

*As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Matthew 9:9-13

During this current liturgical year, the majority of our Gospel lessons are taken from the Gospel of Matthew. We're all familiar with Matthew being the first book of the New Testament. But when you stop to think about it, you realize that we really don't know a lot about Matthew the man. In fact, he is only mentioned a handful of times in Matthew, Mark and Luke and once in the Book of Acts – and never mentioned at all in the Gospel of John.

Although Matthew was a Jew, tax collectors were hated by the Jewish people and were often referred to as "sinners." Not only were tax collectors seen as traitors who served the Roman rulers, but they were notorious for their unfair, money-gouging tactics. No self-respecting Jew would have anything to do with a tax collector. So when Jesus called Matthew to follow Him and ate dinner at Matthew's house, his actions were considered to be positively scandalous, especially by the Pharisees who never passed up an opportunity to malign Jesus.

Following this incident, Matthew is occasionally listed as a Disciple but receives no other mention. He is sometimes called Levi rather than Matthew – it wasn't unusual for Jewish men to have two names that were used interchangeably – and even when he *is* named it is often in tandem with the Disciple Thomas, the same man who so famously doubted Christ's resurrection until he saw Jesus face-to-face.

The Gospel of Matthew has traditionally been credited to Matthew the tax collector/disciple, even though he makes no claim of authorship. Dr. David Scaer, who has studied and written extensively about the Gospel of Matthew, argues that it was the first Gospel that was written, and many date it to approximately 50 A.D. (roughly 17 years following Christ's death, resurrection and ascension into heaven).

While all other books of the New Testament were originally written in Greek, there is conjecture that the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew and only later translated into Greek. There is strong evidence that Matthew was originally written specifically for Jewish Christians and that it was intended to serve as a catechesis – a training tool – for early Jewish Christians to learn about Jesus and His teachings. Since it was originally directed to Jewish Christians, Matthew – far more than any of the other Gospel writers – repeatedly explains how Jesus represents the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets.

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Perhaps a key lesson to learn from the story of St. Matthew is that our Lord does, indeed, call men and women to serve Him in ways that they would never, ever expect. Remember that Matthew was, before all else, a hated and detested tax collector. But Jesus had a plan to use Matthew in a way that Matthew never expected.

Sometimes it's easy to sit in Church and assume that God has "plenty" of people to take care of His business. After all, the Church has a pastor to preach the Word, administer the Sacraments, care for the sick and needy, and generally do everything that we expect a pastor to do. The church probably also has enough (sometimes barely enough) good people who fill the various officer and committee roles, teach Sunday School, usher on Sunday morning and generally do anything else that needs to be done.

But it doesn't stop there. God has a plan for each of us. God has a need for each of us. It may not be today, tomorrow, next month or next year. We never know when and where or even for what purpose He will decide to use us. But use us He will.

God took a sinful man and used him to write one of the most beloved books of Scripture. God takes ordinary men and women – people like you and me – and uses them to spread the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ. He takes ordinary men and women like you and me to serve His people and serve His church.

When He calls, you can't help but know it. And we pray that you can't help but respond just as Samuel answered God's call: "Here I am."

In Christ,

Pastor Terry O'Brien

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## *Looking ahead ...*

Although the pace of activities is still slower than it was during Advent and Christmas – and will be picking up in March as we begin the Season of Lent – the life of the Church continues here at St. Paul during February with these activities:

***The first-ever St. Paul "Game Day" is being planned for Sunday, February 27, beginning at 3:00 p.m.*** A committee is being formed to plan an afternoon of fun and games (and refreshments, of course) for St. Paul members and friends of all ages. Watch the Sunday bulletin for more details.

***The Lutheranism 101 Bible Class*** continues to meet every Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. in the Church basement. Reading or owning the book is not a prerequisite. *Lutheranism 101* is an enjoyable and fast-paced review of our faith – what we believe and why we believe it – based entirely on God's Word revealed to us in Holy Scripture. Plan to join us next Sunday morning!



***The Season of Lent begins next month, so keep these dates in mind:***

- \* March 9 is Ash Wednesday, and a special Divine Service with imposition of ashes (optional) will be held at 7:00 p.m.
- \* April 17: Palm Sunday
- \* April 21: Maundy Thursday, with Divine Service at 7:00 p.m.
- \* April 22: Good Friday Service at 7:00 p.m.

