



NEWS OF PEACE
Peace Lutheran Church, Steeleville, IL
2017



From the Pastor – Matthew’s Message: Love, Actually

We have now been studying the Gospel of Matthew in the Wednesday morning Bible study since November and as I get deeper and deeper into the Gospel I would like to share some thoughts on Matthew’s unique focus, meaning and narrative approach.

Often, many of us tend to think of Matthew as the harsh, uncompromising, even judgmental Gospel – “cut off your hand... pluck out your eye... cast out into out darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth” and all of that! And certainly if you take Matthew’s Gospel in small bits then this is exactly what you are left with. But when you explore the Gospel and leave everything in its narrative context a different message emerges and it is a message of radical, unconditional and even illogical love! In brief, here is a summary: God’s overwhelming love is for all of the creation and all of God’s children (who, are all of humanity, BTW) – it is, however, the distinct calling and responsibility of the *ecclesia* – the Church, the called out ones – to embody this love, to be open vessels of this love for others who need to experience the love of God in their lives!

So the primary themes of the Gospel of Matthew are God’s presence, Salvation through Jesus (whose name means “God saves”), the calling of the “church” to embody this love and the importance and centrality of forgiveness – God’s forgiveness and our human calling to forgive: “forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” But all of these work together. You cannot extract one theme and separate it from another, and the overarching theme of love itself is woven into the fabric of it all. So, we are saved by God’s love and we receive assurance of this salvation through our experience of God’s presence that comes through those whom God has called out to be vessels of this love.

The Gospel begins with the naming of Jesus (God saves) and a reminder that this child is Immanuel – God with us! So in the midst of the incredible darkness of Matthew’s birth story (the Holy family ends up as homeless refugees!) we have the assurance of God’s presence through love and it is this love that saves. And it is this love that the disciples are told to “go into all the world” and share in chapter 28, along with the promise that Jesus will be present with us always, “even to the end of the age.” That is, God’s love will be present and never-failing even to the end of the age.

And this love is to be extended to all – to ALL! Even to one’s enemies to whom we are to go the extra mile and to give them our tunics in addition to our cloaks. No one stands outside of God’s love. No one! And there is absolutely no room for revenge of any kind what so ever! “You have heard it said, an eye for an eye, but I tell you love those who persecute you and pray for those who hurt you!” To “get even” is to fall into sin, to turn your back on Jesus and the gift of salvation. Similarly there is absolutely no room for hate. To hate or reject others is to reject Christ and to disregard the work of the Jesus through the Holy Spirit. In fact, to reject anyone, to exclude anyone, is to fall into sin and to turn your back on Jesus!

For example, in Matthew 18 we have that famous passage where Jesus tells the disciples that if someone has sinned against you then you should go and show the person his/her wrong; and if that doesn’t work then take 2 or 3 with you and try again; and then if that doesn’t work to have the entire community try again; and if that doesn’t work, then you are to “treat that person as a sinner or tax collector.” Too often this is interpreted that you should cast that person out and ostracize him/her. Here is the permission from Jesus to reject those who don’t conform, right? Well, no, not at all! What does it mean to treat someone as a “tax collector or sinner?” How does Jesus treat tax collectors and sinners? Far from rejecting them, or pushing them out, Jesus eats with them, he reaches out to them, he cares for them, he loves them and forgives them. The love of God knows no bounds and the love that we are to show is similarly to go beyond what we think is expected or reasonable = $70 \times 7 = \text{infinity}$ (Jesus actually spells it out like this to his shocked and disbelieving disciples).

Love, actually, must define the community of Christ. It is not judgment, it is not to believe my way or else, it is not live the way I think you should or else, it is not even doctrine that has the final word – it is love. We are to be people of love; we are to be a community of love that is open to inviting all people – no matter what;

people of different cultures, races, colors, sexual orientation, economic status, political views, life styles, even other religions. We are to love – there is no exemption according to Matthew. Therefore here at the end of what I feel was a very, very difficult year and at the beginning of a new year I am committing myself to the love of God and I invite you to join me. And I do this confident in God’s forgiveness when I fail, but also confident of God’s blessings which extend through me and you and this congregation and to the world outside.

Pastor S. Blake Duncan+

prblake1@yahoo.com Pastor has a blog at : <http://pastorduncansblog.blogspot.com> Articles are posted on the blog as well as sermons, newsletters items, and other articles. You can also leave him comments at this site. Please feel free to offer Pastor Duncan your comments, suggestions and reflections on this sermon and sermon reflections.

