



THE VOICE

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH, AVON, CT November 2020

"In Christ, we are digging deep, reaching out, changing lives."

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If you need to stop by the office for any reason, please call (860) 673-3301 and our new Admin Diane will be happy to receive you. You can mail contributions and communications to the church via USPS and drop off donations for outside organizations in the bins by the office door. Thank you!

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Tuesdays Together in November: Virtual Prayer, 10:00 a.m.

November 1: All Saints' Day

November 5 & 19: Bible Study: 10:00 a.m.

November 6, 13, & 20: Women's Fellowship, 9:30 a.m. via Zoom

November 8 & 22: Sunday School: 10:00 a.m.

November 10: Centering Prayer, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

November 15: In-person worship resumes at 11:00 a.m. service.

- Sunday School Students help lead worship at 11:00 a.m.

- December VOICE submissions deadline.

November 19: Centering Prayer, 2:00 p.m. via Zoom

November 21: Men's Breakfast 8:30 a.m. via Zoom

November 22: Christ the King Sunday

November 26: Thanksgiving Day

November 29: First Sunday of Advent

Please join us on our website for virtual worship!

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

November is the month we often reflect on what we have to be thankful for. It is also the month most churches plan ahead for next year with a stewardship campaign. As Thanksgiving and the beginning of the holiday season approaches, a good practice is to reflect on the blessings and challenges of the past year. **A powerful exercise is to write down as many blessings you can think of in two minutes.** Use a timer. The goal is to write as many things as possible, even if you wouldn't normally consider them a "blessing". This practice forces you to think quickly and include many average things you may not have considered a blessing in the past. Rereading the list after you've finished can make you laugh out loud, as well as help you recognize a new sense of gratitude for things you didn't appreciate before.

This can be a useful exercise for churches too! As a congregation we have been extremely blessed this year. Even amidst a global pandemic, **we were able to pay off our mortgage** thanks to an incredible and timely gift from the Jensen-Steinberg family and amazing support from across the congregation to match it. It puts us in solid shape for the future. We were also blessed by the gift of technology so that we could continue to worship together in spite of not being able to meet in-person. Our **online Zoom services** have added a new relational element and connection between members of St. Matthew, with each worship service ending with a period of reflection and fellowship in Zoom breakout rooms. New ministries like **Tuesdays Together** grew out of the quarantine period, while existing groups continued to meet online. **Worship moved outdoors** this fall. It was not only a blessing to be together in-person again, but outdoor worship added a wonderful opportunity to experience the beauty of God's creation while we worshiped. **There is a lot to be thankful for this year!**

That said, this year has also been full of challenges. Pastors and staff have needed to learn new ways of holding worship online. Groups that once met in-person have needed to postpone indefinitely or move to online formats. We felt the financial impact of outside groups no longer using our facility. Our children have had to adapt to new ways of learning, and just about every job has had to make adjustments because of the pandemic. Stress, depression and loneliness have increased across the country with the need for social distancing. Many jobs were lost or hours cut back. Many have been impacted financially. The coronavirus brought the world to a halt and we are still learning how to handle this new normal and are concerned about rising cases in the winter months.

(continued...)

ST. MATTHEW MISSION STATEMENT: *St. Matthew Lutheran Church is a worshipping community called to proclaim God's love for all and to grow spiritually together. Challenged by Jesus' example, we strive to connect people of all ages, abilities, and needs, and to nurture them to be disciples of Christ. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we reach out to the wider community and welcome our neighbors to a life of worship, preaching, teaching, Christian care, service, and spiritual growth.*

(...continued) And so it is in the midst of recognizing both the blessings and challenges of this past year that we invite you into a time of reflection. **As we approach the end of the year, we ask that you reflect on and pray over what you will commit to the ministry of St. Matthew in 2021.** You will be receiving a formal stewardship letter in the coming weeks, but before then we ask that you prayerfully consider your financial commitment to our family of faith. Thank you for helping make this a year of blessing and of overcoming challenges. **Thank you for your commitment to this faith community and our mission of digging deep, reaching out, and changing lives!**

