



THE VOICE

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

June 2021

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



Please join us for St. Matthew's REOPENING CELEBRATION

SUNDAY, JUNE 20

Worship in the Sanctuary, 9am

This service will be livestreamed for virtual audience

**Light refreshments, fellowship, and
games outdoors, 10am**

SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Beginning the week of June 20, 2021

Sundays at 9 a.m. indoor and
livestreamed

Wednesdays at 7 p.m. outdoors

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Jason Lindquist, President	Kevin Reichler
Fred Fenn, Vice President	George Reider
Lanelle Gallo, Secretary	George Spoering
Debbie Steinberg, Asst. Treasurer	Dan Tuve
Bette McIntire	Ben Wright
Jack Pietrick	Pastor Julie Reuning- Scherer
Bill Parchen	Pastor Brian Rajcok

*For contact information, our online church
directory is available to all members. Please
reach out to the office for the code to access the
directory.*

STAFF:

Julie Reuning-Scherer, Lead Pastor
Brian Rajcok, Associate Pastor
Richard Silbereis, Director of Music
Diane Oates, Church Administrator
Roy Zurell, Sexton
Steven Smolnik, Publisher

St. Matthew Lutheran Church
224 Lovely Street
Avon, CT 06001-4018
(860) 673-3301

Website: www.stmatthewavon.org

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

¹² So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being...¹⁷ The LORD executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. ¹⁹ You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Deuteronomy 10:2-13, 17-19

I have been thinking lately about expectations. The people of Israel were given the gift of God's law. The Ten Commandments and the other laws were God's expectations for the people of Israel as God's chosen people. The essence of these expectations is summed up here in chapter 10 of Deuteronomy: to love the LORD and to keep God's commandments. Loving God and keeping God's law had many applications, but one that gets mention over and over is **the special protection the people were to give the most vulnerable of society: the widow, the orphan, and the stranger.** In a society where women and children had no status or ability to own land or businesses, those unattached to a male to provide for them were in danger. Likewise, travelers and migrants were dependent on the hospitality of others, since there were no motels, YMCAs, or government assistance. A key benchmark for how faithfully the Israelites were keeping God's law was how they were treating these vulnerable people in their midst.

During the pandemic, we have had to adjust to many changes in expectations. Some of the expectations were mandated: government shutdowns, business protocols, quarantine requirements. Other expectations have been negotiated, such as who is in the 'pandemic pod,' whether you choose to shop or travel, choosing remote or in-person learning. As the dangers of the pandemic lessen, we once again negotiate changing expectations. The state of Connecticut has removed restrictions, and the CDC has stated that fully immunized people can remove their masks in many public settings.

I believe it is important as Christians to consider the responsibilities incumbent upon us from the government, but also the expectations of our faith. For while it may be safe for many of us to return to pre-pandemic habits, there are among us vulnerable people, as there were for the Israelites. We have people who are not yet eligible for immunization. We have (continued...)

We Are Here For You The pastors are fully vaccinated and making in-person visits. Please call the office if you have a pastoral need.

(...continued) among us immunocompromised persons. We gather for public worship, where we welcome all comers, those we know, and those we do not know, those who are vaccinated and those who are not. **Our call as Christians is not to let these vulnerable people fend for themselves, but to be willing to prioritize their needs in order to create a space that is as safe as it can be for everyone.**

The Reopening Task Force and the Council are continuing to make appropriate adjustments to our practices and protocols for worship and gathering. We are returning to more 'normal' experiences. But we may be more conservative in our approach than some other communities and settings, out of our sense of Christian care for the needs of others. The Reopening Task Force and the Council will continue to communicate regularly with the congregation and encourage your questions and feedback.

A wise pastor once told me that a congregation's Christian faith is measured by how well they treat their homebound, their children, and visitors. I think the same is true for us. As we consider the needs of others, especially the most vulnerable in our midst, we express our love of God with all our heart and soul.

Pastor Julie

REOPENING TASK FORCE UPDATE

The Reopening Task Force (RTF) is very pleased to announce next steps for expanding in-person worship and fellowship activities.

The State of Connecticut's latest guidance for religious gatherings, effective May 19th, 2021, has been relaxed for indoor and outdoor worship, allowing for numbers that can be "safely accommodated".