Worship in January



We celebrate the Baptism of our Lord and the beginning of the season of Epiphany on Saturday/Sunday January 7/8. The last weekend of the season of Epiphany – the Feast of the Transfiguration - is February 25/26. Ash Wednesday this year is on March 1 and there will be services at 12:30 and 7:00 PM.

Below are the contributions for the month of
 (thru December 31st)
 \$5,023.95 is needed weekly to meet our budget



Date	<u>Weekly Offering</u>	<u>Received Year To Date</u>	<u>Needed Year To Date</u>	<u>Difference Year To Date</u>
3 & 4	\$6,865.00	\$236,550.10	\$246,173.55	-\$9,623.45
10 & 11	\$7,347.50	\$243,898.60	\$251,197.50	-\$7,298.90
17 & 18	\$2,941.00	\$246,839.60	\$256,221.45	-\$9,381.85
24 & 25	\$7,048.00	\$253,887.60	\$261,245.40	-\$7,357.80
12/31 & 1/1	\$4,038.72	\$257,925.32		-\$3,320.08



SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING
 Semi-Annual Meeting will be January 22, 2017. Remember that

this is a financial and statistical report. We will also be voting on some constitutional Revisions. There is information in the Narthex to explain the changes. Please pick up one and look over before the meeting.



REGULAR AND LARGE PRINT DEVOTIONAL BOOKS entitled “The Word

in Season” for January through March are available in the Narthex and the church office. Pick one up soon



FLOWER CALENDAR

The 2017 Flower Calendar is on the **bulletin board nearest the kitchen in the basement.** Let me know how you want the dedication to read, **donate \$30.00** to the church, and we will take care of the rest. Please share a special occasion and bring joy and sunshine in the worship services. Remember someone or something special or just share the joy of your life in Christ by supplying flowers for our chancel. Sign up soon!!!



Parish WELCA

Next meeting will be Thursday, March 2nd at Peace, Steeleville at 7PM. Service project will be filling Easter eggs for Peace Book in a Basket Project. Bring plastic Easter eggs and wrapped candy.



Sr. High/Adult Sunday School – will meet



Sundays from 10:30 to 11:15 on January 15 and February 5 and 19.

We will focus on the Apostle Paul and his Corinthian Correspondence – 1st and 2nd Corinthians. Paul is a really fascinating person and his letters reveal much about him as a person and as a leader. Come and enter into Paul's world and the world of the great 1st century Greek trading center, the city of Corinth!

Prayer Works



MORNING PRAYER: Each Wednesday, *Morning Prayer* is prayed in the Noah's Ark Chapel. This mid-week service provides us with an opportunity to enter into prayer and supplication. The service includes prayers for all of our armed service personnel and we pray for all members of the parish who are celebrating birthdays. This brief service begins at 9:00 AM and you are welcome to join us.



Bible Study - Parish Wednesday Morning Bible Study – will resume classes on Wednesdays at 9:30 AM on January 11 at Peace, Steeleville. We will continue with our study of the Gospel of Matthew.



We had several special programs during the advent season and we would like to **thank everyone** involved in these special programs.

Vickie Wathen and all her helpers for the Angel Tree, Ken & Dorothy Bockhorn for the coat drive, Darlene Finley for shut-in Christmas cards, Michelle Gremmels helped with the Christmas pageant, every one who donated desserts and made goodie bags, and everyone who participated in these activities in any way. They made the advent season very exciting.

Thank you to everyone who participated or helped during our practices for the Christmas program. The program was a huge success as usual! The children are always excited about Christmas which makes the time I spend with them even better. I really enjoyed working with the children this year. –Julie



ADDRESS CHANGES:

Elmer & Lela Mae Shemonic, 16
Rosewood Ct., Steeleville, IL 62288

- Lorren Krantz, Address Unknown**
- Sean & Kendra (Carter & Lucas) Wolters, 1581**
Maplewood Ct., Edwardsville, IL 62025
- Joe Moore, 803 S Chester St., Steeleville, IL 62288**
- Kari (Kaelyn & Kyley) Rheinecker, 402 Shoreline**
Dr., Columbia, IL 62236
- Lacey (Colton & Wyatt) Hartmann, Address**
unknown
- Pr. Frank & Kathy Langholf, 1676 S Seminary St.,**
Galesburg, IL 61401
- Jeff & Rosemary (Andrew & Emma) Roberts, 5005**
Calle Arquero, Oceanside, CA 92057
- Joe Moore, 803 S Chester St., Steeleville, IL 62288**
- Everett & John Caupert, 27 Westwood Dr.,**
Steeleville, IL 622889



DEATHS:

Edwin Lakeman passed away on Nov. 22 Three Springs Lodge, Chester. Funeral services were Nov. 26 at Wilson Funeral Home with Pr. S. Blake Duncan officiating. Burial was at Steeleville City Cemetery.