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Brian

WORSHIP THIS MONTH

You might not realize it, but November is an exciting month for worship! The month begins with our observation of All Saints' Day, when we remember those who have died in the Lord, particularly those who have died in our community in the past year. This year our celebration is on the actual day of All Saints', November 1. We will lift up the names of St. Matthew members and loved ones who have died in worship. The fourth Sunday of November, November 22, is the last Sunday of the Church Year, known as Christ the King Sunday. On this Sunday we lift up Jesus as loving judge and wise sovereign, and give thanks for his cosmic rule. And this year, the first Sunday of Advent is in November as well, on November 29. If all those festivals were not enough, we will also be hearing short impact stories, and parishioners sharing about the 'why' of their faith during worship. Join us at 9:00 a.m. on Zoom, or 11:00 a.m. in person!

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Greetings fellow members,

From the *Growing Our Ministry Together* Capital Campaign Committee, we would like to say THANK YOU! Thank you for your prayerful gifts to the campaign over the last 7 months. We have substantially accomplished our goal! When the Committee decided to move ahead with the campaign at the start of our first ever global pandemic, we had faith that our members would help in any way they could. We are happy to say we are only \$15,000 away from our goal. God is great!!! We were and are all in this together. If you would like to still participate in giving to the capital campaign, please mail a check to the church made out to St. Matthew, with "Capital Campaign" clearly written on the memo line, or contact the office with your pledge to be fulfilled by June 2022.

Again, thank you for taking this journey with us and now we'll be able to GROW OUR MINISTRY TOGETHER!

- Missy Lindquist, for the *Growing Our Ministry Together* Capital Campaign

LOOKING FOR THE GIFT FOR THE PERSON WHO HAS EVERYTHING?

Look no further than ELCA Good Gifts!

You can give the gift that keeps on giving with a charitable contribution to the ELCA Hunger "Good Gifts" catalogue. For example, \$30 purchases a piglet for a family in need in honor of your loved one. Each gift comes with an ornament or card that notes the gift 'passed on' to others. Check it out at

<https://goodgifts.elca.org>.

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

- The Reopening Task Force attended the October Council Meeting and reported that in-person outdoor services were going well as were some other small group events.
- John Pearson, Task Force member, reported on his review of the air filtration system at the church and steps that will be needed in that area in preparation for services and other activities in the building.



MEN'S GROUP

Men's breakfast will meet virtually on Saturday November 21st, 8:30 a.m.—9:30 a.m. This is the third Saturday of the month, since the fourth Saturday falls on Thanksgiving weekend. Join us with your coffee or breakfast. An email will be sent out with the Zoom link prior to the meeting. Newcomers always welcome!



SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School will meet at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday November 8th and November 22nd. Also, Sunday Schoolers will help to lead worship the third Sunday of each month. This month this will be Sunday November 15th. See you then!

Tuesdays Together

Every Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. a group of St. Matthew members meets on Zoom for our Tuesdays Together session. It is a period of devotions, prayer, and fellowship. We cover something different every week, so newcomers will be able to jump right into the conversation and there's absolutely no commitment to come every week. Just come once and check it out. Hope you'll join us!



CENTERING PRAYER

Centering Prayer will meet our typical second Tuesday of the month, which will be Tuesday November 10th at 7:00 p.m. And since Thanksgiving is the fourth Thursday, we will instead meet the third Thursday of the month, which will be Thursday November 19th at 2:00 p.m. Both sessions will be on Zoom; a link will be sent out before the meeting. Newcomers always welcome!

GOOD THINGS: God is good to us, even in the midst of struggle.

