, including those found in “The Da Vinci Code!”

Come on by starting April 23rd after church.

May Newsletter and Calendar Deadline – April 20th

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