Write a word that makes you think of Winter. Start each word with the letters in the word WINTER.

W _____

I _____

N _____

T _____

E _____

R _____



Food Pantry

Every year it seems the generosity of this church and this community increases substantially!

Again this year, the food drives held by the schools, banks, churches and Boy Scouts exceeded our expectations by double. We received over 10,000 items during December, along with generous cash donations. For a small community, you help others in a big way. I know I speak for all the people who use the Food Pantry, THANK YOU ALL, and to all a HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Parish Confirmation classes are starting up again on Wednesday, January 4. The 8th grade will now meet at Steeleville and the 7th grade will meet at Post Oak.



First Communion

We will be holding our First Communion Class on Sunday, January 22nd at 11:15AM. Any families who have children, who are interested in taking their first communion, please contact the office at 965-3119.

First Communion weekend will be April 1st & 2nd. Any children who are currently in the 4th grade or older are invited to participate. We will be sending postcards soon with more details.



Wednesday All Stars

We have a strong steady group of 16 now. It's a bit lopsided with 13 girls and only 3 boys, but those 3 boys hold their own! We had a wonderful Christmas celebration on family night. The kids made gingerbread houses that showed off their decorating abilities, and their talent for eating frosting! This group can eat a lot of frosting and candy! The highlight of the evening was performing Christmas Carols. In 3 groups they choose a Carol and composed new lyrics, then performed it for their parents and others during dinner. Although they were all wonderful, my personal favorite was the 4th graders "Duncan, the nicest Pastor". This may be the first song written for Pastor Duncan, if not, it certainly was the most creative!

We will begin the New Year with learning how important it is to serve others, regardless of age or talent. There are so many things 4th, 5th and 6th graders can do to help the less fortunate.



SUNDAY SCHOOL PAGEANT

This year, just like decades of Christmas Eves before, our Sunday School Students presented the church and community with their version of the Christmas Story. This year we had 24 kids participate and working together to present "The King's Birth". The story told us in a simple way the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. With angels, shepherds, and inn workers, they read Luke's version of the story. Thanks to each and every one: Kids adults alike.



YOUTH

The end of 2016 was a busy time for the members of our Youth group. We may be a small church, with a fairly small number of kids, but they are an active and powerful group.

The second week of November was the CSIS LYO youth gathering in Carlinville. Peace sent 10 youth and 2 adults for the weekend. I am very proud to say Peace continues to have students on the Board of the CSIS LYO. Kellyn Rohlfing was elected to the Southern Conference Planning Committee and Elizabeth Froemling was elected as the Southern Conference Representative. When deciding to accept these positions, both girls had to make decisions to miss some of their High School events to cover these, It is hard to make time for everything these two girls are involved in, and I'm proud they have chosen to be involved in the greater church as well.

November 19th and 20th the Youth took charge of Worship. They filled all of the positions with the exception of Worship leader and Preaching. All of the active Youth group participated and did a great job Saturday and Sunday.

December found the kids helping everyone from the Food Pantry to Sunday School to Angel Tree.

Next time you see one of the kids, ask them what's next or tell them thank you for making this a fun place to worship.



Community Breakfast – Saturday,

January 28th from 6:30am – 10am at St. Luke Lutheran Church Basement, Campbell Hill. Proceeds benefit Trico Kids for Christ, Trico Band Boosters & Chester Hospitality House.



Kairos Prison Ministry

Kairos Prison Ministry International, Inc. (Kairos) is an ecumenical Christian faith based ministry which addresses the spiritual needs of incarcerated men, women, youth and their families. By sharing the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, Kairos hopes to change hearts, transform lives and impact the world. This past October was a busy month for Kairos with 152 weekend retreats. The 30,000 volunteers participate in over 640 retreats annually. Kairos is active in 35 states in the United States and eight other countries. The Kairos method of talks, meditations, individual and group activities is an invitation to live in a personal relationship with the living Christ. Kairos is not only to help the Holy Spirit in saving souls, but to put human lives in service to literally transform the prison environments.

