

Parson to Person

By God's Grace Celebrating Our First 60 Years of Ministry

The word for this anniversary year is “grace.” We’ve come this far by God’s grace, and there’s plenty in store for us yet!

The word “grace” has Greek roots and is not found in the Old Testament, but the Hebrew equivalent (hesed) is translated “steadfast love” or “loving kindness.” This concept might help to correct a popular Christian way of speaking about grace. Unfortunately, at times, when Christians speak about God’s grace, the concept becomes disconnected from God - as if grace is something that floats around, or something that gets infused into us. The trouble with speaking about a disconnected grace is that it takes God out of the picture. In reality, any grace we encounter in life is an experience of God himself. We’re not the source of grace - it’s God working through us to touch somebody, or working through somebody to touch us.

Grace is nothing more than God’s steadfast, undeserved love. Perhaps a better way to understand grace is to remember the word “graciousness” because it maintains that sense of relationship. Jesus is full of graciousness, and from his fullness, we have received God’s graciousness upon graciousness.

In the end, however we speak of grace, we will experience God’s graciousness in our daily lives as we live and move and have our being, and we will experience God’s graciousness in and through this congregation in a more particular, saving way...because, no matter what we do, God can’t help but be gracious to all of us.

Pastor Wengert

An Aging Society and Ministry among Older Persons by W. A. Lawrence, AiM

Hello again – and Happy New Year! I say Happy New Year since it is early January as I write this. I wish you God’s peace and joy in this new year, new decade...and beyond.

As you may recall, in my last article I discussed aging and how old is old. This month we will explore learning in later life. How many times (if ever) have you said to yourself “I’m too old to learn that stuff?” I can remember when I began seminary classes as part of my Associate in Ministry certification requirements. I certainly had some doubts as to whether I would be able to withstand the many challenges of the various courses I’d be pursuing. And indeed, those doubts quickly became real fears as I became immersed in the academic life as a fifty-six year old “mature” student. But, in all honesty, I must say that after awhile those feelings of inadequacy and fear passed and I was able to get in the swing of things. Of course there was much prayer and introspection along the way – and God’s grace did abound. Nevertheless, I eventually became invigorated by the challenges and new opportunities as the classes were presented - and enthusiastically looked forward to their pursuit and successful completion.

Over the past thirty years or so the theory has shifted from old age as being a time of obsolescence and decline to one of opportunity and development. Now there’s a paradigm shift for you, especially since from the period of the Enlightenment (18th century) for hundreds of years, one’s ability to learn was considered finished by the time a person reached the age of twenty-five or twenty-six.

Peter Jarvis, the author of *Learning in Later Life* tells us that “for most children their education was completed in their teenage years, although a minority continued their education to the end of their university career. Vocational training or education followed immediately after initial education and young people entered employment. At this point, all education terminated. There was little vocational training after the initial period. Indeed, at this time there was a general belief that adults could not learn a great deal more, since it was widely believed that mental decline set in by the time individuals reached their middle twenties.”¹ My, how things have changed.

Fast forward to the 21st century and we also learn from Jarvis that “as early as 1962 the Institute for Retired Professionals was founded in New York under the sponsorship of the New School for Social Research and this became the first Institute for Learning in Retirement, which has subsequently become the Elderhostel Institute Network.”²

Since then educational institutions specializing in “third age” education (age 50 – 74 years) have come into existence all over the world. We older folks are taking advantage of learning opportunities in considerable numbers. One has only to think of all the personal computer education which has become available since the mid to late 1980’s and the countless educational opportunities the computer industry presents. I never thought I’d see the day when senior members of my family would be using a personal computer to send emails and photographs through cyberspace. And that’s only one small facet of the countless opportunities and possibilities out there.

Well, that’ll do it for this installment. There’s much to explore in this area, so...we’ll continue this conversation next month. Till then...peace.

Bill

¹Jarvis, Peter, *Learning in Later Life - an introduction for educators and careers*, Kogan Page Ltd, 2001, p.3.

²Ibid, p.2.

