



THE VOICE

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

May 2020

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

STAFF:

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Sunday Worship Services are canceled through May 17th and the church is closed at least through May 20th. Please join us on our website for virtual worship!

DATES TO REMEMBER:

The office will continue to be closed through at least May 20th. All events after that date are tentative and may be changed.

All Tuesdays in May: Virtual Prayer, 10 AM
All Fridays in May: Virtual Women's Fellowship, 9:30 AM

May 7: Virtual Bible Study, 10 AM

May 15: June VOICE submissions deadline

May 21: Virtual Bible Study, 10 AM

May 22: Fourth Friday at Grace, 5 PM

May 23: Men's Breakfast, 8:30 AM (*in person, or virtual, TBD*)

St. Matthew Clean-Up Day, 9 AM – *subject to church reopening.*



A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

The past month and a half has been an unprecedented time for our country and the world. While we are looking forward to being together in person again, in the meantime we are grateful for the gift of technology that helps us stay connected. This period of social distancing seems to be a crash course for churches around the world to utilize modern technology, and I can already sense how this time of quarantine is helping us recognize our true priorities and put life in perspective. I'm hopeful that we as a congregation, the church global, and humanity in general will come out of this more aware of our interdependence and with a deeper sense that we are one human family all in this together.

For the first several weeks of the quarantine we hired a professional to record our services. The week after Easter we moved to a live Zoom worship format Sundays at 9:00 a.m. We are also connecting once every Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m. for all who want to join. The women's group is meeting on Zoom weekly Fridays at 9:30 a.m. Bible Study is meeting virtually every first and third Thursday at 10:00 a.m. The men's group continues to have our fourth Saturday breakfast together online. Groups like choir and centering prayer also met together using Zoom. And Sunday School met online on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and is meeting from now until the end of the quarantine at 10:30 a.m. Sunday mornings. Login information for these online opportunities are sent out weekly on Mondays. Please contact the office at office@stmatthewavon.org to be added to our email list. A recorded version of our Sunday worship can also be accessed through our homepage at the website www.stmatthewavon.org.

During this Easter season and the holy days of Ascension and Pentecost which we will celebrate in May, I am reminded that after His Resurrection, Jesus was present to His disciples in a new way. He was physically present to them only on occasion, and following the Ascension was no longer physically present at all. Rather, He gave them the even more powerful gift of His presence in the Holy Spirit which came on Pentecost. This Spirit of Jesus is with believers of all times and all places!

I believe this is a time for us to experience Christ in a new way! Present to us not in the physical church building but in the presence of our loved ones, in the actions of our daily (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...) lives, in the solitude and silence, in the chaos and stress, in the roller coaster that is life. I hope this can be a time for you to discern God's presence in a new way, and that you may be blessed and healthy and safe.

Blessings to you all as we experience God in whatever new way the Spirit is leading us!

Easter Blessings,

Pastor Brian

WANT TO GET INVOLVED AT ST. MATTHEW DURING THE QUARANTINE?

Beyond online opportunities, there are ways to offer your gifts to help St. Matthew dig deep, reach out, and change lives with the love of Christ in this time of quarantine! If you are interested in working on these ministries, please reach out to Pastor Julie or Pastor Brian.

- **Researching Virtual Church:** If you are interested in checking out what other churches are doing, considering our assets for online worship, offering technical expertise, or creating online worship, this group is for you!
- **Participating in Online Worship:** Do you enjoy reading scripture or leading prayer? Do you like curating artwork, music, or video? Are you good at creating short videos to share with friends? If so, we'd love to include you in our Sunday worship!
- **Caring phone calls:** If you enjoy connecting with others, perhaps you'd like a little virtual training with our pastors to learn to join our Care Teams in making caring phone calls to members.
- **Sending cards:** Another way to stay in touch is through sending purchased or homemade cards. Homebound members and members without internet access would be the first folks on the list, but health care professionals, other essential workers, and any ill folks could also be included.
- **Prayer:** Join our prayer chain or healing prayer group. Start a centering prayer practice, or pick up a [Christ In Our Home](#) daily devotional outside the office door at church. Deepen your connection with Jesus and see how he calls you into service.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S UPDATE:

When our new Council met in February, no one anticipated that in a short amount of time we would be dealing with a worldwide pandemic. The COVID-19 Virus has brought new challenges to the forefront for our congregation. Our goal as a Council has been to develop avenues to enable us to remain connected as a congregation. Our Virtual Services have been well received and our connections with members through phone calls and emails have brought our congregation closer together.

As a Council, we have continued to meet on the first Tuesday of the month via "Zoom" – an avenue of communication which was unknown to many of us just a short time ago. The Council is currently reviewing the success of our Virtual Services, discussing way to enhance our online opportunities for our members, tracking our financial status, and discussing how to best move our Capital Campaign forward in a sensitive and understanding manner during this challenging time. We are also discussing the need to make informed decisions as we look toward what will become our new normal. We all wish to return to our "normal" Sunday morning services, but to achieve that goal, we need to be sure that our members will be safe and not at risk. We will continue to listen to the recommendations made by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention) as well as our State Public Health Service.