- † Carol Reider finished the weeding around the church. Along with Paula Robinson and Roy Zurell, she tamed our chaos and beautified our beds. Thank you!
- † Five dogs and one cat joined in worship at outdoor worship on St. Francis Day, and many more in homes during Zoom worship! We said a special blessing for the animals we love, and raised our prayers for the care and well being of all creation.
- † Pastor Brian presided at two baptisms this month! Evan Grow and Perry Hasson have joined us as fellow members of the Body of Christ. The Grows are friends of the Coslett family, and Perry has been a regular worshipper for a year at St Matthew. Welcome, Evan and Perry!
- † St Matthew provided a meal at Grace Lutheran in October—mac-n-cheese and meatballs. Due to the pandemic, the meal was prepared by Costco and delivered by George Reider. Your generosity makes this possible—thank you!
- † Beautiful strains of Bach Cantata 51 floated from St. Matthew's backyard on October 11, praising God in the midst of God's wondrous creation! Soprano and flute soloists, accompanied by string quartet and continuo, performed the cantata in the midst of our Sunday worship service, while our musician Dick chanted the liturgy in the style of Bach.
- † Our congregation is making a difference in the fight against hunger by collecting food for Gifts of Love, the Canton Food Bank, and Grace Lutheran Church in Hartford. A number of members give to ELCA world hunger through St. Matthew, by sending donations in the envelopes provided along with the weekly giving envelopes. Still others make direct donations to ELCA world hunger through the ELCA website. St. Matthew's gifts have been especially essential during this time of global pandemic. If you would like to learn more, visit www.elca.org/hunger. Thank you!
- † Confirmation class began this month, with 12 students and three parent volunteers. Class will be hybrid in style, with one in-person event per month. The event for October is making cards for the homebound and those who have lost a loved one in the past year, in honor of All Saints' Day (November 1). The rest of the instruction will be asynchronous at home study and Zoom check-in meetings taught by Pastor Julie and Pastor Brian.
- † Pastor Brian hand delivered Spark Picture Bibles to preschoolers and Spark Bibles to third graders. It has been a great opportunity to visit with families and even get an occasional garden tour.
- † A number of people pre-paid their pledges early in the year, giving us a cushion in our operating fund. We have been slowly tapping those funds over the months. As the year draws to a close, we are grateful for your continued generosity, despite uncertain times. Your faithfulness makes a difference!

God is Good, All the Time!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 ALL SAINTS' DAY 9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom 11:00 Outdoor Worship	2 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Finance Committee	3 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom 7:00 Church Council	4	5 10:00 Bible Study 7:00 First Communion Class via Zoom	6	7
8 ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER SUNDAY 9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom 10:00 Sunday School via Zoom 11:00 In-Person Worship (TBA)	9 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Confirmation In-Person Event	10 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom 7:00 Centering Prayer	11	12	13	14 10:00 First Communion Service-Outdoors
15 VOICE Deadline 9:00 Virtual Worship live on Zoom 11:00 In-Person Worship (TBA)	16 1:00 Staff Meeting	17 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom	18	19 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	20	21 8:30 Men's Breakfast via Zoom
22 CHRIST THE KING 9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom 10:00 Sunday School via Zoom 11:00 In-Person Worship (TBA)	23 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Zoom Confirmation Meeting	24 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom	25	26 THANKSGIVING DAY	27	28
29 9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom 11:00 In-Person Worship (TBA)	30 1:00 Staff Meeting	Notes:				

November 2020

Please join us on our website for virtual worship! All in-person events are tentative and may be changed. If you need to stop by the office for any reason, please call (860) 673-3301, and our new Admin Diane will be happy to receive you.



November 2020



SAINT MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH
224 Lovely Street, Avon, Connecticut 06001-4018

WELCOME, DIANE, OUR NEW ADMIN!

We are pleased to welcome **Diane Oates** to our staff as Church Administrator. She began on October 26. Diane has many years of administrative experience in the legal and education fields, and has served as bookkeeper in both churches and Christian schools. Most recently, she has served as Office Administrator at Trinity Church in Windsor. Diane holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Design & Resource Management from the University of Connecticut and resides in East Granby with her husband, Aaron. They have two adult sons, newly-married Elijah (22) and Ethan (18), a freshman at Messiah University. In her free time, Diane enjoys walking, reading, sewing, crocheting, puzzles, and cooking with her husband. Feel free to send a selfie to office@stmatthewavon.org or call the office at (860) 673 - 3301 to introduce yourself and give Diane a warm welcome!