Beginning on June 20th (Father's Day), the sanctuary will be open for 9 a.m. indoor Sunday worship. Please register if you plan to attend as we have limited seating at this time.

For the time being, mask wearing and social distancing will still be expected for all over the age of 3 years who attend the in-person sanctuary service. We are taking this approach at this time to continue to ensure our more vulnerable populations, including the unvaccinated and children, are safe and protected. The Task Force will continue to assess this approach as all age categories become eligible for vaccination and recommend revisions to our protocols as needed.

Zoom services will be replaced once live streaming technology via YouTube is available. **St. Matthew will maintain its commitment to an ongoing virtual option for worship for those who prefer it or who cannot attend in-person.**

Outdoor worship will be offered on Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. through June 13, and at 7pm on Wednesday evenings beginning June 24th, weather permitting.

Mask wearing and social distancing are recommended but not required for fully vaccinated individuals for outdoor services and related outdoor Church activities. However we encourage all to wear masks as they arrive and leave to maximize the protection of all in our congregation.

Small group ministries and committees may now meet indoors and outdoors.

Masks will still be required for all indoor activities.

Please contact Diane at the office to reserve space in the building or outdoors.

The church building opened to the public on May 24th, 2021. The building is now open during office hours, Monday – Friday 9am – 4pm. Please ring the office doorbell for admittance if the door is locked.

The Reopening Task Force will continue to monitor the rapidly evolving guidance from CDC and State of Connecticut and will provide recommendations to Council as additional updates become warranted.



FIRST COMMUNION Fifth grade students will receive First Communion on Sunday, June 6 at the 11:00 a.m. outdoor service. Congratulations to Lindsay Bender, Brooke Cody, Brooke Mehler, Ellie Mehler, Mia Mehler, and Maddie Trimble!

YOUTH GROUP

Summer Mission Trip! Youth group will be travelling to North Carolina this summer for a trip of mission and fun. It will be from July 31 – August 6. Let Pastor Brian know ASAP if you are interested!

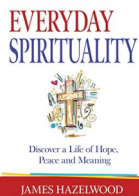
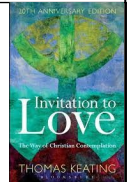


SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School will not be meeting over the summer. But we will be back to in-person classes this fall! Please reach out to the office if you are interested in supporting this crucial ministry.

CENTERING PRAYER

Centering prayer group meets every Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. and every Thursday at 2:00 p.m. on Zoom. We are currently reading *Invitation to Love* by Thomas Keating. Contact Pastor Brian or the church office and we'll send you the Zoom link and get you a book!

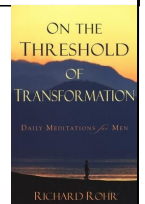


TUESDAYS TOGETHER

Tuesdays Together continues to meet every Tuesday morning 10:00-10:30 a.m. on Zoom. We are currently reading Bishop Hazelwood's book *Everyday Spirituality*. Contact the office or Pastor Brian if you would like a copy. And even if you aren't reading the book, you are always welcome to join us any Tuesday!

MEN'S GROUP

Men's group will meet on Zoom Saturday June 26th 8:30-9:30 a.m. We are reading Richard Rohr's *On the Threshold of Transformation: Daily Meditations for Men*. Copies of this daily meditation book are available for free to anyone who would like one, just come to church and pick up a copy. This book is the basis of our discussions this year.



BIBLE STUDY Bible Study meets every first and third Thursday at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom. This month that will be June 3 and June 17. A link will appear in St. Matthew's weekly Constant Contact for all who wish to attend. Newcomers always welcome!

GOOD THINGS:

In May there were a lot of good things going on at St Matthew!

