



# THE VOICE

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

September 2020

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

## STAFF:

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

Website: [www.stmatthewavon.org](http://www.stmatthewavon.org)

*The church building is closed at this time, but 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!*

*Please join us on our website for virtual worship!*

## DATES TO REMEMBER:

**Tuesdays in September:** Virtual Prayer, 10:00 a.m.

**Fridays in September:** Virtual Women's Fellowship, 9:30 a.m.

**September 3 & 10:** White Privilege Series on Zoom, 7:00 p.m.

**September 3:** Virtual Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.  
Virtual White Privilege Discussion, 7:00 p.m.

**September 6:** Zoom Worship, 9:00 a.m. / Outdoor Worship, 4:30 p.m.

**September 10:** Virtual White Privilege Discussion, 7:00 p.m.

**September 13: Rally Day** Zoom Worship, 9:00 a.m. / Outdoor Worship, 11:00 a.m.

**September 15:** October VOICE submissions deadline

**September 15:** Centering Prayer, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

**September 17:** Virtual Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.

**September 19:** Men's Breakfast, 8:30 a.m. on Zoom

**September 20: (St. Matthew Feast Day)** Zoom Worship, 9:00 a.m. / Outdoor Worship, 11:00 a.m.

**September 24:** Centering Prayer, 2:00 p.m. via Zoom

**September 25:** Fourth Friday at Grace

**September 27:** Zoom Worship, 9:00 a.m. / Outdoor Worship, 11:00 a.m.

## A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

*One of them, a lawyer, asked Jesus a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is greatest?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:35-40*

Our Council and Reopening Task Force have been working hard the past month to formulate plans for safe in-person ministry and worship. Their work is guided foremost by Jesus' words about the Greatest Commandment, to love God and neighbor. For us at St Matthew, this means balancing the need for safety in our community and the broader society, and the need for authentic worship and community.

St Matthew's Reopening Task Force has developed the following guiding principles to govern its work:

- It is essential that St. Matthew policy and procedures meet the spiritual and emotional needs of the congregation in ways that are both physically safe and embrace the range of views of St. Matthew members.
- The decisions we make must continue to comply with current ELCA, state, federal, and clinical guidance for COVID-19 management. As the COVID-19 trajectory evolves, this collective guidance will also evolve and be revised, as necessary, in the coming months.
- The Reopening Task Force will be responsible for:
  - reviewing the comprehensive dataset including St. Matthew member survey, medical, and scientific information in order to recommend a phased-in approach.
  - being wholly responsive to the complex issues associated with COVID-19 planning by providing thoughtful, flexible plans based on the most current high quality data. The Task Force will continue to advise Church Council as these plans evolve in the coming months, and welcomes direction from Church Council at any time.
  - recommending a return to our traditional in-person schedule when safe to do so, in context of new, safe, and effective preventive and therapeutic interventions that are anticipated to emerge into 2021.
  - Ensuring the safety of the St. Matthew staff throughout this continuum.

In addition, the Task Force has completed interviews with staff members, which, along with the work described above, have shaped the following Task Force recommendations to Council:

(continued...)

(...continued)

- Continue online worship as the principle worship service of the congregation throughout the duration of the pandemic.
- Plan several 'soft opening' outdoor services on Sunday evenings, beginning August 30, at 4:30pm. These would be spoken Services of the Word without communion, with social distancing, masks, and other safety practices required.
- Open St Matthew's outdoor space to small group ministries of St Matthew, with proper social distancing, masks, and other safety practices required.
- Plan for a worship Sunday schedule of 9:00 a.m. Zoom Worship, 11:00 a.m. Outdoor Worship, beginning September 13, and an eventual move indoors for the 11:00 a.m. worship service as the weather changes.

The Council approved these recommendations from the Task Force at its meeting Monday, August 17. Stay tuned for more details as the planning progresses. We are blessed to have such excellent leadership in place in the Reopening Task Force and the Council.

