

St. James-St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

119-15 135th Avenue

South Ozone Park, NY 11420

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We Worship Every Sunday at 10:00 am

Visit us at SouthOzoneParkChurch.org

To those still “Among the Living...”

We are living in unprecedented times – times that are extraordinary, unparalleled and unmatched – times that have never existed before and cannot be compared to anything that we have ever known. Exclaiming or even worse, complaining that “our lives have been disrupted” is an understatement given the reality that thousands who have died within our city, thousands more continue to be hospitalized and millions unemployed due to COVID-19.

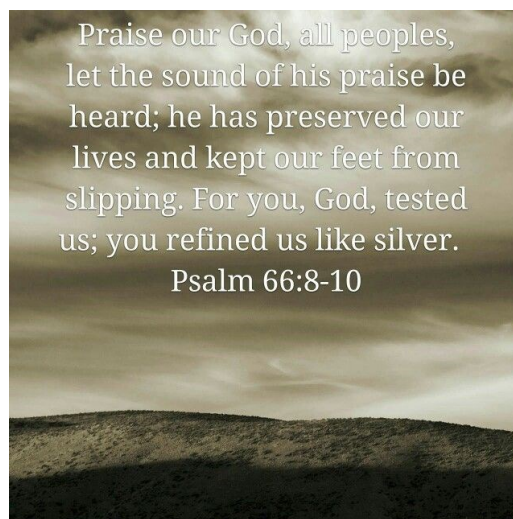
As you can tell – not much has changed since I last wrote to you...but not really, I am convinced that our situation has gotten worse. During this past week, the United States surpassed the grim 100,000 death milestone due to this devastating disease. But that's not all, there is a wave of anger sweeping across our nation—a reaction to the gruesome death of an African-American man while in the custody of Officers of the Minneapolis Police Department. And coming closer to home, there was a racially charged incident in New York's Central Park when an African-American/Black man (a birdwatcher) was falsely accused of threatening the life of a Caucasian/White woman (a dog-walker).

Coupled with a global pandemic ravishing the lives of every age group and demographic, there is growing and understandable distrust and frustration with governing and political officials – those who swore an oath to protect and serve while having varying degrees of “power and control” over the lives and livelihoods of those under their care.

So, what are we to do when it seems that our world is spiral out of control? What are we to do when fear replaces faith – faith in the system and society as a whole? What are we to do as a called-out people of God when injustices cast a dark cloud over us? Well, we dig deep—deep into the reservoir of Scripture for answers. The prophet Isaiah had a vision: *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”* (6:8)

The Messenger

June 2020 Edition



During the Easter season, one of the appointed readings from the Psalms was 66:8-20. I must confess that verse 9-10 captured my attention: *“Our God has kept us among the living and has not allowed our feet to slip. ¹⁰For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us just as silver is tried.”* These verses caused me to cry out: Why? Why keep us among the living? Why, keep me? Why me, Lord?

It is quite glaring – we need to be held by God during these times – now, more than ever, we need God's tender embrace and reassuring presence in our lives and that of our world. But, as individuals and as a called out community of believers, we can do our part to help comfort the terrified souls of those we encounter or vice versa.

Whether we believe it or not, God is keeping us among the living for a specific reason – to bear God's image in the world and to bring the good news to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, the day of vengeance of our God; and to comfort all who mourn...(Is. 61:1-2)

So, people get ready—let's get busy with fulfilling our mandate as the church, for such a time...while keeping in mind the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “The time is always right to do what is right!”

As you ponder the question: Why did God keep you among the living? I would like to share this song with you and pray that it would serve as an inspiration as you discern your role as a disciple in these days.

Why me – By Kris Kristofferson

Why me Lord, what have I ever done
To deserve even one
Of the pleasures I've known
Tell me Lord, what did I ever do
That was worth loving you
Or the kindness you've shown.

Refrain: Lord help me Jesus, I've wasted it so
Help me Jesus I know what I am
Now that I know that I've need you so
Help me Jesus, my soul's in your hand.

Tell me Lord, if you think there's a way
I can try to repay
All I've taken from you
Maybe Lord, I can show someone else
What I've been through myself
On my way back to you. *Refrain:*



With the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) global pandemic and concerns, we continue to take the following measures at least through **June 30, 2020**:

1. **Remain Closed** for “in-person” Worship Services and Meetings – During this time, you can call the Church office to let us know if you are in need of Pastoral Care or special prayers.
2. **Reach out to our members and friends** – You may join us in connecting with our church family – Let them know that they are loved. We strongly suggest you do so by telephone and avoid person-to-person contact...at the least, pray for everyone.
3. **Your Church Offering** – You can mail-in your Offering Envelopes to the Church or if possible, drop them off (please, Checks only) in our mail slot on the side door. Contributions can also be made via your PayPal Accounts... <https://www.paypal.me/StJamesStMatthews>
4. Our **Annual Picnic** scheduled for June 13 has been cancelled.
5. **Going forward** – we will continue to share our **Sunday Worship Services** online and have an audio version available for those who wish to dial-in from home phones. For Sunday Worship Services at 10:00 am, please dial: **646-558-8656** and enter meeting ID: **394-171-8778 #**.

In an effort to keep in touch with our church family during this time, we will continue to send out weekly email blasts and posting updates on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/St-James-St-Matthews-Lutheran-Church> Email us at stjstm@aol.com if you do not get our weekly blasts and “like us” on Facebook to get these updates when posted. Video recording of **Sunday Worship** “Service of the Word” are posted on our website for your viewing: www.SouthOzoneParkChurch.org

As we continue to shelter-in-place and do our best to cope with these times, you are invited to engage the Scripture Readings assigned for the month of June.

June 7 – Holy Trinity Sunday

Matthew 28:16-20

Guest Preacher: Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, ELCA

June 14 – *Graduates Sunday: Matthew 9:35-10:8

June 21 – Father’s Day: Matthew 10:24-39

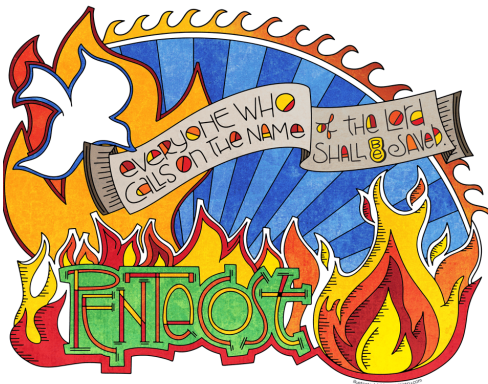
June 28 – Pentecost 4 : Matthew 10:40-42

In addition to meditating on scripture during these days, we also look to God in fervent prayer. So, please pray with me—a recent prayer offered by our Metro New York Synod Bishop, The Rev. Paul Egensteiner:

“**Almighty God**, Our heavenly Parent, bless the public servants in the government of this country, that they may do their work in a spirit of wisdom, charity, and justice. Help them use their authority to serve faithfully and to promote our common life; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen**”

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We would like to honor all **Graduates this year in a special way. Kindly email (stjstm@aol.com) a nice picture of the graduate and share their name, school/college graduating from and what’s next, e.g. High School, College, etc. Please email us by **Monday, June 8**.*



Sunday Worship: 10:00 am

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Contact us by Mail:

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