As we continue our work as a Council in the "virtual realm", I wish to thank those individuals who have been supporting our progress to date: Pastor Julie, Pastor Brian, Dick Silbereis, Roy Zurell, Cynthia Zakowski, Jason Lindquist, Ann Eberhard, Dawne Ware, Debbie Steinberg, Deb Brodeur and John Jarzbek. The work of these individuals has greatly contributed to our ability to move forward as a congregation during this challenging time. They have been involved with the behind-the-scenes work which (continued...)

(continued...) has helped us to remain on track. I also wish to thank Margaret Byrne and Doreen O'Leary for their efforts in serving others by keeping our connection with Grace Lutheran open, as well as Missy Lindquist and George Reider for serving as Co-Chairpersons of our Capital Campaign as we continue the work in our quiet phase of the program. Our wish is for our members to remain safe and healthy. We continue to pray for families who have lost loved ones and for those doctors, nurses, paramedics and hospital personnel who are supporting those in need.

Jack Pietrick, SMLC Council President

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ The Pastors made the Council aware of their plans for virtual services and other virtual happenings, such as Bible Study and Tuesdays Together at Ten.
- ◆ Council members reported on the phone calls they have been making to check on the welfare of members of committees for which they serve as liaison.
- ◆ Plans were discussed for creating future services after the paid video service contract has run out after Easter.
- ◆ St. Matthew and other churches are eligible to apply for Paycheck Protection Program as it is considered a small business. Council approved making an application to People's Bank to cover staff payroll in the future.
- ◆ George Reider and Missy Lindquist updated the Council on the Capital Campaign progress. Things are progressing despite the current situation.

GOOD THINGS:

Good things continue to happen through the ministries of our church during quarantine:

- ✠ We celebrated Holy Week with online Maundy Thursday and Good Friday messages from the pastors, as well as a festive Easter Sunday service in our sanctuary. As many as 91 households participated in our prerecorded online worship services through Easter Sunday.
- ✠ Care Team visitors are regularly calling homebound members to offer conversation and care during this time of quarantine. Thank you to Sheila J. and Bette M. for heading up this ministry!
- ✠ The Confirmation Class resumed its instruction via Zoom, focusing on Luther and the Reformation.
- ✠ The choir, men's group and women's fellowship are all meeting via Zoom.
- ✠ Sunday School is now meeting via Zoom at 10:30 AM on Sunday mornings. They also experienced interactive Maundy Thursday and Good Friday lessons about Jesus the Good Shepherd and building a home altar, thanks to PB and Dick S.
- ✠ Deb B. made Easter lilies available to members to grace their homes; people dropped by the church to pick them up. Likewise, the daily devotional *Christ in our Home* and the award winning magazine *Living Lutheran* are available for pick up outside the office door of the church.
- ✠ St. Matthew collected 3 large storage bins of items in critical need for Grace Lutheran, including masks, toilet paper and thermometers. Members also sent financial contributions directly to Grace for items they purchase in bulk for their grab-and-go Friday night meal. Thank you to Margaret B. and Doreen O. for bringing our collection there each week!
- ✠ A number of people paid ahead several months to help with our cash flow during the times when we are not 'passing the plate'. Others have been mailing their offerings to the church, and still others are electronic givers (contact Cynthia at office@stmatthewavon.org if you'd like to sign up). We are blessed to be able to meet our financial obligations during this time thanks to your faithfulness!

God is good, all the time!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
: May 2020		<i>Please join us on Zoom or on our website for virtual worship! The office will continue to be closed through at least May 20th. All events after that date are tentative and may be changed.</i>			1 9:30 Women's Fellowship via Zoom	2
3 9 AM Virtual Worship live via Zoom 10:30 Virtual Sunday School live via Zoom	4	5 10 AM Tuesdays at 10 Virtual Prayer via Zoom 6:00 Virtual Confirmation Meeting via Zoom	6	7 10 AM Virtual Bible Study 12 PM Virtual National Day of Prayer via weblink .	8 9:30 AM Women's Fellowship via Zoom	9
10 9 AM Virtual Worship live via Zoom 10:30 Virtual Sunday School live via Zoom	11	12 10 AM Tuesdays at 10 Virtual Prayer via Zoom	13	14	15 9:30 AM Women's Fellowship via Zoom June VOICE Submission Deadline	16
17 9 AM Virtual Worship live via Zoom 10:30 AM Virtual Sunday School live via Zoom	18	19 10 AM Tuesdays at 10 Virtual Prayer via Zoom	20	21 10 AM Virtual Bible Study	22 9:30 AM Women's Fellowship via Zoom 5 PM Fourth Friday at Grace.	23 8:30 AM Men's Breakfast (in person or virtual, TBD) 9 AM St. Matthew Clean-up Day (pending church reopening)
24 9 AM Virtual Worship live via Zoom 10:30 AM Virtual Sunday School live via Zoom	25 MEMORIAL DAY	26 10 AM Tuesdays at 10 Virtual Prayer via Zoom	27	28	29 9:30 AM Women's Fellowship via Zoom	30
31 PENTECOST 9 AM Virtual Worship live via Zoom 10:30 AM Virtual Sunday School live via Zoom						