Youth and Family Ministry

Sunday School News

Fellowship Sundays, the first Sunday of each month, continue to provide meaningful opportunities for classes to learn together. In January students made Valentines for our troops overseas. The theme of the February fellowship will be “A New Commandment: Love One Another” and will focus on sharing the love of Jesus with others.

Anniversary Banners – Look for the banners created by our Sunday School classes which celebrate and illustrate many of the ministries of our congregation over the last 60 years.

Service to others – The 5th and 6th grade class, as part of their Christmas gifts for Jesus, will be going to Lutheran Care and will assist residents in getting to worship services there. The 7th and 8th grade class will take hearts and Valentines to the residents of Lutheran Care.

First Communion Classes - begin February 21, 2010. There will be a dinner for the communicants and their families on Maundy Thursday prior to receiving their first holy communion.

Attendance continues to average around 45-50 a Sunday. Parents, if your children are not currently attending Sunday Church School and/or worship, you may want to consider participating in these wonderful opportunities for learning about the grace and love of God and sharing your journey of faith with your children.

Valentine Goodies Sale - Sunday, February 14, 2010 in the church foyer..

Confirmation Classes resumed on Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2010.

Youth Group

Service to others – assisted in the Camden Kids Christmas Party.

Attendance appears to be on the upswing.

**Check the website: stmatthew-lutheran.org for more information.

PROPERTY MINISTRY

During December and January, the Property Ministry assisted Worship & Music with the annual Christmas decorations. This included set-up and take-down of the Advent Wreath in the sanctuary, the Christmas tree in the narthex, the outside crèche and figures, the inside crèche and figures, and the large wreaths in the sanctuary. The Epiphany star was hung in the sanctuary.

A boiler pump in the education wing had to have the bearing replaced between the motor and pump in January at a cost of \$600.

The Property Ministry overran its 2009 budget by \$1,000. This overrun was due to the major snowstorm in December that cost \$2,700 for clearing our parking lot of over 21 inches of snow. (A snowstorm of 8 inches would cost about \$700 to clear the parking lot.)

Visitor/Staff Parking Spaces

Our parking lot has 4 parking spaces directly across from the main entrance that are reserved for visitors on Sundays and for the church staff on Monday to Friday. Once again we ask all members of the congregation to use other parking spaces (65) in our parking lot or in the adjacent paved parking lot during any scheduled worship service (Sundays, Mid-week Lent, Christmas Eve and Day and funerals). We want our visitors to feel welcome to Saint Matthew!

We have eliminated reserved parking spaces for the Pastor and Parish Coordinator at their request; therefore, they and other staff will be using the staff parking places on weekdays. Thank you for your cooperation with this policy.

Brian Schultz, Chair

First Communion Classes

Preparations are underway for the next session of First Communion classes taught by Mary Beckett, beginning February 21. They will be held during the regular Sunday school class time at 9:45 and will run through April 21. The students' first holy communion will be on Maundy Thursday, April 1, following a special shared supper.

If anyone knows of a child who cannot attend Sunday school but desires to attend the First Communion class sessions, notify Pastor Wengert or Mary Beckett, mbeckettj@comcast.net or 856-273-1050. The class is primarily for fifth grade students; however, older students who have not received instruction, may also be included. Contact Pastor or Mary for more information.

At the table of our Lord Jesus Christ, God nourishes faith, forgives sin, and calls us to be witnesses to the Gospel. (*The Use of the Means of Grace*, principle 31)

Valentine s Day Bake Sale
Sunday, February 14, 2010
after each service
Proceeds will benefit
Bosnia volunteers from Saint
Matthew

SPIRITUAL LIFE MINISTRY

MMM ~ First Friday Movies, Media & Munchies

The Spiritual Life Ministry at Saint Matthew Church has seen a year of growth and the launching of this new ministry - MMM. We started with 7 people (over age 59) at the first film, *The Visitor*. By the third movie we were at 15 people with ages from 8 to 70+ for the award nominated animated film *Up*. People have found MMM an affordable (free) night out with lots of munchies, fellowship and good discussion.

On **February 5**, we will gather in the church lounge at 7:00 pm to view *My Sister's Keeper*. Some may have read the book with the Saint Matthew Readers in October. The movie is different, but both book and movie have much to cause a lively discussion during munchies.

