



# THE VOICE

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

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

## STAFF:

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*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:

***The office will continue to be closed until notice is otherwise given.***

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

**October 1:** Virtual Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.

**October 2, 16, & 30:** Women's Fellowship, 9:30 a.m. at the church.

**October 4:** Blessing of the Animals: 9:00 a.m. on Zoom; 11:00 a.m. at Outdoor Worship.

**October 11:** Worship on Zoom, 9:00 a.m. Bach Cantata 51 at 11:00 a.m. at Outdoor Worship

**October 13:** Centering Prayer, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

**October 15:** Virtual Bible Study, 10:00 a.m. - November VOICE submissions deadline.

**October 18:** Communion Sunday: 9:00 a.m. on Zoom & 11:00 a.m. at Outdoor Worship.

**October 25:** Reformation Sunday—**WEAR RED!** 9:00 a.m. on Zoom, and 11:00 a.m. at Outdoor Worship. - 2:00 p.m. Confirmation Service, outdoors.

## A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Fall has always been my favorite season. The temperature is not too hot and not too cold. The air smells crisp. It's perfect for hiking. Nature appears mature and full, with leaves revealing brilliant hues of orange, red, yellow, purple, and brown. It is a period of harvest both for crops and for the human mind to gather itself. It can be a time for us to embrace a holistic, natural spirituality, to enjoy the beauty of creation and observe the wisdom of the natural world. Watching birds fly south for the winter, squirrels collect acorns, and other animals prepare for hibernation helps us attune to the rhythms of the earth. It's also a delight to watch our beloved domestic animals play and explore the outdoors. There is something sacred about our pets and the pure love they give. There's something about having animals live with us that helps keep humans connected to nature in the midst of a lifestyle that so often keeps us away from nature. Animals teach us the simple joy of being.

St. Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of animals and ecology. He is known for renouncing all his father's wealth, living a life of voluntary poverty, and having a deep connection to the natural world. Birds would sometimes flock around him while he spoke and he referred to animals as his sisters and brothers, as well as to rivers, mountains, the sun, moon, and stars as siblings. **October 4th is St. Francis' Feast Day and we will celebrate with a Blessing of the Animals at St. Matthew. We will do this both virtually at 9:00 a.m. and in-person at 11:00 a.m.** We hope you bring your beloved pets to receive a blessing, and that you are open to them teaching you to embrace lovingness and playfulness and all the gifts they offer.

Later in October we celebrate the gift of music at outdoor worship with a performance of **Bach's Cantata 51 on October 11, and Reformation Sunday at both services on October 25th.** As you know this is a very important day for Lutherans! **Don't forget to wear red!** It is not merely a time to flex our Protestant muscles however, but should be a time of reflection on how the church has been reformed and continues to reform. As many have said "the church is always reforming!" We are especially aware of this in 2020, with services online and outdoors, and all the other ways our lives have changed this year.

So join us October 4th with your pets, October 11 for Bach, and October 25th wearing red. We look forward to all this season has in store!

Blessings to you this autumn,

Pastor Brian

**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.*

## **REOPENING TASK FORCE UPDATE**

The Reopening Task Force successfully planned and implemented outdoor worship services on Sunday, beginning August 30. This 11:00 a.m. service is about 30 minutes long, with generously spaced seating spread throughout the back lawn of the church. Parishioners sign in at the contact tracing attendance sheet, and then are directed by an usher to their seat. Everyone wears a mask, with the exception of the clergy when they are speaking. We plan to celebrate communion at several of these services using pre-filled cups of grape juice and wafer packets which parishioners will pick up at the sign in table. We will remain outdoors as long as the weather holds; please visit the website for up-to-date information on outdoor worship cancellation or a planned move indoors.

The safety protocols that we are practicing at our outdoor worship services will continue as we move the service indoors, likely the first Sunday in November. **When we come inside to worship, we will require everyone to sign up online or by calling the office beforehand**, to accommodate physical distancing.

Worship on Zoom at 9:00 a.m. will remain our principal worship service throughout the pandemic, as it is a safe option for everyone.

