

Reflections on Ministry and Context  
**St Paul Lutheran & St Matthew Lutheran (1969)**

Nevada & Butler, MO

Completed:



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

*Congregations and Organizations in the Call Process are invited to expand their Ministry Site Profile (MSP) by reflecting on the several key aspects of ministry and context given below. You are encouraged to give short, thoughtful answers (a maximum of 250 words) on at least four of the seven topics. This form is optional unless specifically requested by a synod bishop. The form is submitted electronically and becomes a part of the Ministry Site's MSP.*

1. What key issues or concerns of our church and society are reflected in the ministry that is centered in your congregation or organization?

**At St. Paul Lutheran, an ever-present concern of our congregations is the continuing downward trend of church attendance. Perhaps a liturgical church service holds less appeal in our community; however, we still believe that a Christ-centered church with people who share the love of one another in Christ is important as we continue to proclaim this ministry throughout our community.**

**St. Matthew Lutheran's congregation is traditional, conservative, and enjoys the traditional Lutheran liturgy many of us experienced growing up. As the only ELCA Lutheran Church in Bates County, we are aging and our congregation is getting smaller but our faith continues to grow.**

2. How do the stewardship practices and allocation of financial resources of the congregation or organization reflect your priorities for mission?

**St. Paul Lutheran realizes the importance of global outreach by supporting the ELCA with a percentage of our monthly offerings. At the same time, we continue to serve our community through the Community Outreach soup kitchen, backpacks of love, YMCA Grocery Grab, and gleaned produce from area farms when possible.**

**St. Matthew Lutheran hopes our budget reflects our stewardship practices. We give as generously as we can to the Synod and we stepped up financially in our partnership with St. Paul, Nevada, MO, to call our interim pastor. Thrivent Action Team funds, provided by several members of St. Matthew Lutheran, have helped fund projects and mission work of the church. Due to our involvement with the Butler Ministerial Alliance, we receive Molten Trust Funds at year's end to distribute.**

3. In what ways is the membership of your congregation or organization similar or different from the people of the neighborhood in which you are located?

**St. Paul Lutheran sees all people as children of God and all are welcome in our churches. The rural Missouri communities where our churches are located are more conservative than urban areas and thus less receptive to the ELCA's position on some social issues and practices. We realize that some will not consider St. Paul or St. Matthew as their church.**

**St. Matthew Lutheran is a middle income church family and we are surrounded by low and middle income families. Many of our neighbors are retirement age, just like our congregation, but do not attend our church.**

4. Identify the three most significant or formative events in the history of your congregation or organization.

**St. Paul's history has been full of significant events since 1955 when a small group got together to start the church. One of the most formative events that has led to St. Paul being what it is today was hiring Reverend Richmond Anderson as pastor in 1975. Since he was the first non-resident pastor, the congregation learned to take care of**



many responsibilities independent of the pastor under his sound direction. The second event was the building of a new church facility beginning in 2001. This facility gave us space for a growing church, but instead of growing we gradually became smaller. The third formative event was yoking with another church to continue supporting a full-time pastor. We understand that is the case with many small Lutheran churches and we believe, with God's help, we can make the best of it.

St. Matthew's former pastor was with us for 8 years, which was a long time for us. We have a long history of interim pastors, many who only stayed with us two to three years. A few years ago we became less worried about how or if we were going to be able to "make budget" and gave in to faith to carry us forward with our mission. Thrivent Action Teams have made a positive impact on our ability to fund projects, help with community events, and upkeep of our church.

5. Describe the way the congregation or organization is currently involved in community and ecumenical partnerships. At one time St. Paul Lutheran was principally known for the annual St. Paul Salad Luncheon. This was a fund raiser in which a portion of the proceeds were given to a worthy cause in the community. When Pastor Chris Deines became our pastor, he encouraged more community involvement with our church. Before Covid19 hit, the adult Sunday School became participants in the Backpacks of Love program by providing lunches for qualified kids in the Nevada Middle School with nutritious meals on Friday afternoon so these young people would be guaranteed one good meal on the weekend. When the Backpacks of love was shut down due to Covid, we participated in the USDA Grocery Grab program organized by the local YMCA. There have been other programs including an intergenerational faith class for troubled teens at Hartland Hospital in Nevada and gleaning at several Mennonite farms for food for the Nevada Community Outreach. Once every other month we provide and serve Sunday lunch at the Community Outreach Kitchen.

St. Matthew is a member of the Butler Ministerial Alliance that provides emergency assistance to those in need. We assist with their fund raising efforts as well as join with the participating churches to provide community worship services during Lent and Thanksgiving. We also support the Hands Up Project run by the Carpenter's Cup. St. Matthew hosts an annual Prom Dress Sale giving girls a chance to sell/buy prom dresses or other dresses and accessories for upcoming dances and events. Our spring Spaghetti Dinner funds our Foster Family Appreciation Dinner. We provide a monthly meal to the Butler Youth Center during the school year and contribute to the purchase of Summer Pool Passes for the youth as well as support a local Teacher's Appreciation Day. We raise funds selling baked goods at the community fall festival, Hucksters Days and adopt kids with Toys for Tykes at Christmas.

6. Has your congregation or organization had significant conflict in recent history and, if so, what have you learned from that experience?

St. Paul has had some personal conflicts over the past ten years. It has caused some families to leave the church. What we have learned from this experience is that the pastor and the congregation have to be forgiving of each other and we should possibly take advantage of having a mutual ministry committee to facilitate communications. It would be helpful if the congregation would understand that they have an obligation to assist a new pastor regardless of the new pastor's previous experience.

St. Matthew has not experienced significant internal conflict in recent history. We did experience some issues with what appeared to be loitering around the south side of our building and in the parking lot a few years ago. Motion detecting lighting on the south side of the building has helped deter that activity.

7. Describe your physical facilities: construction date, purpose, capacity, date of last renovation, any deferred maintenance, and any plans for upgrading.



**The first St. Paul Lutheran Church was established in Nevada in 1955. The location at 1030 S. Clay Street was dedicated July 28, 1957. Groundbreaking for an addition to the Clay Street church was on November 20, 1977. In 2001 the groundbreaking was held for a new St. Paul Lutheran Church on South BB Hwy. The first service was held in the new church building in the summer of 2002. In 2017 the congregation decided to modify some of the Sunday School rooms in the new facility to create space for a Christian Pre-School run by one of the congregation members.**

**St. Matthew's church has been described by some as God's little cabin. Built in 1969, St. Matthew started as a "mission church" in 1970 and today, our little church remains basically the same. Weddings held at the church have seen well over 100 guests. Our annual Advent supper has seated ~80 individuals for dinner and songs of praise and glory. Recent upgrades include increased storage cabinets for the kitchen, new flooring in the foyer and bathrooms was laid and a new chip and seal coating was put on the parking lot.**