On **March 5** we will look at *Doubt*, a movie about the conflict between tradition, change and making assumptions that can lead to very dangerous situations.

You are invited to come the first Friday of the month at 7:00 pm and discover the newest ministry at Saint Matthew Church - MMM.

Save the date of **Sunday, March 14, at 3:00 pm** for St. Matt Players' presentation of three solo characters in the Life of Christ - Peter, Judas, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. These personal perspectives will set the mood for the coming Holy Week and Easter celebration at Saint Matthew Church. Refreshments will follow the presentation. There are no tickets for this Lenten event but a free-will offering will be taken.

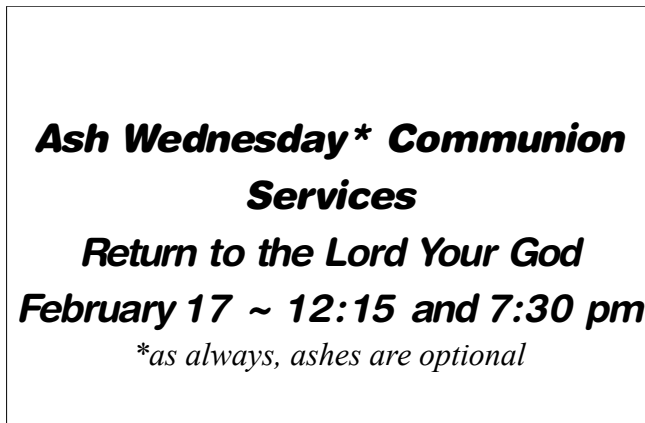
Try-outs for the Friday, May 14th dinner theatre, *It Should Happen to a Dog*, will be held Sunday, February 21, at 12:15 pm in the church library. The play has four characters in addition to **Professor Tim Wengert** who will be playing the role of Jonah.

You are encouraged to save the date for this very special night. Dinner for 100 people will be held at 6:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall. The play will be presented at 8:00 pm in the church sanctuary. Tickets for dinner and the play will be \$20 and tickets for the play only will be \$12.50. Dessert will follow the play for all people attending the production.

submitted by **Nance Carlson**, chair

Anniversary Note Cards Available

Special note cards for the 60th Anniversary celebration are available for purchase each Sunday in the church foyer or during the week in the church office. Designed by **Kristen Bower**, they feature a lovely full color print of Saint Matthew Church. The cost is \$5.00 for 5 cards in a packet and the proceeds will be used to help defray expenses of the celebration gala on April 18 at the Moorestown Community House.



Changes in Messenger Distribution

This is the first month the *Messenger* is not mailed to all families in the congregation. Due to current cumbersome post office regulations and rising costs, the newsletter will be distributed through member mailboxes in the church foyer. Please check your mailbox near the end of each month for next month's *Messenger*. We will continue to mail first class to those members who are unable to come to church as well as to some friends and former members who wish to receive it. There will be extra copies available in the "tract rack" in the foyer. The newsletter is also available on the church web site (text only).

Note that there is a new *e-Messenger* that is distributed via e-mail. It is an abbreviated version of the hard copy with emphasis on key activities and happenings. **Pastor Wengert** and **Brandie Plasket** are editing and sending this communication tool. If you wish to receive this monthly newsletter and we do not have your e-mail address, please contact the office to be added to our list for distribution.

Offering Envelopes

Congregation members are reminded to pick up offering envelope boxes from your mailbox in the church foyer. Please use your regular offering envelopes for making contributions. Pew envelopes are primarily for use by visitors.

A Word About the Christmas Paraments

We give thanks to God for our new Christmas paraments which hung from the altar and pulpit during the season of Christmas as they will each Christmas. The rose on the altar parament reminds us of Isaiah's prophecy that a "rose would bloom in the desert." While joy is the dominant mood, there is a stark reminder in the cross-shaped manger that this birth will lead to suffering and death. The trumpeting angel on the pulpit parament proclaims the joyous news "behold I bring you good news of great joy..." every time the Word is read and preached and the Sacraments offered. There is an outline of Saint Matthew Church in the stitching as is also found in the Advent altar parament created by the same artist, Vicki DeVilbiss.