Thank you to the ushers, altar guild, sound personnel, task force members, staff and leaders who are making in person worship possible in these unusual times!

## **COMMUNION OPTIONS DURING THIS TIME OF PANDEMIC**

During the summer, St Matthew members studied the theology and practice of Holy Communion in the Lutheran Church. We learned that the gathering of the people of God is an essential element in our understanding of the sacrament: the Body of Christ is the spiritual food that is shared in Communion, but it is also the people who gather, who are Christ's hands and feet in the world. Holy Communion is nourishment for our spiritual lives as well as the forgiveness of sins, and it is clear the people of St Matthew have been missing this sacrament of sustenance and grace. **For this reason, we, your pastors, have decided to offer Holy Communion at in-person outdoor and indoor worship services as our safety protocols are put into place, and also at our Zoom worship services, beginning in October.**

It is a new thing to offer communion virtually. As pastors, we experience our community as truly gathering when we meet for worship on Zoom; the service is in real time, and we pray, sing and speak together. It is not the same as being together in person, and this is not something we plan to offer beyond the pandemic period. We feel, however, this is the best way to safely meet the spiritual need for communion for everyone during this time. We will also begin bringing the sacrament to homebound members, and arrange for a first communion for our sixth graders.

**The whole community will have the opportunity to commune on October 18, which we have designated as Communion Sunday for both the virtual and in-person services.** Those who choose to partake of communion on Zoom will need to assemble the elements from the pantry at home: grape juice or wine, bread or rice crackers. The pastors will lead the communion prayers via the zoom service, and people will commune themselves or the others in their homes. Those who come to outdoor worship will commune with pre-filled cups of grape juice and wafer packets which are picked up at the sign-in table. We encourage you to bring any questions you have to us, and look forward to communing with you!

Pastor Julie and Pastor Brian

## **BACH COMES TO OUTDOOR WORSHIP, OCTOBER 11**

St Matthew's backyard will be filled with the sounds of string quartet, flute, and soprano on October 11 at the 11:00 a.m. outdoor worship service. Our worship will feature Bach's Cantata 51, "*Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen!*" ("*Exult God in Every Land*"), as well as preaching and prayer. Musicians will include Pastor Julie's husband and our former music director Michelle Horsley, among others. Sign up information will come out in the weekly email. Rain date will be October 25. We hope you will join us!

## **CONFIRMATION SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2:00 p.m.**

Five ninth graders will be confirmed at an outdoor service on Reformation Sunday, October 25, at 2:00 p.m. The Confirmands are: Jacob Fitts, Zoey Hatinen, Joseph Siana, Elijah Wells, and Samantha Yanke. Congregation members are welcome to attend along with the confirmation families, as long as the weather holds; in case of inclement weather, the service will move inside and will be family only. Please congratulate and pray for these awesome young adult members of St Matthew!



## **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

**Sunday School will meet at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday October 11th and October 25th.** (Note, this is not 10:15 a.m. as previously stated). Also, Sunday Schoolers will help to lead worship the third Sunday of each month. This month this will be Sunday October 18th. We are looking forward to a great Fall!

## **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 October 13th at 7:00 p.m. and the fourth Thursday which will be Thursday October 22nd at 2:00 p.m. Both sessions will be on Zoom; a link will be sent out before the meeting.



## **MEN'S BREAKFAST**

Men's breakfast will meet virtually on Saturday October 24th 8:30-9:30 a.m. Join us with your coffee or breakfast. An email will be sent out with the Zoom link prior to the meeting. Newcomers always welcome!

