

SAINT MATTHIAS

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Saint Matthias Messenger

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Saint Matthias Episcopal Church
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Monday - Friday
9:00^{AM} - 4:00^{PM}

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Web Page:
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Sunday Worship Services
<https://zoom.us/j/91597283264>

High School Sunday School
<https://zoom.us/j/606546082>

Kids' Sunday School
<https://zoom.us/j/159762887>

Wednesday Bible Study
10:00^{AM}
<https://zoom.us/j/778461428>



We Wonder About the Future

Today is May the 5th. Carole and I have spent part of the last evening and the entire morning participating in Clergy Conference on Zoom. This is an annual meeting of all the clergy in the diocese with the bishops. Even the Presiding Bishop was in attendance. Normally we get together in one place, but things are not normal as I write this, not even close.

We spent the time talking about conducting worship and other church events in cyberspace since we can't be in our church homes. We talked about how much we miss our church buildings and how we look forward to being back there again. We even tried to get our heads around the concept that churches are in Phase Three of the governor's plan for reopening society and business. That translates into weeks and perhaps months from now. As you read this you will have a better idea of the reality of when we may return home better than I do at this time.

And the truth is that even when we get to go home it will be done in stages. We will undoubtedly still be participating in social distancing and there will be a limit on the size of the groups that can congregate. We probably will not be celebrating Eucharist for a while after we get back in the building. Worship services, weddings, funerals, and baptisms will look different in all probability.

But we will get through it. The new normal will be different but we will still have each other and we will have God.

Last Sunday I preached about hearing the Good Shepherd's voice above the tumult that is echoing all around us. We are away from home. But we are not alone. Here is the end of that sermon.

I think this morning we miss our sheepfold don't we, our church home? There we are consciously close to God. We can easily hear God's voice. We have each other. We have the Eucharist. We hear the voice of God in the scriptures and so many other ways. Our paths are made clear as they are not in any other place. We understand our lives there as we can only understand them in the presence of the Good Shepherd.

But then again we do eventually have to leave. We can't stay there forever. This is one of our longer absences from our place of security for sure. We find ourselves out in the loudly dangerous world outside the gate of our sheepfold, with all the voices that will once again compete with the Good Shepherd for our attention. And the question becomes how can we pick out the voice of the Good Shepherd amidst all the competition?

I remember as a kid waking up in the morning on the farm. The window right beside my head would be open with only a screen between me and the outside. There was a special quiet. I would hear the rooster's crow. Maybe a dog would jog by. The slightest breeze could be heard as it brushed through the grass and the flowers beside the house. Maybe a flying insect would go by and I could hear that distinctive hum. I could feel the warmth of the sun as it came through the window heating the day. I might hear my grandmother softly walking in the kitchen, already well into her day. And then the stillest, smallest sound of all, the voice of God within me not really saying much at all, just being there with me, agreeing with me that everything was

ok, that all was right with the world.

God speaks with us all the time if we will but be aware and listen. We are not alone in the world existing within a cacophony of bad advice. God speaks with us in our prayers for sure, but God also speaks with us in other ways too.

Where did that idle thought come from that gave you an insight into a thorny situation? Why did your friend choose just this moment to say what she did, or choose this moment to give you a hug when you needed it the most? Why did the sign up ahead just take on new meaning when you have seen it for years in another way? Why did that word in scripture or the passage in the book or the character in the movie seem as if they were speaking directly to you? Why, when you were sitting alone did it suddenly feel that you were no longer alone, but that in fact you suddenly just feel great about your world and your life and the loneliness has left?

Every day we encounter God in the everyday. We need only be aware. This is the voice of our shepherd we are hearing. This is the true source of our advice as we attempt to make our daily decisions and live our daily lives.

So my invitation to all of us who miss the sheepfold is this. Enjoy the memories of being there where we knew we were safe and loved and cared for. We have followed our Good Shepherd out through the gate into the world knowing the Good Shepherd is leading and caring for us as only the Good Shepherd can. We are never alone. We will never be alone no matter what. We can hear the voice of God every day in the everyday. And we will be home one day. You can count on it. Our shepherd will lead us there.

Fr. Bill+

A Whole Lot of Baking Going On!

