

Matthew and Kelley Weusthoff

Matthew's Childhood

Matthew grew up in Jennings and attended Our Lady of Good Counsel in Bellefontaine Neighbors. He described the parish as having a sense of community. He went to both church and school there and knew the families. The pastor, Father Don Wester, set a good strong example. He cultivated communities. Matthew said, "It was good for the whole parish to support each other in their faith."

There were lots of opportunities for community involvement and recreation, like Good Counsel's parish picnic every year, and field day in October for all the students. Father Don, the religious sisters, and the faculty did a great job of keeping faith at the center of everything.

The religious order, Apostles of the Sacred Heart, lived at Our Lady of Good Counsel. He remembers Sister Veronica, Sister Barbara, and Sister Jerilyn. He stated that there was much exposure to those in religious vocations. Matthew said, "It was good for vocation formation, even if someone didn't enter religious life."

Kelley's Childhood

Kelley attended Holy Infant in Ballwin for Kindergarten through eighth grade. She stated that she had good preparation for each sacrament. Kelley said, "Holy Infant was amazing."

She described First Reconciliation as "really poignant for me. I was nervous and had prepared a script as to what I wanted to say but then I felt at home in the confessional and the ability to be honest with him." Reconciliation grounds her. She went to confession at Ascension once and the priest said, "Welcome home." Kelley stated, "What it means to be Catholic. So meaningful."

Kelley attended Ursuline Academy in Kirkwood for high school. She stated, "I loved it. There was such a meaningful experience with Catholicism and I made life long friends."

Ursuline's motto is: "I will serve." Kelley said, "It spawned an interest in working with little ones. Great experience to participate in."

Careers

Matthew has worked as a mental health therapist for the past 12 years. He really enjoys working with individuals and couples for marriage counseling. He stated, "The outcome is rewarding." He described a very humbling comment. One couple told him that he saved their marriage. He said that they did the work and he just facilitated it.

Kelley attended Truman State University in Kirksville, majoring in Speech and Language Pathology. She has worked in a variety of settings throughout the last ten years, but is grateful for where God has currently called her to serve. She works in an early childhood special education setting with children three to five years of age who all present with either a speech or language delay.

Newman Center

Kelley was very involved with the Newman Center at Truman State. Kelley stated, "I can't accurately describe how profound that (the Newman Center) was for me in continuing to explore my faith." Her college roommate made it a point to talk about Mass and recommended the Newman Center, which she stated was so meaningful. They had Adoration at the Newman Center. She stated that it was great that they had that outlet for Adoration, and that they had the stability and availability.

The Newman Center was in a very small room. One classmate sang and another played the ukelele. Kelley said, "It was such a meaningful place of prayer and devotion. I learned the importance of continuing to seek out God in everyday life."

Youth groups were just starting when they were growing up. Matthew and Kelley wish that they had youth groups on the scale that they are now.

Joining Saint Peter Church

All the parishes that Matthew had a connection with had closed. These parishes were in North County. He stated, "It's a point of grief. I can't go back to my home parish."

Matthew moved to Saint Charles County for work. He loved the Saint Peter Church building; Saint Peter felt like home. It was reassuring that Saint Peter had been here since 1850. He felt like the parish would be around for a long time. At a family reunion, Matthew's family was reminiscing about parishes closing in North County. Matthew stated, "Not at Saint Peter because it's been here since 1850."

Kelley felt the same way about Saint Peter, even though she has wonderful memories of Holy Infant. She stated, "It feels real. People are genuine. There's so much devotion that you see when you're in church."

They've been to many churches. Matthew stated, "It's home here. It's on par with any other church."

They like worshipping in other churches when they travel. They always go to Mass. They love Saint Patrick in New York and they've been to Canada. But they can't go more than two weeks without going to Saint Peter. They miss it. Matthew stated, "It's like a beacon that draws us in."

Matthew and Kelley always go to Saint Peter on Christmas Eve for the 11:00 Mass. They come early for the 10:30 choir. "I'm pretty stubborn about going to Saint Peter." Usually, his parents and brother will join them. They love the church.

The renovations have been beautiful but they're glad they got married prior to the changes because the church had a unique feel. They have nostalgia for the old look with the red carpet. It's great that they're investing so much in its longevity. It stays maintained.

Getting Married and Marriage Preparation

Matthew and Kelley got married in 2018 at Saint Peter Church, where they had already become members. Fortunately, they got married before the scaffolding went up for the church painting. There were a few swatch paintings on the walls, though.

Wedding planning is stressful with planning for photography, catering, the banquet hall, and transportation. Their Marriage Preparation emphasized the Mass, marriage, and preparing for marriage, not just the wedding day. Outside of church, it's a wedding industry planning for the perfect day. Their marriage preparation emphasized that they're planning for a vocation and the lifestyle of marriage.

Matthew stated, "This parish in particular emphasized being prepared for the commitment of entering the vocation of marriage. It's a sacrament."

Involvement At Saint Peter

Kelley comes to Saint Peter for Adoration quite a bit. She described it as "Seeking out what is most important, which is Jesus." She also mentioned how she has come to appreciate how the scent of incense is able to immediately focus her thoughts on the Blessed Sacrament and create a sense of calm and a feeling of being grounded.

Adoration and Reconciliation ground her. It's quiet time alone with the priest or Jesus. Kelley said, "I would feel like I was missing out on something if I didn't have Catholic Reconciliation."

Matthew and Kelley both help out with the Christmas basket delivery organized by Saint Vincent dePaul and find it really enjoyable. Donations are made during Advent. On the Saturday before Christmas, volunteers put baskets together with food, gift cards, meat, and supplies based upon how many people live in the household. There's a big turnout of volunteers. There are so many volunteers that Matthew and Kelley have only delivered to two families each year.

Matthew has been helping out with the food pantry for about five years. Someone asked him and he also saw a notice in the bulletin that Saint Vincent dePaul needed help. He volunteers for one week out of a month. Matthew described it as rewarding. He said, "It's great to see families that you help. They are very grateful and appreciative. It's great to be able to do that. I know that I'm helping somebody else."

The bulk of the donations come from the Thanksgiving food drive. It's such a great turnout and it keeps the pantry stocked for a long time. Quite a few families are helped throughout the year. Kim Setzekorn coordinates the food pantry.

Matthew also volunteers at the sausage supper. He said, "It's fun and everybody enjoys it. The community comes together. It's a great fundraiser."

Meaning of Saint Peter

Matthew and Kelley described the new priests as great. They had big shoes to fill with Father Seper. Each of the priests takes time to speak with people after Mass. They're very friendly. They're impressed when a priest knows their name, especially since there are so many parishioners with the combined parishes of Saint Peter and Saint Charles Borromeo.

Matthew had a message for people whose parishes have closed. "Saint Peter offers reassurance. Be assured that this is a parish with a long standing history and will be around for a long time. Welcome home."