The specially commissioned handcrafted paraments were donated in loving memory of **Ruth Loftness** by her husband **Paul** and friends and family.

Anniversary Banner in Sanctuary

A beautiful banner commemorating the 60th anniversary of Saint Matthew Church is hanging in the sanctuary. It was handcrafted by **Michelle Trabold** from a design created by **Kristen Bower**. Michelle is an accomplished seamstress and has repaired some banners and other things for the church but this was the first time she had made a banner. It is a significant effort and we are grateful for her contribution to the church.

In creating the logo of a dove with an olive branch on the banner, Kristen said her inspiration was "from the biblical story of Noah. When Noah sent out the dove and it returned with the olive branch, it was a sign of hope, life, and of a new beginning. The 60th anniversary is not just celebrating the church's past; it's also celebrating the current and future life of the church and the excitement of what the future may hold. The colors used are similar to the colors of the cross that hangs in Saint Matthew's sanctuary."

Adult Forum

Dr. Karlfried Froehlich, will speak at the Adult Forum on Sunday, February 7, at 9:45 in the lounge. His topic will be "From Reformation Polemics to Gospel Message." Martin Luther protested against the blatant neglect of biblical faith in the church of his time. He called the people back to basics - to the Bible through which the word of God is proclaimed, to the message of God's steadfast love, and to Christian responsibility in the world.

Dr. Froehlich was the Benjamin B. Warfield Professor of Church History at Princeton Theological Seminary before retiring. He is currently the Henry Luce III Guest Lecturer on Theology and Communications.

SOCIAL CONCERNS MINISTRY

Hygiene Kits for LSMNJ Refugees

During the 60th anniversary year the emphasis of the Social Concerns Team of Saint Matthew will be on newly arrived refugees who come to Refugee Services of Lutheran Social Ministry of New Jersey.

During the entire month of February they will be collecting hygiene kits to give each family member. Anyone wishing to donate items may get a baggie from the team on Sundays, February 7, 14 or 21 and fill it with items from the list inside. These items include a washcloth, bar of soap, shampoo (may be travel size), toothpaste (may be travel size), toothbrush, comb, deodorant, and razor. The filled baggies should be returned on Sunday, February 28 and placed in the container in the church foyer.

Just imagine how it would be to come from a foreign country to a new land with nothing, or perhaps just a paper bag filled with a few personal items. Your giving can help in so many ways.

Supplies Needed by Immigration & Refugee Services of Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey (LSMNJ)

As the weather warms up and you take time to clean out unused items, keep Lutheran Social Ministry in mind. The Immigration & Refugee Services need the following to help the immigrants and refugees become self-sufficient.

1. **Furniture:** kitchen tables & chairs, sofas/loveseats, coffee tables, twin size mattresses & box springs in good condition, tall (not long), lamps
2. **Linens:** twin & full-sized sheets & blankets, pillows, bath towels
3. **Kitchen utensils:** silverware, pots & pans, cutlery, other kitchen items
4. **Gift cards** for food (Shop Rite, Super Fresh, Walmart)

They are no longer accepting clothing, pull-out couches, queen or king size mattresses/box springs.

For more information about donations, drop off, etc., call 609-393-4900, ext. 20.

Additional Help Needed

With all of our ideas/wish lists, Social Concerns Ministry could use more help. If anyone is willing to be an “on call” helper for events or projects that come up, please contact **Nancy Nugent** at 609-261-7182 or put your name and phone no. on a paper and put it in mailbox 213 or in my mailbox beside the office.

Maybe there is someone who would like to attend a meeting occasionally to find out what we do; to brainstorm with us; and to pray for our role in the world of social concerns.

Coupons

Continue to bring coupons for Camden and place them in the box on the table in the foyer. Bring only those for groceries and sundries (deodorant, toothpaste, etc.) and paper goods (paper towels, tissues, etc. Do not bring coupons for restaurants. - submitted by **Nancy Nugent**, chair

Lunch Bunch
making sandwiches for homeless at New Visions, Camden
Thursday, February 11, Teen Den, 7:00 pm

Baked goods are much appreciated any time. Place them on a disposable plate or container and leave them at the church office. (They can be frozen until needed.)