I hear there has been a lot of cooking and baking going on. Let's share those goodies!! We will be having an online auction. Bakers and cooks, start thinking what you would like to make. Sign-ups will be from May 20 to June 3. The online auction will open Saturday, June 6 at 10:00 a.m. and close Sunday, June 14 at 12:00 p.m.

Bakers and cooks, please provide the following information: your name, name and short description of your dish, whether you will deliver the item or want the buyer to pick up, and your contact info. You can send the information to:

Kathy Adams - ktouch52@gmail.com

Mary Ellen de la Vega - maryellendelavega@gmail.com

Instructions on how to log on for the auction will be coming soon.

Stephen Ministry Happenings

Thanks to all who bought sweets at our Sweets Sale in February. It was a huge success, raising \$471.00. Funds from the annual Sweets Sales help purchase updated materials and provide continuing education for our Stephen Ministers.

Congratulations to Terry Dodd who completed 6 days of Stephen Ministry Leaders training in February. This is a course sponsored by Stephen Ministries St. Louise, a trans-denominational religious and educational organization. Stephen Leaders are crucial to the success of a congregation's Stephen Ministry. They are the key people selected by the congregation.

FOLLOWING ARE COMMENTS FROM TERRY:

"In February of this year, I had the honor of attending the national conference for Stephen Leader Training. I am struggling for words to describe the indescribable. I was awed and amazed at the dynamic outreach this nearly half century ministry of committed Christians has imparted to over 13,000 congregations from over 180 denominations. I can also tell you the 6 days were long, at 12-13 hours per day, but they flew by in the excellent presenting, new and exciting information, skills and tools I was entrusted to bring back to our own Stephen Ministry and ultimately to our congregation at St. Matthias. Our goal in Stephen Ministry Leadership is, and remains, to equip congregation members as well-trained lay caregivers to provide one-to-one, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting.

What will remain as a standout moment for me is having the privilege, in-the- midst of my two hundred fellow trainees from throughout the United States, Canada and Australia, of being recognized as one of the three longest serving Stephen Ministries. Aren't we amazing at St. Matthias!"

In short, Stephen Leaders make Stephen Ministry happen. Terry Dodd and our other Stephen Leaders, Faye Jackson, Stan Jamieson and Kay Lozano, have the ability to lead people in a caring ministry with the commitment to ensuring that people who are hurting receive Christ's love.

"A Stephen Minister is the Caregiver, and God is the Cure giver." Total confidentiality is a MUST. "

*Faye Jackson,
Stephen Minister Leader*



Processing Grief Amid the Pandemic

(Copied from Ministry Matters)

It's undeniable that we are currently living through a season of loss. At first, many of us lost events and vacations that we had been looking forward to. Then, we lost our sense of normalcy and, perhaps, safety. Next, we lost important aspects of our stability, including our routines and our social connections. Now, many of us are facing the loss of jobs, futures, and even, most tragically, friends and family members.

While we may crave a return to normalcy, we must also recognize that even in the best of times it is normal to mourn these small losses, let alone the compounded griefs of a global disaster. The losses we're experiencing would be particularly difficult to adjust to even if we had our "normal" lives and social activities in which we could take solace. It takes time for our minds, our hearts and our bodies to process any kind of change, and this is doubly true of changes of this magnitude.

Grief is an important emotion in our lives. Our bodies, minds, and hearts need to process the changes and losses that we feel in these difficult times. Taking time to mark a loss and admit that it hurts allows us to eventually accept the fact that the world has changed.

We always need others to witness our pain and help us grieve, but this is all the more important in the midst of a global tragedy. Just as our pain is a collective reality, we also share our grief. Acknowledging our anger and sadness together can be a powerful step toward strengthening community and making meaning in this moment.

We aren't necessarily used to grieving together. Learning to fully experience our grief and to do it together (even while physically distanced) might take creativity and courage. Like Job's friends, church communities too often try to offer solutions or explanations to people who really just need the caring and compassionate presence of fellow human beings. We may even chastise ourselves for grieving "too much" or "doing it wrong"! But this is a time of massive loss, and it's important to be gentle with ourselves and with others and to avoid looking away or trying to rush past suffering. This can be a time when compassion becomes not just a duty but a part of who we are.

Stan Jamieson

Summer Small Groups on Zoom

Though Wednesday Bible Study is on hiatus for the summer, there are plenty of other small groups in the works. Consider taking part in one or more of the following. For details, including Zoom links and meeting IDs, contact Fr. Bill or Rev. Carole and look out for weekly announcements.