Pastor Julie

### **REOPENING TASK FORCE MEMBERS**

Doug Peterson and Kathy Alsgaard, co-chairs; Ellen Ericson, Tom Leonard, John Pearson, Jack Pietrick, and Pastor Julie, members. Please reach out directly to the task force members with questions, or to [office@stmatthewavon](mailto:office@stmatthewavon) to be connected to a task force member. We are here for you!

### **WHITE PRIVILEGE**

Join the Pastors, Meg Kraft and Bill Parchen for the remaining sessions in a five-week discussion series which began in August and was adapted from a study entitled, *White Privilege: Let's Talk*.

- ◆ Whiteness as a Tax-Exempt Status. Thursday, September 3rd: 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
- ◆ On Becoming An Ally Thursday, September 10th: 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8606733301pwd=RHErNHXOVpXVnl4NkVpQVgwS0Z5dz09>

Meeting ID: 860 673 3301 Passcode: 224Lovely By Phone: + 1 929 436 2866

### **ONGOING ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE BY PHONE**

Did you know you can access our online worship, fellowship, and education opportunities by phone? Call the number below, and be ready to enter the meeting number and access code.

#### **TUESDAYS TOGETHER AT TEN - 10 AM**

Meeting ID: 646 984 284  
Password: 06001  
By Phone: +1 929 436 2866

#### **FRIDAY MORNING WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP - 9:30 AM**

Meeting ID: 818 9979 6978  
Password: 307570  
By Phone: +1 646 558 8656

#### **SUNDAY WORSHIP - 9 AM**

Meeting ID: 943 7820 7224 Password: 06001 By Phone: +1 929 436 2866

### **ARE YOU RECEIVING ST. MATTHEW EMAILS?**

We send them out Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, communicating up to date ministry and worship information, how you can help at St Matthew and the community beyond, plus prayer resources and other helpful info. If you are not receiving these emails, please contact the office at [office@stmatthewavon.org](mailto:office@stmatthewavon.org) or at 860-673-3301.



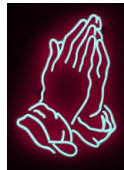
### **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Sunday School will start again in September on a bi-weekly basis. This will involve an in-person “Prayer and Popsicle” gathering on a Saturday evening in the church parking lot, and Rally Day the following morning during Zoom worship. Keep alert to our Constant Contacts for updates!



### **MEN’S BREAKFAST**

Men’s group will meet for breakfast on Zoom on the 3rd Saturday of the month, September 19th. (Pastor Brian has a Synod Council meeting on the 4th Saturday). We’ll gather on Zoom 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. for a time of fellowship, prayer, and devotion. Newcomers always welcome! Hope you can join us!



### **CENTERING PRAYER**

Centering Prayer group will meet the third (not the second) Tuesday of September at 7:00 p.m. and the fourth Thursday of September at 2:00 p.m. That is: **Tuesday, September 15th at 7:00 p.m. and Thursday, September 24th at 2:00 p.m.** Newcomers are always welcome!

### **COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Council approved in-person worship services, to be held outdoors, with masks and other social distancing protocols, to begin August 30, at 4:30PM.
- The Council approved a plan to install faster WiFi service to the church, to enable zooming and live streaming from the sanctuary, for future worship services.
- The Council received an analysis of giving in the congregation during 2020 from Debbie Steinberg and Bill Parchen. We are grateful for the faithful giving of this congregation, especially during these challenging times!



### **EVENING READERS**

The Evening Readers Book Club’s September meeting will be announced soon, tentatively on September 14th; it will be a virtual meeting. Book TBA also soon.

