



ST. MATTHEW'S HOUSE

Touching Hearts. Transforming Lives.

What We Believe

Preface

St. Matthew's House is a Christian ministry inspired by a small Bible study. In the late 80s a group was reading the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, and began to prayerfully consider what it meant when Jesus said to his disciples:

“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. **35** For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, **36** I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.... **45** Truly I tell you, Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

The day after reading this passage, the Naples Daily News ran a story about the local homeless population which featured a picture of a man eating out of a dumpster. The group saw the story as an answer to prayers. God was showing them how they might be able to care for “the least of these.” Inspired to do what they could to help the homeless, this small group of Christians organized a feeding ministry that they operated out of an old firehouse. They named this soup kitchen St. Matthew's House.

Although St. Matthew's House has grown immensely in size and scope since then—it provides not just feeding, but housing, addiction recovery, jail chaplain service, and vocational training—all ministry activities are still guided by Christ's exhortation in the Gospel of Matthew to show love and care for those among us who are most vulnerable.

Throughout our history St. Matthew's House has worked closely with churches, synagogues and the twelve step fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. People seeking help through St. Matthew's House are encouraged to find a faith community and twelve step support group to grow in their spiritual life and recovery.

Christ Inspired

Following the example of Jesus Christ, of God's covenant love showing kindness and mercy, and His redemptive love extended to all, St Matthew's House endeavors to care for the most vulnerable among us. The Scriptures show that God in Christ – in both word and deed – provided hope and healing for those who were desperate for both, regardless of their background or personal beliefs. When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), He not only quenched her corporeal thirst, He also satisfied her deeper thirst for love

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Matthew 25:31-46



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and forgiveness. Similarly, in sharing the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), God demonstrated the potentialities of those outside the family of faith. The image and likeness of God in all flesh inspires compassion and care to others in need. All people are encouraged to demonstrate a radically intimate form of compassion, mercy, and care. The sole requirement of our neighbor to receive our care is their need...their hunger, thirst, imprisonment, addiction, homelessness, lostness.

The good news is that Christ provides hope and healing for all who desire it. At St. Matthew's House we offer this hope in the ways Jesus does, in word and in deed. When our most vulnerable neighbors – the hungry, homeless, incarcerated, sick and addicted – come to St. Matthew's House desperate for help, we aspire to demonstrate the love Christ shows to all.

This means that when the hungry come to us, we not only provide them with a meal, but we also offer them the sort of relationships that satisfy a deeper need of friendship and care. It means that the homeless who arrive at our doorstep receive not only shelter and a bed, but also kindness and community—Radical Hospitality. And, when the drug and alcohol addicted enter into our Justin's Place Recovery Program, they get not only sobriety and a new start, they get family, compassion, and discipline.

A great theologian once said, "Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love for which they crave."

At St. Matthew's House, we invite all people of goodwill in our community, regardless of belief or background to join us giving this look of love to our most vulnerable neighbors. It is joyful work to care for those in need as Christ did – and still does; both by satisfying outward needs and, more importantly, by attending to hearts and souls.

Christian Worldview

St. Matthew's House is a Christian ministry. As such, we are guided by the Scriptures, which we believe is.. "inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training, in righteousness; so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NRSV).

As a faith-based organization, we affirm the call of God to all people "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" to participate in the compassion and care of St. Matthew's House.