- ✚ The church reopened to the public on Monday, May 24th. Members can now come in and out, groups can meet in-person, and fully vaccinated individuals can attend outdoor worship without masks.
- ✚ We had two Baptisms in May. We welcomed Sloan Zammett and Emilia Person as the newest members of the Body of Christ!
- ✚ Five youth affirmed their baptisms on Pentecost Sunday, May 23rd. Bryce Krodel, Hannah Lindquist, Jon Pascavis, Danny Stickles, and Ian Trimble are now confirmed and fully adult members of St. Matthew. Congratulations!
- ✚ Sunday School met twice on Zoom for our final Sunday School classes of the school year. We are excited to plan for fall in-person classes!
- ✚ On Saturday, May 1st, St. Matthew served as a rest stop for the Connecticut Cycling Advancement Program. St. Matthew members handed out water bottles and snacks to the young cyclists as their bike route took them past St. Matthew. It was a nice way to start connecting to the community again after the year of pandemic.
- ✚ Longtime member Shirley Slattery turned 100 on May 17th!

God is good, all the time!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
June 2021		1 10:00 Tuesdays at 10 6:00 Centering Prayer	2	3 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	4	5 4:00 Zoom Worship Rehearsal
6 9:00 Virtual Worship with Holy Communion via Zoom 11:00 Outdoor Worship Service with First Communion	7 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Finance Committee	8 10:00 Tuesdays at 10 6:00 Centering Prayer 7:00 Church Council	9	10 2:00 Centering Prayer	11	12 4:00 Zoom Worship Rehearsal
13 9:00 Virtual Worship via Zoom 11:00 Outdoor Worship Service	14 1:00 Staff Meeting	15 VOICE DEADLINE 10:00 Tuesdays at 10 6:00 Centering Prayer	16	17 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	18	19
20 9:00 Indoor & Livestreamed Worship with Holy Communion 10:00 Reopening Celebration	21 1:00 Staff Meeting	22 10:00 Tuesdays at 10 6:00 Centering Prayer	23 7:00 p.m. Outdoor Worship Service	24 9:00 a.m. Staff Retreat 2:00 Centering Prayer	25	26 8:30 Men's Breakfast via Zoom
27 9:00 Indoor & Livestreamed Worship 10:15 Unbinding the Gospel-Module 1 (Hall of the Evangelists)	28 1:00 Staff Meeting	29 10:00 Tuesdays at 10 6:00 Centering Prayer	30 7:00 p.m. Outdoor Worship Service			

June 2021



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Operating Income:

- Offering income was \$37K higher than budget YTD due primarily to prepayments of pledges (note the straight-line budget was adjusted in February to account for holdover pledges from 2020).
- The budget included a \$37,500 transfer from Endowment that we have not yet requested.
- Total YTD Operating Income was \$7.4K lower than budget as the higher income partially offset the lower money received from Endowment.

Operating Expenses:

- Total YTD Operating Expenses were \$1.7K lower than budget, with most categories being below budget.
- Compensation expense was higher than budget due to timing as the budget had May as a three-payroll month vs. April.
- Property was right on budget, with various line items better or worse due to the timing of expenses. We'll be requesting reimbursement from Endowment for the \$6.3K in HVAC expenses incurred year to date as this is part of their amounts set aside for internal distributions.
- The insurance premium for the property/liability renewal is slightly higher than budgeted amount. Workers' Compensation renewed at a slightly lower rate than budgeted.

Net Operating Fund Activity:

- Net Operating Activity was negative \$25K for the month and positive \$19.9K YTD vs. the budget of \$25.6K YTD, due to the items noted above. Note that net income would have been \$32K higher than budget had we requested and received the funds from Endowment. As noted above, this is due to the prepayment of pledges.

Cash and Restricted Cash:

- We continued to receive Capital Campaign contributions as people fulfill their pledges.
- The Endowment external contributions approved at the annual meeting were distributed in April, with the exception of \$5,000 for Grace Lutheran Church, which will be distributed for a specific project.

Loans:

- The balance of the loan from Endowment is \$12,454.60 at January 31st.
- We are working with People's to submit our application for PPP loan forgiveness and expect the full amount of the loan to be forgiven.
- We have determined that St. Matthew is not eligible to receive a grant under the second round of PPP loans.



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

This will be a busy month with Reopening, Reuniting & Renewing! The Marketing and Communications Committee has some great things to share at our Reopening Celebration on June 20 at 10 a.m. Keep a look out for some exciting news!



COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Our last Council meeting was filled with hope as we all explored ways to grow and expand who we are as a faith community. We talked about our "neighbors" and how we can experiment with a variety of ways to meet them. Music, service venues and even special projects were discussed.