Semi-annual Congregation Meeting
February 7, 2010*
following the 11:00 am Worship Service

- 1.a review of expenditures & receipts for 2009
- 2.presentation of financial plan for 2010
for approval

***This was originally scheduled for January 31 but postponed because of later Stewardship Campaign.**

Please remember to bring in your financial pledge for 2010 as soon as possible.
If you need a pledge card, contact the church office.

MEMORIAL FUND DISTRIBUTIONS

Funds from the 2009 investment income will be available for distribution to areas of foreign, domestic, or local missions or a congregation project. Anyone wishing to make recommendations for funding for a special cause or project may pick up a green form on the table in the foyer and return it to the Memorial Fund mailbox beside the office by Sunday, February 28. Be sure that contacts/addresses are clearly identified.

Scholarship application forms will be available in the spring

OWLS VALENTINE CELEBRATION

The Saint Matthew Older Wiser Lutheran Seniors will celebrate Valentine's Day on Thursday, February 4, at Bacio's restaurant on Chestnut Hill Drive and Route 130 at noon. Chef Robert Minitti will conduct a cooking class and then they will enjoy his creativity. Make checks payable to Fifty Plus OWLS and give to Bud Koch by January 31 - \$30 per person.

Please Help Animals in Need

Hello Saint Matthew congregation! My name is Brianna Cariello. I am running a supply drive to benefit the animals of the Animal Orphanage of Voorhees. The orphanage is a shelter that rescues unwanted and neglected cats and dogs. They are currently in need of the following:

- 1.kitten chow (Purina)
- 2.dry and canned cat food (Friskies)
- 3.laundry detergent
- 4.bleach
- 5.dishwasher detergent (powder)
- 6.paper towels

A donation bin has been placed in the church foyer. Donations will be collected through February 28

This drive is a portion of my Silver Award Project for Girl Scouts. I appreciate your support; and surely the animals will too!

Brianna Cariello

(Brianna is in Sunday school and confirmation classes at Saint Matthew Church.)

MUSIC NOTES

*This month guest columnist, choir member and singing teacher **Bob Steinfort** offers some vocal coaching for all of us on singing Setting Six of the worship liturgy. **David D. Harp**, Cantor*

As Lutherans most of us are comfortable singing our hymns and liturgies in a reverent, pious and forthright manner. We're sincere and occasionally enthusiastic in our traditional style. Now we're using Setting Six for worship and this setting asks us to sing a bit differently since its gospel and blues style has its roots in our African-American churches. If we are going to capture the essence of this worship style, we need to sing with more freedom and energy, louder and more joyful, and with the enthusiastic conviction that we are truly a blessed and thankful people. So this Sunday and for the remaining time we use this setting, let's sing more like we do when we're at a wedding reception. It's no less reverent and could be a whole lot more fun. "Celebrate good times, come on!" God love us!

Robert **Edwin**

Steinfort

WELCA News

All women are invited to. . .

***The Eleventh Annual WELCA
Mini~ Retreat***

Saturday, February 13, 9:00 am

Fellowship Hall

Saint Matthew Lutheran Church

Prayer, A Conversation with God

Leader: Ruth Stotsenburg*

Donation: \$5.00 ~ includes breakfast

Ruth Stotsenburg served the First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown for many years as Director of Christian Education. She is a gifted speaker and conducts educational trips to Europe and Israel. Most recently she founded the Institute for Spiritual Growth.

Women from Lutheran churches in Camden and elsewhere in South Jersey have been invited. This year women of the First Presbyterian Church are also included.

Sign up on the bulletin board in the church foyer.

Calling all women ~

WELCA Workshop

Friday, February 5, 2010

10:00 am in the church library

Purposes:

Assemble Health Kits for Lutheran World Relief

Cut out pillows for Bosnia Servant Trip

Women's Renewal Day

The fourth annual Rest, Refreshment and Renewal Day for all women will be held at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia on Saturday, February 6, 9:00 am ~ 3:30 pm. This year's theme is "Creation and Creativity," and the day will allow participants to explore the meaning of creation and creativity in their lives. The seminary is located at 7301 Germantown Avenue. To register go to www.ltsp.edu/restrefresh or contact **Virginia Sheppard** at 235-6255.