### **GOOD THINGS: God is good to us, even in the midst of struggle. In September, we are grateful for the following:**

- † Thank you to Carol Reider and our Sexton, Roy Zurell, who have been weeding some of our garden beds. The Garth looks beautiful again! We welcome additional volunteers to take Pastor Julie up on her offer to “Weed with Pastor!” Reach out to the office if you’d like to help.
- † Families at St Matthew and throughout the Greater Hartford Conference have been enjoying a DIY VBS, provided by Pastor Brian, Meredith Trimble, and Camp Lutherlyn! These online resources give families devotions, scriptures, and fun activities to share, without screens, to strengthen faith. Thank you for sharing, Meredith and PB!
- † The Reopening Task Force continued to meet and plan. We have a committed crew with a ton of expertise, and we are blessed at a critical time with their leadership and dedication.
- † Zoom Worship continued, welcoming teens and adults to share prayers and scriptures. If you would like to be a Zoom Worship leader, let PB or PJ know!
- † Fifteen people began a study of White Privilege, based on an UCC curriculum, lead by Meg Kraft, Bill Parchen, Pastors Brian and Julie.
- † Our finances are still in the black, thanks to pre-paid pledges, the PPP loan, and your continued faithful giving!

**God is Good, All the Time!**

| Sun   | Mon | Tue  | Wed | Thu  | Fri  | Sat   |
|---|-----|--|-----|--|--|---|
| <b>September 2020</b>   |     | 1<br>10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.  | 2   | 3<br>10:00 Bible Study<br>7:00 White Privilege   | 4<br>9:30 Women's Fellowship via Zoom                                | 5   |
| 6<br>9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom<br>4:30 Outdoor Worship                               | 7   | 8<br>10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.<br>7:00 Church Council                   | 9   | 10<br>7:00 White Privilege   | 11<br>9:30 Women's Fellowship via Zoom                               | 12  |
| 13 RALLY DAY<br>9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom<br>11:00 a.m. Outdoor Worship              | 14  | 15 VOICE Deadline<br>10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.<br>7:00 Centering Prayer | 16  | 17<br>10:00 Bible Study  | 18<br>9:30 Women's Fellowship via Zoom                               | 19<br>8:30 Men's Breakfast via <a href="#">Zoom</a> . (Meeting ID: 814 7413 2264. Pass-word: 06001) |
| 20<br>9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom<br>11:00 a.m. Outdoor Worship                        | 21  | 22<br>10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.   | 23  | 24<br>2:00 Centering Prayer  | 25<br>9:30 Women's Fellowship via Zoom<br>:00 Fourth Friday at Grace | 26  |
| 27<br>9:00 Virtual Worship live via Zoom<br>10:15 Sunday School<br>11:00 a.m. Outdoor Worship | 28  | 29<br>10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.   | 30  | Please join us on our website for virtual worship! The office will continue to be closed, but you are welcome to contact the office via email or phone to make a time to stop by. All in-person events are tentative and may be changed. |  |   |

Notes:



September 2020



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

## **CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE**

Greetings fellow members,

God works in wonderful ways! The generous \$150,000 gift given to the church from the Steinberg/Jensen families in late 2019 was given as a springboard to receiving matching gifts to pay down the building mortgage of just under \$300,000.

We are pleased to share that despite challenging times and uncertainty, we have received gifts and pledges totaling \$105,000 during the quiet phase of our campaign! With just about \$40,000 left to our goal, we are now entering the final phase. We ask for your prayerful consideration of a gift or a pledge, payable through the 2022 calendar year. Please watch your mail for a letter and pledge card!

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either of us or Pastor Julie. Again, thank you for your prayerful consideration of support in this endeavor.