Our discussions supported the theme of a recent sermon: "I am the vine, you are the branches, those who abide in me and I in them, bear much fruit." This also connects to the work that has been done with our marketing task force and our vision of digging deep, reaching out, changing lives.

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.*

CANTON FOOD BANK

P. O. Box 374 – 55 River Road

Collinsville, CT 06022-0374

Dear Pastor Julie,

We gratefully acknowledge St. Matthew's recent donation of \$2,000 from the endowment fund.

We have all been through a year when there seemed to be something new to worry about every week; but, because of people like you, food insecurity never had to be one of them.

With your help, not to mention your prayers of support, your congregation has played a large part in continuing to make this a healthier, happier community that takes care of its own.

Sincerely,

Karen Adajian
Treasurer



Town of Simsbury

754 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Community and Social Services Department

Dear Pastor Julie,

On behalf of Simsbury's Community and Social Services Department, I would like to thank you and your congregation for your very generous donation to our department's programs.

During this COVID-19 crisis, many of our families are struggling to meet their nutritional needs. Your thoughtfulness helps us serve them in this time of great uncertainty.

On behalf of the people whose lives you all have touched by your kindness, I thank you.

Very truly yours,

Kristen Formanek
Kristen Formanek, LCSW
Director



Over a Century of Commitment to Hartford's Children

April 14, 2021

Pastor Julie Reuning-Scherer
Pastor
St. Matthew Lutheran Church
224 Lovely Street, Route 177
Avon, CT 06001-4018

Dear Paster Reuning-Scherer:

On behalf of everyone at Camp Courant, thank you for your gift of \$1,000.00. Your donation will directly support some of Hartford's most at-risk 5-12 year olds. Camp Courant has provided a free summer camp experience for Hartford children for 126 summers, and as we look ahead to summer 2021, we know that the campers we serve will need Camp Courant more than ever. With more than a dozen educational programs, two meals per day, and a safe, fun environment to learn and grow, we are getting ready to welcome campers back to in-person camp.

Camp Courant's mission has always been to provide a safe, fun, outdoor setting for Hartford's youth to explore their surroundings outside the City. Camp Courant provides an environment for our campers to experience new and exciting adventures, achieve life-long friendships, all made possible because of your support.

Your generous contribution in support of Hartford's youth entitles you to be included in our donor recognition club, **The Camp Courant Family Tree**. If you prefer your donation to remain anonymous, please call us at (860) 244-2835 or write to us at the address below.

Your contribution will be acknowledged in the Hartford Courant and the Annual Report as follows:

St. Matthew Lutheran Church

We are looking forward to our 127th season in June 2021. Stay tuned for opportunities to visit us!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Corrienne Gagliardi Chipello". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Corrienne Gagliardi Chipello
Executive Director & CEO

P.S. The above letter will serve as written confirmation that no goods or services were received in exchange for this gift. Please keep this letter with your tax records to substantiate your charitable contribution. If your company provides matching gifts as a benefit to its employees, please forward their matching gift form to us.

Hartford's Camp Courant

285 Broad Street ♦ Hartford, CT 06115 ♦ Tel: 860.244.2835 ♦ Fax: 860.244.2859 ♦ www.campcourant.org



233 Main Street | New Britain, CT 06051 | P 860.826.1358 | F 860.229.6575 | cmhacc.org

April 20, 2021

Pastor Brian Rajcok
St. Matthew Lutheran Church
224 Lovely Street
Avon, CT 06001



*Your support helped 7,500
children, families and adults find
Recovery last year.*

Dear Pastor Rajcok:

CMHA has received the generous \$1,000 gift check dated April 5, 2021, from St. Matthew Lutheran Church.

We greatly appreciate your choosing to donate to CMHA through the Church's endowment fund. Your support will further enable CMHA to provide high quality behavioral health care services for those who cannot afford to pay, especially during these ongoing, uncertain times.

Your funding will help us to continue providing the life-saving, quality care and treatment that our community members need and deserve. The kindness and support we receive from people and organizations such as St. Matthew Lutheran Church is what makes CMHA's mission possible.

Thank you for helping to fund CMHA's vital work as we provide support and make Recovery possible for our neighbors.

Sincerely,

Raymond J. Gorman
President and CEO