Saint Matthew Readers

To celebrate sixty years of ministry for Saint Matthew Church, Saint Matthew Readers have selected a book written during each decade of the sixty years.

In January we read *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac which was a sociological look back to the fifties and what changes would accrue in the sixties.

The selections through June are as follows:

- February 22 *The Eighth Day* by Thornton Wilder
March 22 *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* by Dee Brown
April 26 *Schindler's List* by Thomas Keneally
May 24 *All the Pretty Horses* by Cormac McCarthy
June 21 *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel

Children's Books

There are also outstanding books for children through the decades since 2000. This list might assist parents in making selections.

- 50's *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White
Old Yeller by Fred Gibson
60's *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell
A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle
70's *Annie and the Old One* by Miska Miles
(older children) *Bridge to Tarabithia* by Katherine Patterson
80's *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLahlan
In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World
by Virginia Hamilton
90's *Ella Enchanted* by Gail Carson Levine
(older children) *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
2000 - 2010 *The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, A Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread*
by Kate DiCamillo
(older children) *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman

We Get Mail. . . lots of thank you's

*What a brave group of volunteers who did not let a heavy snowstorm keep them from coming out to decorate our church for Christmas! My deepest thanks to **Sue Acheson, George Boehmler, Chris Cassel, Bob Ganskopp, Joyce Hagen, Sue & Ray Kuhn, Paul Otto, Dave Rulon, Joyce & Brian Schultz, Joyce Valore, Joy Wadleigh, Karen Widin and Bernie Williams.***

*Another group of dedicated workers (many from the Tuesday Maintenance Group) helped place the poinsettias in our sanctuary. Many thanks to **Sue Acheson, Bob Ganskopp, Duane Gustad, Ray Kuhn, Bud Maycott, Skip Nice, Paul Otto, Joy Wadleigh and Bernie Williams.***

I was especially blessed this Christmas with so many faithful friends giving their time and talent in a very special way ~ a big thank you to all.

Lynne Ganskopp

*We give thanks to God for the members of the congregation who helped in the Fall Clean-up on the morning of November 21, 2009. They included **Janet Abele, Mary Beckett, George Boehmler, Joe Buss, Sr., Tom Cassel, Marinela Ceteras, Dallas Dorward, Jose and Joseph Feliciano, Lynne & Bob Ganskopp, Barry Grahn, Duane Gustad, Sue & Ray Kuhn, Dave and Hollis Rulon, Bruce and Rob Swanson, Joyce & Brian Schultz.***

*We also thank **Mike Barbaccio** who provided the hoagies on behalf of the Parish Life Ministry and **Karen Terpak** for furnishing homemade soup. Set up and clean up for the luncheon were provided by **Lynne Ganskopp and Joyce Schultz.***

Brian Schultz, Property Ministry Chair |

Thank you to all who gave so generously to the "Giving Tree" for Family Service of Burlington County. By sharing your blessings, you made a happy Christmas for eighty children.

Joyce Hagen and Vicki Seehafer

Thank you for all the calls, cards, visits and the flowers brought by Pastor Ingrid during my recent heart attack recovery. The Saint Matthew family is a truly caring people. All the kind expressions were a great comfort to me.

Avis Peterson

Laurie and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Saint Matthew family for all your prayers, visits, cards, phone calls and kind and loving thoughts. All of these are deeply appreciated.
Bill & Laurie Grosspeter

Dear Pastor Wengert,

October 3rd is now receding in time but not so much in memory. Mom's (Florence's) memorial was a truly heartfelt event that I know was appreciated by all, family and friends alike. Maryann and I would like to thank you and all who were so important in helping everyone remember Florence in such a warm spirited manner.

Merry Christmas and may the New Year bring us all God's peace.

Eric & Maryann Klemmer

... from Interfaith Hospitality Network

Thank you for your generous donation. As you know from meeting the families we serve, your donation goes to good use in running our day canter services and the IHN van.