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN COMING TO INDOOR, IN-PERSON WORSHIP

We will be welcoming members of our congregation back to worship in the sanctuary on Sunday, November 15! We have missed being together in our worship space, and we have missed you! While we want to see you as soon as possible, we know that loving our neighbor means practicing the best in social distancing, and that some parishioners will elect to continue with online worship. In fact, Zoom worship at 9am will be our principal worship service throughout the pandemic. For those who are ready to worship in-person, however, we offer the following protocols.

Pre-registration. Everyone who attends in-person worship inside will need to pre-register by 9am Sunday morning. Pre-registration is necessary as seating is limited to ensure proper safety protocols and that there will be room available for all who wish to attend.

Pre-registration can be done by one of the following methods:

Online via the link in the weekly worship email.

SMLC website at www.stmatthewavon.org.

Call the church office at 860-673-3301 by Friday at noon.

Email the church office prior to Friday at noon at office@stmatthewavon.org.

Health Assessment. Please complete a personal health assessment at home before leaving for church. If you answer yes to **any** of the following questions, we ask that you stay home and attend church another Sunday to keep yourself and others safe.

Have you had close contact with a person with a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19?

In the past 72 hours, have you had any of the following?

Fever of 100.0° F or greater, OR

New cough OR new sore throat, OR

New diarrhea OR new nausea or vomiting, OR

New respiratory distress (shortness of breath or fast breathing), OR

New chills OR new repeated shaking with chills, OR

New muscle aches OR headache, OR

New loss of smell or taste?

If you have a positive diagnosis for Covid-19, contact the church office immediately.

Arrival. All parishioners will park using every other parking space. All parishioners (unless 3 yrs. of age or under) must wear a mask and put it on before leaving their car. Keep your coat and belongings with you, as coat closets will not be available.

Please enter by the north door, nearest the sanctuary. Lines marked along the sidewalk will assist with social distancing. Parishioners will be greeted by an usher outside the north church door who will check you in. Plan to arrive 15 minutes before the service begins to allow time for check in. Ushers will seat parishioners in the sanctuary.

Narthex/Entryway. Once inside the church doors, you will see hand sanitizer and reminders to keep at least 6 feet apart from other parishioners at all times. Face masks covering the mouth and nose are required during the entirety of the worship service. **(continued...)**

(...continued)

Seating. An usher will bring you to a seat in the sanctuary, spaced 9 feet from other parishioners. Bulletins, hymnals, and other high touch items in the sanctuary will be removed. We encourage parishioners to print a bulletin accessed in the weekly worship email or from the website and bring it along, or use a smart phone to access the bulletin for use during worship.

Offering. An offering plate will be available on a table at the rear of the church. People may place their offerings there on their way into the sanctuary.

The Service. The worship service will be about 30 minutes long, either a Service of the Word with scripture, preaching and prayer, or a streamlined Service of Holy Communion. In addition, organ and other instrumental music will accompany our worship, along with singing by a cantor. Parishioners will stay at their seat until the end of the service. We will not be sharing congregational singing at this time.

Departing. Parishioners will be excused by an usher, and exit from the north at the front of the sanctuary (the pulpit side) or by filing out the way they came in, maintaining at least six feet of distance between themselves. Parishioners will exit directly outside, and may visit freely with others in the parking lot (with proper social distancing). There will be no coffee hour.

Restrooms. The restrooms near the office will be open, but will be single occupancy. Please use the flip sign on the outside of the restroom door to indicate whether the restroom is occupied. The water fountain will not be available for use.

Other Areas of the Church. Areas beyond the sanctuary, narthex/entryway, and hallway leading to the bathroom will be closed. The church office will not be open on Sunday mornings.

Thank you! Thank you for your patience and understanding as we navigate the changes and challenges of this time. The Holy Spirit is active among us as we practice these practical ways to love one another as Christ loved us.

Don't forget... 'Fall Back' is November 1st!

Daylight Savings Time ends at 2am on November 1st, so don't forget to turn your clocks back one hour before bed on October 31st.

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