- **COMPLINE** - The prayer book service for prayer at the close of day, led by the Rev. Carole Horton-Howe on Mondays from 8:00 to 8:30 p.m. beginning June 1st and running throughout the summer
- **ABOUT PRAYER** - A four-week small group exploring different forms of prayer, led by the Rev. Carolyn Estrada on Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. beginning June 4th
- **PRAYING FOR SAINT MATTHIAS** - An opportunity to spend time together in prayer for our church, led by Fr. Bill on Wednesdays from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m. beginning June 5th and running for six weeks

ECW to Host Virtual Tea

The ECW sponsored tea is back on!! We have a plan that should suit you to a virtual T. The entire Saint Matthias family—men and children included—is invited to join us on Saturday, June 6 at 2:00 p.m. via Zoom. During this time of continued self-quarantine, it will be a great opportunity to socialize while sipping tea and eating sandwiches (or whatever you prefer to drink and eat) from your home. We look forward to the opportunity to gather again in person, but in the mean-time this is an opportunity to share a virtual embrace with our friends.

RSVP to Kathy Adams and let us know if you plan to participate and whether you'll be joining online or by phone.

If you haven't Zoomed yet and have some questions, contact one of us and we will hopefully help you get set up.

Kathy Adams: ktouch52@gmail.com

Andrea Schmid: andrea@stmatthiaswhittier.org

Growing Up

This article is about our *youth group at St. Matthias*, I promise. Stick with me for a minute.

Let's start with some numbers. For most of the last two decades, anywhere from 60-70% of young Christians have left the church after graduating from high school — that's roughly two-thirds. Why do they leave? When asked, most of these young folks described the church as 'childish,' 'arrogant,' 'narrow-minded,' as the place where they were treated like children.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, evangelical and mainline churches got really good at getting young folks to show up to church. Youth groups boomed, middle and high school ministries became their own industry, and churches started spending a lot of energy making themselves look and feel like whatever was 'cool' at the time. And it worked. Thousands and thousands of young folks started coming to church who wouldn't have otherwise. It still works, in fact.

So why don't they keep coming?

Starting around middle school, we stop being children and become... something else. A fourteen year-old isn't usually a mature adult, but they're not a kid anymore either. We enter into a strange state I'm going to call 'youth' — the transition between childhood and adulthood. During this time, we begin to explore our world, acquire and exercise new liberties, feel the first burdens of responsibility, and encounter the rich complexities of romance, grief, and mystery. In short, we start getting a taste of the wonders and depths of mature, human life, and we start forming the attachments that shape our adult identity. The things that we love and identify with during this time hold a special place in our hearts because they become a part of who we are for the rest of our lives. I remember the songs on the radio in high school much more clearly than whatever has been popular on Spotify the past few months.

Our young people stop coming to church because church has become just a part of their childhood. The youth group that got them to show up by playing to whatever they thought was cool at 13 or 14 isn't relevant when they're encountering rich, mature beauty elsewhere in their newly forming adult lives. Simple answers and explanations they got in Sunday school and had reinforced in high school don't stand up to the test of their mature questions and fall apart in the face of real grief.

If we want our youth to stick with us, the way of Jesus has to become a part of their forming adult identities. If we want our youth to become wise, good, vivacious Christian adults, then we have to show them that Jesus can handle their deepest questions, that he can sit with them in the sharpest griefs, and that the fullness of life in Christ is abundant and eternal.

So, what's going on at St. Matthias with our youth on Sunday morning?

Each week, we pray and read the gospel together. Each week, Sam & I ask a question about the passage — a real question, that we're actually curious about — and we lead them in a discussion where they do their best to answer the question using our text. We do this because a good question is one of the

ways to take the Bible out of Sunday school and lead students into a new world of the Scriptures. When they are the ones thinking hard, asking difficult questions, discovering truth in the Scriptures, then the truths that they find and the One they encounter there are far more likely to stick with them as a part of their adulthood.

This is a slow process, where victories are small and there's plenty of awkward silence. It feels counterproductive at times to not just give them an answer — answers are good, after all. Sam and I know, however, that in this way our youth might catch a glimpse of faith that is bigger and more beautiful than they knew God who they just might want to follow into adulthood.