May 2020



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SAINT MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH



UPDATE FROM THE "GROWING OUR MINISTRY TOGETHER" CAPITAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

When the committee first met to start planning our capital campaign, with the goal of paying off our mortgage by June 30, 2020, we never thought we would be in these times we are in today. Our online committee meetings have now turned to conversations about how we continue in these uncertain times. Out of these discussions, we prayerfully decided to move ahead with the "quiet phase" of the campaign. The "public phase" congregational kick off dinner, originally scheduled for April 25th, will be postponed until further notice, with the goal of holding it this Fall.

With the quiet phase still moving forward, we have received generous leadership gifts of \$49,500 already, as well as another \$15,000 matching gift for any contributions that come in by June 30, 2020. This totals \$64,500 of the \$150,000 goal. If you are interested in learning more about leadership giving, please contact Pastor Julie.

God Bless you and your family!

Missy Lindquist and George Reider - Co-Chairs



FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Dear Members of St. Matthew,

We know this is a difficult time for everyone, as we experience the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, personally, through health and/or economic issues. It is at times like these that our faith and the ministry of SMLC becomes an even more important part of our lives.

We ask that you please continue to give generously to support the work, mission, and ministry of St. Matthew Lutheran Church. A few ways that you can continue to give at this time are:

- Through Vanco: Please contact the office if you'd like to set up online contributions.
- Through your bank: Obtain a direct deposit online giving authorization form from your bank.
- Mail checks directly: Send your checks to St. Matthew Lutheran Church, 224 Lovely Street, Avon, CT.06001 (include your check in your church envelope or provide your envelope number on the memo line of the check).

We have been blessed to have a few people who have already paid their pledges fully. Some people have also given their offering several months in advance, plus we have several electronic givers. This giving will help to keep our cash flow positive through May.

Please reach out to Pastor Julie for questions regarding your pledge.



SUNDAY SCHOOL THANK YOU

Thank you so much to our passionate, committed Sunday School teachers for the 2019/2020 year. Even with an abbreviated spring, these talented teachers made a real difference in the lives of our congregation's youngest participants.

Thank you to: Kelly O'Connell, Margaret Byrne, Sarah Burns, Kristen Conover, Melissa Bender, Amy Byrne, and Jie Jie Zong.

Thank you also to Pastor Julie and Pastor Brian for so strongly supporting the program and for their regular presence in classes, which helped create meaningful connections between our kids and their pastors.

Finally, thank you to Richard Silbereis for facilitating regular Sunday School anthems and for gifting the kids with the knowledge and ability to actively participate in services. Thank you all for laying the foundation of faith, and, in so doing, ensuring the future of the church.

Meredith Trimble, Sunday School Coordinator

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER: A celebration of the National Day of Prayer is scheduled to be held at 12 PM / Noon on **Thursday, May 7th**. The event will be broadcast from the Carmon Family Center via a livestream, which you can access at this web address:

<http://client.tribucast.com/tcid/49314335>

This year's theme is "**Pray God's Glory Across the Earth**" and is based upon Habakkuk 2:14 *"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."* This is the 69th Annual National Day of Prayer and is based upon both an Official Statement from Governor Lamont, as well as a Presidential Proclamation requesting prayer.

"I urge you, first to pray for all people... Pray this way for kings and all others who are in authority, so that we may live in peace and quietness, in godliness and dignity..." - 1 Timothy 2:1-4

For additional information, please contact Steve and Beth Wilson or Dr. David and Donna Wittmer at (860) 673-4053.



EVENING READERS: The May meeting will be virtual; details to come. Please contact Debbie Steinberg for more information or to be included on the book club email list.

- **May 11th, 7:30 PM** - *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll



MEN'S BREAKFAST: A Men's Breakfast will be held on **Saturday, May 23rd at 8:30 AM - virtual or in-person, TBD**. Please email Pastor Brian or the office if you'd like to attend.



HYMNALS

Do you wish you had your own hymnal in your home to help with prayer and devotion during this time? If so, see this special offer from Augsburg Fortress (our Lutheran publishing house) below!

“Much worship is currently occurring in the home rather than the sanctuary, which is why we’re announcing a **10% discount plus free shipping on ELW Pew Edition***, a **40% discount, plus free shipping on the Gift Edition and Pocket Edition of Evangelical Lutheran Worship, as well as on Bread for the Day**, our book of daily bible readings and prayers.

Use discount code ATHOME. The same discount code will also get you free shipping and a price of \$15.99 on the Spark Story Bible and Whirl Story Bible from Sparkhouse.

Offer good through May 31, 2020. Valid only in the contiguous United States.

<https://emails.augsburgfortress.org/discounts-and-free-shipping-on-elw-resources-and-story-bibles>

**Limit 5 per customer*