The Kairos teams enter the prison twice per year for spring and fall retreats. In addition, the Kairos teams return to each prison every month for a “reunion”. The reunion is an opportunity for previous retreat participants to meet with the outside Kairos team members and is also a time for the team to encourage the inmates and discuss their spiritual path with other inmates and the Holy Spirit.

On Thursday, October 20th Bill Beck entered Menard Prison, Chester, IL along with 32 other Kairos team members for a four-day Christian Men's weekend retreat. Participating from the prison were 36 inmates and seven inmate/servers who had participated in the previous retreat last spring. The retreat is a structured program with several talks, meditations, discussions and sharing. The retreat ends Sunday afternoon with a closing service. The 36 inmates were directly touched by the Kairos team sharing the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ and the light of hope at one of the “darkest” prisons (or hopeless situation for the inmates) in the State of Illinois. The Kairos team uses homemade baked cookies as a symbol of God's never-ending love for the inmates. Each team member collects 40 dozen cookies for the retreat. For this weekend retreat the team entered Menard with approximately 1,600 dozen cookies. The following is a photo of the cookies in 36 plastics bins.

There are many opportunities for you to serve in this ministry, all we ask is that you have a willing heart and a spirit of obedience. If you would like to become involved, you can be:

- a team member,
- a prayer partner,
- a support volunteer,
- a financial donor,
- or a cookie baker.

We are starting the planning for the Spring 2017 Retreat. If you are interested in participating in the Kairos Ministry, attending the Sunday afternoon closing or would like more information, you can contact Bill Beck at 618.670.4389. Unfortunately, being a team member or a visitor for the closing is restricted by Menard to men only. More information about Kairos is available at the website: mykairos.org



Live Well/Stay Well Mind, Body & Spirit A Twelve Month Series of Wellness Program

2nd Thursday of each month
6pm

Westminster Presbyterian Fellowship Hall
Sparta, IL

Let's Get Fit! – January 12th
Eat for the Health of It – February 9th
Managing Stress – March 9th
Let's Start Biking – April 13th
Spiritual Program – May 11th
Stop Smoking – June 8th
Motivate Yourself – July 13th
Happy Feet – August 10th
The 2 P's to a Healthy Life – September 14th
Women's Health – October 12th
GI Health – November 9th
Know Your Meds – December 14th



ANGEL TREE

A HUGE THANK YOU TO OUR CONGREGATION, NEIGHBORING CHURCHES, LOCAL BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THE 2016 ANGEL TREE. THIS YEAR WE HELPED 151 FAMILIES - 418 CHILDREN. THAT'S 33 MORE CHILDREN THAN 2015. THAT MAY NOT SEEM LIKE A LOT OF DIFFERENCE, BUT MONETARILY IT IS HUGE. HOWEVER, AS ALWAYS, YOU ALL STEPPED UP TO THE PLATE AND DONATED OR SPONSORED ANGELS!

I WOULD LIKE TO SAY A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO MY STEADFAST HELPERS. THEY PUT IN COUNTLESS HOURS AT THE PARSONAGE, PICKING UP GIFTS FROM OUR COMMUNITY TREES, SHOPPING, AND HELPING ON WRAP DAY. I AM NOT GOING TO MENTION NAMES BECAUSE I AM AFRAID I WOULD UNINTENTIONALLY MISS SOMEONE. YOU ALL KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND HOW MUCH I APPRECIATE ALL YOUR HELP.

AND THIS SOUNDS REPETATIVE, BUT CAN NOT BE STRESSED ENOUGH - THANK YOU FOR YOUR YEAR ROUND DONATIONS OF ITEMS FOR THE TREE. ALTHOUGH YOU MAY HAVE ONLY PICKED UP A FEW PAIRS OF SHOES OR A FEW ITEMS OF CLOTHING, THERE WERE MANY WHO DID SO AND THEY ALL ADD UP. THAT'S HOW OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY SHOULD WORK. EVERYONE DOES A LITTLE TO ADD UP TO A LOT. SO KEEP THE ANGEL TREE IN MIND WHEN YOU SEE THOSE CLEARANCE RACKS. IF YOU FIND A GOOD DEAL, BUT NOT SURE WHAT TO GET, HOW MANY, ETC, JUST GIVE ME A CALL AT 615-1161. IF YOU FIND SOMETHING THAT IS A GOOD DEAL, BUT YOU CAN'T SWING THE DONATION, JUST CALL ME. I WILL LET YOU KNOW IF WE CAN WORK THE PURCHASE INTO OUR BUDGET AND GET YOU A REMIBURSEMENT.

SUMMED UP - ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR THANKS TO ALL YOUR HELP!!!