*J.D. Neal,
Youth Sunday School Teacher*



A Weekly Service of Compline

“Say the words of the ancient prayer, and listen for the prayer of God that rises in your heart.”

One of the realities of our worship is that we use a printed bulletin rather than opening up the Book of Common Prayer. There are all kinds of good reasons for this. A bulletin, to borrow from the old Dragnet show, has the service and nothing but the service. So worship is more accessible and welcoming to our visitors, allows all of us to focus rather than flip pages and provides a take home for reviewing scripture and prayers during the week. But we lose something too. We don't get a chance to become familiar with the many other liturgies in the prayer book.

I confess that I love the prayer book. It was a critical part of my first encounter with the Episcopal church. When I was about twelve a friend invited me to St. Luke's in our little hometown in Oklahoma to hear the youth choir sing during Midnight Mass. So on a bitter cold December 24th night my life changed forever. The warmth and beauty of the Christmas Eve liturgy swallowed me up. I tried to absorb everything about the service but was also multi-tasking by reading the prayers in the prayer book that I found in the pew rack. They seemed to articulate perfectly much of what I felt.

That's especially true for me of the service of Compline. Compline is prayed at the end of the day. Its name comes from a Latin word meaning 'completion.' Some have called it the church's bedtime prayers. We take some time to turn our focus away from the world and towards God, placing ourselves before God in quietness and reflection at the end of our day. We ask forgiveness for the things that have not gone well and, using scripture and our own intercession, pray for protection, strength, rest and peace through the night until morning comes and we begin again.

There's a rhythm to it that is a perfect entrée to journaling or meditation on what has been and what might be. Edward Farrell wrote, “Say the words of the ancient prayer, and listen for the prayer of God that rises in your heart.” Some of the phrases in the Compline prayers tend to stay with us. And I wonder if they are an invitation into further reflection to give clarity to the day just completed and offer some shape the day to come.

On June 1st we will begin a weekly service of Compline - by Zoom, of course. It will be each Monday evening at 8:00 through the summer. All are welcome. Just give me a call or send me an email to let me know you're interested. And see what prayer of God might rise up in your heart.

Rev. Carole+

Saint Matthias Staff

Rector

Fr. Bill Garrison

Associate

Rev. Carole Horton-Howe

Associate

Rev. Carolyn Estrada

Deacon

Rev. Kay Lozano

Music Director

Kevin McKelvie

Parish Administrator

Dottie Andersen

Facilities Manager

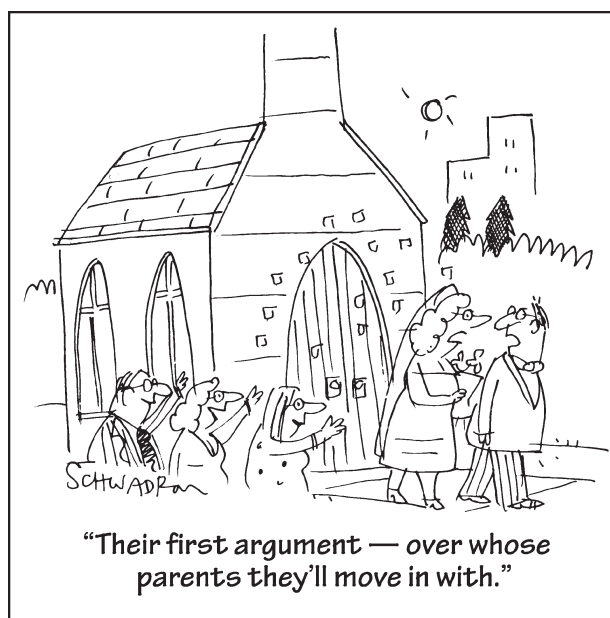
Ben Gonzalez

Treasurer

Kathel Harris

Special Dates in June

- ➔ Trinity Sunday, June 7
- ➔ Flag Day, June 14
- ➔ First day of summer, June 20
- ➔ Father's Day, June 21



“Heaven and Hell: A History of the Afterlife” by Bart D. Ehrman (2020)

Book Review by Ben Corbitt

What happens to us after we die is one of life’s oldest mysteries, and has spawned countless answers. In the Western world, we are most familiar with heaven’s glories for the righteous and hell’s torments for the wicked. The ideas are so familiar that many people likely never give much thought to their origin.