# ***Congratulations***

... to all members of St. Paul Lutheran Church who are celebrating birthdays or wedding anniversaries during the month of February. Please send any additions or corrections to Barb Turner in the Church Office.



## **February Birthdays**

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Sarah Boyett    | 18 Susan Matthews  |
| 3 Madylyn Rowley  | 22 Bill Merrifield |
| 4 Nicole Clark    | 23 Buck Miller     |
| 7 Mart Amling     | 25 Kamden Temmen   |
| 7 Zophia Banning  | 26 Desiree Banning |
| 7 Carol Gordon    | 27 Matthew Schmitz |
| 12 Bailey Ambrose | 27 Judy Schramm    |
| 12 Anthony Smith  | 28 Betty Patrick   |
| 15 Steve England  |                    |

## **February Anniversaries**

- 1 Tom and LouAnn Horsley (8<sup>th</sup>)
- 4 Kim and Mary Ellen Kresin (27<sup>th</sup>)
- 17 Dean and Diane Hildebrand (10<sup>th</sup>)



## **Serving Our Lord in His House during February**

**Communion Assistant:** Buck Miller

**Elder on Duty:** Todd Bockewitz

**Altar Guild:** Mary Ellen Kresin, Cindy Schmitz

**Ushers:**

Adam Cross, Head Usher

Feb. 6: Wally Bingaman, Jerry Stone

Feb. 13: Larry Durbin, Kim Kresin

Feb. 20: Dan Lees, Wayne Miller

Feb. 27: Lynn Bishop, Jeff Bockewitz

**Acolytes:**

Feb. 6: Anna Simac, Josh Simac

Feb. 13: Christa Bingaman, Allison Kresin

Feb. 20: Mackenzie Bingaman, Josh Simac

Feb. 27: Christa Bingaman, Anna Simac

**Greeters:**

Feb. 6: Dan and Dodie Lees

Feb. 13: Roger and Irma Waddington

Feb. 20: Selma Horton, Sharon O'Brien

Feb. 27: Rich and Barb Amling

# February 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 6:30 Bible Class	2 9:00 Bible Class 5:30 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:30 Choir Rehearsal	3	4	5
6 9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class 10:15 Divine Service 11:30 Junior Confirmation	7	8 6:30 Bible Class	9 9:00 Bible Class 5:30 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:30 Choir Rehearsal	10	11	12
13 9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class 10:15 Divine Service 11:30 Junior Confirmation	14 6:30 Elders Meeting 7:30 Church Council	15 6:30 Bible Class	16 9:00 Bible Class 5:30 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:30 Choir Rehearsal	17	18	19
20 9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class 10:15 Divine Service 11:30 Junior Confirmation	21	22 6:30 Bible Class	23 9:00 Bible Class 5:30 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:30 Choir Rehearsal	24	25	26
27 9:00 Sunday School/Bible Class 10:15 Divine Service 11:30 Junior Confirmation 3:00 St. Paul Game Day	28 7:00 Ladies Guild					



*"Make Disciples of All Nations"*

Central Illinois District  
Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

**Central Illinois District President  
David Bueltmann  
will be St. Paul's special guest on  
Sunday, February 13**

Central Illinois District President David Bueltmann is a good friend and staunch supporter of St. Paul Pana, and we are blessed to have him as our guest Preacher during the Sunday, February 13 Divine Service. Prior to the Service, President Bueltmann will also conduct the Bible Class at 9:00 a.m. in the Church basement.

President Bueltmann was ordained in 1968 and has spent his entire ministry in the Central Illinois District (CID). He became President of CID in 1995 and is respected among fellow Council of Presidents members for his leadership, his strong confession of the Lutheran faith and his long-term support of Missions and Evangelism. The CID currently supports seven mission churches, four campus ministries, ministries among the hearing-impaired and developmentally disabled, prison ministries, and provides important financial support to our partner church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia.

Please give a warm welcome to President Bueltmann and his wife Charlotte when they join us at St. Paul on February 13!