## **CONFIRMATION CLASSES BEGINNING**

Confirmation classes for 7th and 8th graders begin this month with a hybrid model of at home instruction and in-person events. For more information, contact Pastor Julie

**GOOD THINGS:** God is good to us, even in times of challenge. During the month of September, we experienced the following blessings from God:

- † Six Sunday school children led Zoom worship on Rally Day, and an equal number came out to the Prayer and Popsicle event led by Pastor Brian the night before.
- † Crowds ranging from 25- 40 people regularly gathered outdoors for worship at 11:00 a.m. this month, while 30 households continued to worship via zoom at 9:00 a.m. each week.
- † We once again celebrated the feast day of our namesake, St Matthew, on September 20, during both worship services. Thanks to Dick Silbereis for planning this celebration!
- † Three new zoom masters joined our team to facilitate Sunday morning 9 am worship, including two high school students. Thank you, Sarah, Jake, and Greg! And to Rick, who trained them!
- † Women's fellowship met outdoors in the parking lot this month, and the Men's Breakfast continued to meet virtually on Zoom.
- † People responded generously to the public phase of the 'Growing Our Ministry Together' capital campaign - thank you!
- † St Matthew members and friends continued to give faithfully during this time of challenge, so our budget is in the black at this time. Thank you!

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

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>October 2020</b>				1 10:00 Bible Study	2 9:30 Women's Fellowship at the church.	3
4 BLESSING of the ANIMALS 9:00 Virtual Worship via Zoom 11:00 Outdoor Worship	5 1:00 Staff Meeting  7:00 Finance Committee	6 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.  7:00 Church Council	7	8	9	10 10:00 Grow Baptism
11 9:00 Virtual Worship via Zoom 10:00 Sunday School on Zoom  11:00 Bach Cantata 51 at Outdoor Worship	12 1:00 Staff Meeting  7:00 Stewardship	13 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.  7:00 Centering Prayer	14	15 VOICE Deadline 10:00 Bible Study	16 9:30 Women's Fellowship at the church.	17
18 COMMUNION SUNDAY 9:00 Virtual Worship via Zoom  11:00 Outdoor Worship	19 1:00 Staff Meeting	20 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.	21	22 2:00 Centering Prayer	23	24 8:30 Men's Breakfast via <a href="#">Zoom</a> .
25 REFORMATION SUNDAY 9:00 Virtual Worship via Zoom 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Outdoor Worship 2:00 Confirmation Service, Outdoors	26 1:00 Staff Meeting	27 10:00 Tuesdays at 10: Virtual Prayer via Zoom.  7 Stewardship	28	29	30 9:30 Women's Fellowship at the church.	31
Notes:				Please join us on our website for virtual worship! The office will continue to be closed until notice is otherwise given. All in-person events are tentative and may be changed.		



October 2020



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224 Lovely Street, Avon, Connecticut 06001-4018

### **OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR**

Office Administrator Cynthia Zakowski finished her employment with St Matthew in August, and in the month of September Pastor Brian and Pastor Julie, along with an interview committee of Ann Eberhard, Jack Pietrick, and Debbie Steinberg, have been evaluating candidates. We hope to have a new office administrator to introduce soon!

### **ST MATTHEW MEMBER JOINS SYNOD COUNCIL**

Bill Parchen, St. Matthew member, has been appointed to serve on the New England Synod Council. He joins Pastor Brian in this work. This is the governing body of the 180 ELCA congregations throughout New England and upstate New York. Bill brings a wealth of church and professional leadership experience to this four year term. Join us in praying for him as he serves the larger church, and for our mission as Lutheran Christians throughout our region!

### **FINANCE UPDATE**

Thank you to all who continue to support the financial needs of our church and congregation, through honoring pledges, and other contributions and gifts during this time.

As you know, we were able to pay off our mortgage in June, thanks to the Capital Campaign receipts and a loan from Endowment. We pay down the Endowment loan principal with continued contributions to the Capital Campaign. The balance at the end of August was approximately \$38 thousand.

Our offering income continues to be ahead of budget on a year-to-date basis, thanks to some prepaid pledges. We will continue to need your faithfulness in giving to keep our budget balanced through year end.



### **WOMEN'S FRIDAY FELLOWSHIP**

All St. Matthew women are invited to join us for in-person fellowship at the church. We will meet at 9:30 a.m. on October 2, 16 & 30.

Please bring your own chair and wear a mask.

Please **sign up at the link below or email the office at [office@stmatthewavon.org](mailto:office@stmatthewavon.org)** for contact tracing; we are limited to 15 participants per St. Matthew safety protocols.

Looking forward to seeing you!

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