In his newest book, New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman casts a scholarly eye toward heaven and hell. Where did these beliefs come from? Are they the undisputed teaching of the Bible? What did Jesus say about the afterlife? Ehrman’s thesis is perhaps less conclusive than we would like, but endlessly fascinating in the details: Heaven and hell were never handed down on stone tablets, but emerged slowly from an ancient world that held room for many views of the afterlife.

Ehrman begins his study in the pre-Christian world, where many believed in life after death, but didn’t especially look forward to it. For many polytheists of ancient Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome, there might be a continued existence beyond the grave, but it was a pitiful reflection of the living world.

As Ehrman shifts to the Jewish scriptures (the Christian Old Testament), readers might expect our modern heaven and hell to leap off the pages. This is not the case. Ehrman points to a variety of afterlife views in the oldest parts of the Bible, including the stark contention that nothing waits for the dead at all. The writer of Psalm 115 laments that “The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any that go down in silence.” Ehrman contends that for many ancient Jews, death was the final word. In the grave, one could not even hope to praise God.

A more hopeful view develops throughout the Hebrew scriptures, that individuals would be resurrected for a final Day of Judgment, in which God would reward righteous Jews and destroy the wicked. Ehrman claims this view, of imminent resurrection and judgment, is the only authentic afterlife teaching we can trace to the historical Jesus. Our Gospels contain clear references to interim states of reward and punishment for the dead, most vividly in the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16. But Ehrman argues that this story is not literal to begin with, and likely not an actual saying of Jesus in any event.

The words of the Apostle Paul get us closer to a modern view. Paul’s letters predate the Gospels, and thus serve as our earliest intact writings from the Christian period. While Paul affirms Christ’s teachings about a future resurrection and Judgment Day, he also offers some innovations. These include an interim state of happiness for dead believers, poetically expressed in 2 Corinthians, where he says to be “away from the body” is to be “at home with the Lord.”

Ehrman concludes that it is not in the pages of the Bible that heaven and hell achieve their modern form more or less intact. Instead, this occurs in the crystallization of Church doctrine during the first 400 years after the life of Christ, as Christianity grows from a fledgling underdog to the dominant religion of the Western world. But even this does not end the development of the Christian afterlife. Teachings about the fate of dead souls continue to evolve in response to new challenges, most notably with official Church recognition of the middle state of Purgatory in the Middle Ages.

And so it continues for us, Ehrman suggests. Ideas that were once stamped out as heretical, such as universal salvation, have gotten a fresh look in our own times, when ex-evangelical authors can upend Christian orthodoxy with statements like “Love Wins.” The Christian afterlife has always been a work in progress, Ehrman demonstrates, while suggesting that it will continue to be.

Ehrman’s prose is witty, engaging and easy to follow throughout the book. Even while delving into some fairly weedy disputes (e.g., the precise physical nature of resurrected bodies), he is able to continually make relevant and interesting points that aid the overall development of his thesis. Bart Ehrman might not be able to tell us what happens in the next life, but with this insightful book, he has provided one more enjoyable way to use our time in this one.

Futures Fund

The Futures Fund gained \$27,737.39 for the month of April, however it is still down \$31,140.84. In this regard our portfolio manager advised the following:

After a very challenging March, equity markets rallied across the globe in April. Growth portfolios were up anywhere from 5-7% for the month. We are not out of the woods yet as we expect volatility to continue, but we still maintain our view that this will be a transitory event. We continue to meet weekly to make sure that portfolios are allocated in line with our current views.

Stan Jamieson - Member

Opportunities to Participate in the Future of St. Matthias

The Fall of 2020 has two important programs that affect the life of the Church; stewardship and the Diocesan Convention.

Stewardship is an important process of discernment for the church and at St. Matthias we are blessed with thoughtful, caring people who are determined to keep this church active and engaging. The vestry is forming a small committee to develop and plan the Fall stewardship program. We would like 1-2 members of the congregation to join a few vestry members on this committee. If you are interested in participating on this committee, please let clergy or me know.

Another important function of the church is participating in the Diocesan Convention. St. Matthias has 3 delegate spots and 2 alternate delegate spots at the November 2020 event. This is a wonderful opportunity to see the larger church "in action". If you are interested in representing St. Matthias at this event, please let clergy or myself know.

Mary Jean Christian, Senior Warden



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