Missy Lindquist and George Reider

Capital Campaign Co Chairs

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## **WHAT TO EXPECT AT OUTDOOR WORSHIP**

Sunday, August 30, we will worship outside at 4:30pm in the back lawn of the church. This is a 'soft opening' to practice our safety protocols as well as an opportunity to worship together in person. We will share a simple Service of the Word, which includes prayers, scriptures, and preaching. We will do a similar outdoor service on September 6 at 4:30 pm; on Rally Day, Sunday September 13, we will move the outdoor service to our usual time of 11:00 am on Sunday morning. We will continue to worship outside at 11:00 am as long as both weather and safety conditions permit. Any cancelation of outdoor worship will be posted on our website by 2pm on Sunday. **Our Zoom worship will continue every Sunday at 9:00am regardless of outdoor worship schedule.**

**Please bring the following items with you to outdoor worship:** a mask, chair, water, sunscreen or bug spray, and an umbrella if you are concerned about the sun. **We ask that you park every other parking space, and wear your mask over your nose and mouth for the entire time you are on St. Matthew's campus.** An usher will show you and your household members to your spot on the lawn. One bathroom in the education hallway will be open for emergencies; the rest of the church building will remain closed.

In addition, please observe these general safety guidelines:

- Stay at home if you are sick, and self-quarantine if you think you may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Others who should stay at home include people over 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions.
- Maintain physical distancing of 6 feet or more at all times.
- Before and after coming to worship, wash your hands with soap and water. (Also use hand sanitizer after touching frequently used items or surfaces.)

We look forward to adding this opportunity to our worship life and connecting with you!



**ONGOING DISCUSSION ON WHITE PRIVILEGE:** Join the Pastors, Meg Kraft and Bill Parchen for the remaining sessions in a five-week discussion series which began in August and was adapted from the United Church of Christ's study entitled, *White Privilege: Let's Talk*.

This curriculum on privilege is not about guilt or shame, but it is about telling the truth and bringing things to the surface that we don't always see – things that may be holding us back.

Join us as we read, listen, talk and deepen our understanding of current race issues facing our society and the journey to becoming an ally.

**Week 4 - Whiteness as a Tax-Exempt Status *Thursday, September 3rd: 7 - 8 PM***

Prior to the session, please read the last 2 chapters of part three, found [here](#).  
<http://files.constantcontact.com/df37b3ea301/1c5a3d31-e5ff-43bc-bd64-1a60acf4b7b4.pdf>

**Week 5 - On Becoming An Ally *Thursday, September 10th: 7 - 8 PM***

Prior to the session, please read part one, found [here](#):  
<http://files.constantcontact.com/df37b3ea301/0f8f5972-cee7-410d-8169-1354ceb4d136.pdf>

**Zoom Meeting Link:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8606733301pwd=RHErNHNXOVpXVnI4NkVpQVgwS0Z5dz09> Meeting ID: 860 673 3301  
Passcode: 224Lovely  
By Phone: + 1 929 436 2866

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## MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND GOES VIRTUAL

Because of the coronavirus restrictions, the September 18-20, 2020 Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend will now be presented online using Zoom video conferencing.

If the coronavirus has put stress on your marriage, you are not alone! Lutheran Marriage Encounter wants to help you renew and revitalize your marital relationship no matter whether you have been married a year or 60+ years. And because there is no room and board expense, your total cost to experience this Weekend is only \$100 per couple. In addition, some scholarship funds are available if this creates a hardship for you--simply email or call us at the information below before you register.

You only need to provide a quiet spot with minimal distractions, a good internet connection, and a computer or laptop or some such device suitable for video conferencing. (If you have children in the home, it is highly recommended that they stay with friends or relatives for the Weekend.) The Weekend begins at 8 PM on Friday night and ends at approximately 3 PM on Sunday. REGISTRATIONS WILL BE LIMITED, so sign up NOW while there are still openings. Simply go to: [www.GodLovesMarriage.org](http://www.GodLovesMarriage.org), find the September 18-20 Virtual Weekend, fill out the form, and pay the \$100 with a credit card, or print the form and mail with a check. Don't miss this opportunity to create a more intimate and joyful marital relationship! For questions, please contact Northeast US Directors of Lutheran Marriage Encounter, Fred & Julie Schamber, at 724325-3166 or [fjschamber@comcast.net](mailto:fjschamber@comcast.net).