*IHN continues to be the only resource for homeless families who are working and trying to support themselves. As we enter our eleventh year, we are serving our 242nd family. In 2009 we received calls for assistance from 351 unduplicated families and provided meals, shelter and support to 23 homeless local families, including 44 children. As you know it is only through the generosity of your church and our other interfaith partners that we can provide these services. I am always impressed when our host churches, who already make an offering of time and shelter, also offer financial support. Truly, we couldn't do it without you. **Pat Lususk***

... from Camden Lutheran Parish

Thank you for your recent donation to the Camden Lutheran Parish. With congregations such as yours that support our mission, we are able to continue to spread the Good News in Camden. Your help is very much appreciated.

Lenten Vespers
Wednesdays of Lent, 7:30 ~ 8:00 pm
February 24, March 3, 10, 17, 24

Update from ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson

ELCA Disaster Response in Haiti
(excerpts from an e-mail sent January 15)

“The images of the despair and destruction in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti continue to overwhelm us but they also call forth our response of prayer and generosity.

Paul’s letter to the Romans give us words of comfort and hope:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit,

because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8: 22-27)

Thank you for continuing to hold in prayer the people in Haiti and all those who are working to bring relief. Thank you for your generous financial gifts.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is already working through long-standing partnerships with The Lutheran World Federation and Lutheran World Relief to provide emergency food, water, shelter and medical supplies.

The church is uniquely positioned to provide immediate and ongoing help. The ELCA has committed an initial \$250,000 from ELCA International Disaster Response, and we've authorized an additional \$500,000 as congregations respond both to the immediate needs and long-term rebuilding efforts. One hundred percent (100%) of all gifts for Haiti Earthquake Relief will be used for the immediate relief and ongoing recovery.

This is what it means to be the church together in mission for the sake of the world.

In God's grace,

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson (continued)

P.S. Thrivent has pledged to match \$1 for every \$2 their members contribute, up to a total contribution of \$1 million from Thrivent. To make your matching gift (up to \$250 per person), go to www.thrivent.com/helpinghaiti.

Note this: Saint Matthew members may donate through making your check to Saint Matthew Lutheran Church and indicate "Haiti relief" in the memo. You will be given credit through Saint Matthew Church and all contributions so marked will be sent directly to the ELCA for Haiti earthquake relief.

Or - you may give through the ELCA website at www.elca.org/haitiearthquake or call 800-638-3522.

Rainbow of Hope Tea and Auction

Rainbow of Hope is holding a Fastnacht Tea with an Auction on February 14, 2:00 pm at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Maple Shade. All are invited. Proceeds will benefit Rainbow of Hope's work with single mothers as they try to establish a new life for themselves and their children.

ALMSGIVING in LENT

Giving "alms" (Greek root *mercy*) has been part of Christian worship from the beginning and continues each Sunday as the offering plate is passed and a portion of the money is given outside of this congregation. In order to prepare for Easter, during Lent Christians have traditionally fasted, given alms, and spent time reading the Word and praying. There will be almsgiving receptacles around the church during Lent and you are invited to give your change each Sunday which will benefit the mission trip to Bosnia this summer. The ministry to Bosnian children helps to forge early relationships between Christians and Muslims (who were persecuted during the 1990's war by Christians). Two people from Saint Matthew Church will join about 30 others from around the New Jersey Synod to carry out this day camp ministry.

By God's Grace Celebrating Our First 60 Years of Ministry

Since worship is the heart of who we are as a congregation, it makes sense in our 60th year, to look backward and forward at our worship life.

*The architect for our sanctuary, built in 1971, is a member of the congregation. **Herman Hassinger**, an influential church architect of the 20th century, became known on the East Coast for designing church buildings to enhance the liturgy and worship life of the congregation. This month Herman has written about the basics of church architecture through the years, and next month we'll read about Saint Matthew's architecture in particular. -**Pastor Wengert***

“In the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevya sings the song, *Tradition*. It's about the way things have always been done. Well, a lot of what we do in building a church is based on tradition. It helps when you know the reasons for our traditions and how they got started.

The early Christians had no churches. They met in private homes or in the case of Jewish Christians, they met in Synagogues (which were not Temples, but more like schoolhouses).

