

## Report to Congregation Council November 19, 2024

The highlight this past month wasn't personally mine, but it impacted me (and the congregation) ... Deacon Lindsay and Austin welcomed their little girl, Ellison Marie Stertzbach, into the world. Although she'd begun her maternity leave on October 7, out of concern from the challenging pregnancy, it was with joy and relief Ellie was born happy and healthy (just tiny).

So, as of today, we as a congregation have had approximately 6 weeks to adjust to Deacon Lindsay not being present. Many of us have stepped up to "cover" the various roles that she serves in the congregation, and thankfully she left us all well-planned instructions as to "what to do and when to do it." I personally have picked up teaching Catechism on Sundays, making sure some of the other items are moving forward, and the training of worship assistants. Others have taken on the children's Christmas service and Care Packages, and the Adult Mentors. It's an adjustment, and one that reinforces to me that we are a congregation that couldn't operate effectively without a second called leader.

Reformation Sunday was a nice celebration. 5 young people confirmed their faith and made promises to continue in their walk with God. Thanks to Joyce and Jan for organizing a wonderful reception for them and their families.

I attended a Synod Training on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, at which I was able to renew my bi-annual boundaries training requirement. I also connected again with my colleagues at the monthly Cleveland West Lutheran Conference meeting on November 7. Later that evening I went with a few St. Matthew Members up to Case Western to hear Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber deliver and lecture. This month was a good month for continuing education!

This month also included the ever-active range of meetings here at St. Matthew. The staff held our meeting at Alladin's on the 29<sup>th</sup>, which is something we've been attempting to do (eat out) in order to build our team. Additionally, the Worship Team, Evangelism & Communication, LGL Samaritan, and Finance Teams all met. Finally, we held our Annual Congregational meeting. (Reminder...we still need to install all of the Congregation Council members for 2025).

Visitation this past month included more visiting with active and in-person members than with the hospitalized and homebound members. My hope is that the coming month will be a little more open so I might see more of the homebound members before the holidays.

I was honored to preside over the marriage of Caroline Obermeier and Daniel Kane the weekend of November 9<sup>th</sup> in Cleveland. I also was contacted by a funeral home in Parma with a family in need of a pastor for a brief graveside service at Western Reserve National Cemetery, which I was able to do.

Lastly, I've been tracking the in-person attendance numbers since September. There's been a perception that attendance has "dropped off" recently, so I was curious if the perception is accurate. I'm providing you with the total attendance number (includes both services combined) for every Sunday beginning in 2021. On average there are close to 13 people less in worship per Sunday, which has been more noticeable at the 11:00 service than at the 8:30 this past year. Although the number isn't a drastic shift, it's large enough to notice when a worship service would typically have 50 in a space like ours. I've also included the statistics for membership gained (baptisms/affirmation of faith) and removed (death/transfer) since 2022. 2024 statistics coming.

In Christ, with Christ, for Christ!

Pastor Steve