The typical Roman house was organized around a courtyard, usually with a fountain. Since this was convenient for baptisms, the font was often located at the entrance to remind us that through baptism we enter the church. Just beyond the courtyard was a broad corridor beyond which was the main room of the home. That corridor in Roman times was called the *Narthex*. Today, we use that name for the vestibule that leads to the sanctuary. Once the basic layout was established, the main room was called the *Nave*, Latin for *ship* (same root as Navy). The church was the ship which led us to heaven. Today some Scandinavian churches have a ship model hanging in the rear as a reminder of this idea.

After the Holy Roman emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion, there was a scramble to find buildings suitable for Christian gatherings. The law courts, called *Basileas*, were pressed into service. The typical Basilea was entered mid-way on the long side and had two semi-circular ends. The Christians removed one end where they put a door facing the remaining semi-circular end, which they called the *apse*.

The far end (the *chancel*) contained the altar and perhaps the pulpit. At first the altar was a simple table. The veneration of relics in the medieval church changed the altar from a table to a casket-like box. The Reformation re-established the altar as a Table of the Lord, a symbol of our ritual remembrance of the Last Supper.

Beyond that, everything else has its roots in practical necessity. Candles were used for illumination and as a symbol of Christ, the Light of the World. The church was often the only large building in towns and villages of the Middle Ages. The weekly market, usually held in the market square in front of the church, might be canceled due to rain. In that case, the market was held indoors. Stone floors were useful when they had to clean up after the sheep, goats and chickens were gone. But this livestock was kept out of the chancel by the erection of a fence to keep the animals away from the altar. Today that fence remains as the communion rail. Most Lutherans have abandoned incense, unlike some other denominations. The only excuse for incense was the fact that few folks bathed and they mostly smelled bad! Today incense reminds us of our prayers ascending to God (*Psalms 141*). For most laymen unable to read, visual images told the Bible stories. These images were either painted on the walls (called *frescoes* when painted into wet plaster) or illustrated in stained or colored glass. Imagine a world without visual images ~ no illustrated books or magazines; no movies or television.

The only images were religious and these were usually shown in contemporary costumes. There was no clear concept of the past as a separate, different era.

Two millennia after Christ we have accumulated “church habits” or traditions in our worship places called churches. These traditions are nice to know and respect. But they are only a reminder that we are the heirs of our past as well as guardians of the future. Tradition reminds us that we stand in the line of one hundred generations of Christians. Luther saw the past as a prologue. He helped folks understand the fact that we must constantly re-examine and assess the past so we can keep what is best for the future...and that’s how we got to where we are today.”

Herman Hassinger, FAIA

Come and join us
Family Fastnacht Celebration
Tuesday, February 16, 2010
6:30 pm
(the night before Ash Wednesday)

Parade Supper, Children's Crafts, Fellowship
Freewill offering for Appalachia Service Project

Sign up in the narthex or call the church office

Help is needed with set-up and clean-up.
Call Pat Brode: 856-608-9310

**You and your friends are invited for
sampling, mingling and fun
at
The Sixth Annual Saint Matthew
Wine & Cheese Tasting
Saturday, February 13, 2010
7:30 ~ 9:30 pm in the Shockey Lounge
Saint Matthew Lutheran Church
\$10.00 per person
Sign up in the narthex.**

*Enjoy wines and cheeses from around the world.
Surprise goodies!
Soft drinks available.*

Report from 2009 Christmas in Iraq

At the suggestion of **Kim Villani**, members of Saint Matthew Church joined with Lockheed Martin employees, Moorestown Public Schools, Moorestown Soccer Club and other friends and families to provide holiday care packages for the New Jersey National Guard Unit 1-150th Assault Helicopter Battalion in Al Kut. 40 volunteers created 419 individual care packages and mailed 3000 pounds of gifts in 83 Wayne moving boxes. They arrived at their destination on Christmas Eve. Many letters of appreciation were received from the troops. Kim, Joe and Justin thank all at Saint Matthew who helped with donations of gifts and cash for this effort.

February Staff Anniversary: Bill Lawrence ~ 10 years