



# THE VOICE

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

April 2020

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

## STAFF:

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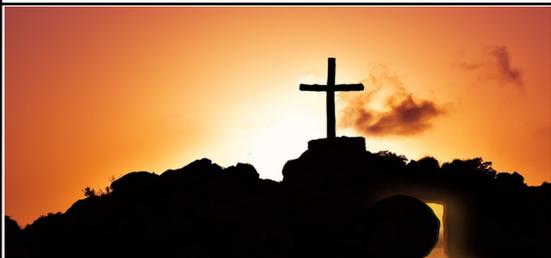
*Sunday Worship Services are canceled through the end of April and the church is closed. Please join us on our website for virtual worship!*

## DATES TO REMEMBER:

**April 2** - Virtual Lenten Prayer  
**April 5** - Virtual Palm Sunday Service  
**April 9** - Virtual Maundy Thursday Service  
**April 10** - Virtual Good Friday Service  
**April 12** - Virtual Easter Sunday Service  
**April 15** - May VOICE submissions due  
**April 24** - Fourth Friday at Grace, 5 PM

## LOOKING AHEAD (tentative) :

**May 2** - St. Matthew Clean-Up Day.  
**May 3** - First Communion  
**May 17** - Last Day of Sunday School  
**May 22** - Fourth Friday at Grace, 5 PM  
**May 23** - Men's Breakfast, 8:30 AM  
**May 25** - Memorial Day / Office Closed  
**May 31** - Pentecost / Confirmation / Healing Prayer



## A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Greetings St. Matthew...from my home to yours! Like many of you, I am working from home, setting up new routines, spending more time alone and with immediate family. I am also thinking about what it means to be a church in this time. Our building may be closed but we are recognizing that we need each other and our faith in Jesus more than ever. I am so grateful to be a part of this church called St. Matthew!

There is much that remains unknown about how the coming weeks will unfold but currently the Council is planning to keep the church building closed through April, in keeping with recommendations from government officials and the CDC. A closed building, however, does not mean a closed ministry! On the contrary, the leaders and staff at St. Matthew have been setting up new systems and working remotely to revamp our ministries for this time of social distancing due to COVID-19. Here's what we are doing:

**Online Worship.** Currently we are offering online worship and devotions at our website [www.stmatthewavon.org](http://www.stmatthewavon.org). The most recent offering is posted on the homepage; past offerings can be accessed under the Sermons tab at the top of the page under the heading "Video Library." You will see our regular offerings listed in this newsletter; we will also provide online offerings for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

**Staying Connected.** Our Council and ministry leaders have started a touching-base campaign of phone calls to people participating in the ministries of our church. The newly formed Care Teams are making calls to our homebound members. And the pastors will be making their way through the church directory in the month of April. These check-in calls are designed to see how members are doing, if they have any unmet needs, and how we might remember them in prayer. In addition, we encourage you to stay in touch with others you know in the church through our online Member Directory. It's on the website [www.stmatthewavon.org](http://www.stmatthewavon.org), under the 'About Us' tab.

**Prayer.** In addition to our pastors, our Prayer Chain and Lay Healing Prayer Ministers are available to support you. Requests directed to the Prayer Chain arrive via email, and (*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...) the group prays the request for one week in their personal prayer. Lay Healing Prayer Ministers pray specifically for healing and are available for phone conversation and prayer. All prayer requests are confidential. You can visit the Prayer page of our website at <https://www.stmatthewavon.org/prayer> to submit a prayer request, or you can email [office@stmatthewavon.org](mailto:office@stmatthewavon.org) with your prayer request and it will be referred to either or both groups per your direction.

**Generosity.** Your continued financial gifts are deeply appreciated at this time. You can mail in checks to church to stay current with your giving, or set up electronic giving by contacting [office@stmatthewavon.org](mailto:office@stmatthewavon.org).

**Staying in touch.** The best source of updated information is our website, [www.stmatthewavon.org](http://www.stmatthewavon.org). The best way to be in touch with the pastors is by cell phone. Feel free to reach out to the office for leadership or staff contact information: [office@stmatthewavon.org](mailto:office@stmatthewavon.org).

As always, we are the Body of Christ, for one another and the world. Let us continue to hold in prayer the most vulnerable, decision makers, essential workers, and health personnel, and one another.

*If one member [of the body] suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Cor 12:26-27)*

*Pastor Julie*

## **WORSHIP DISCUSSION WRAP UP**

Thank you to all who participated in the Community Conversations on worship in February and all who filled out the survey! As was shared in last month's newsletter, the overall response to worship practices at St. Matthew described was positive, with an average score of 3.9 in a scale of 1-5. The comment section of the survey revealed a great diversity of opinion on many topics including music, prayer, the use of the organ, how worship connects with the societal and political matters, silence, children and youth, to name a few. In many cases, a preference expressed by one person was balanced by a contrasting preference by another person. For example, sixteen respondents stated they like traditional styles of music and twenty-one said they like new styles of music. Sixteen people mentioned they liked traditional wording of prayers, while fifteen people commented they liked the service as it is. One thing emerged loud and clear from our comment section: we are a diverse congregation with a variety of tastes!

The survey as a whole suggests a continued course of balancing new elements in worship with elements that are familiar and predictable. The new elements are important not only because many current members appreciate them, but also because our congregation has a stated goal to reach out to new people who undoubtedly have preferences that will be new to us. In many ways, the work we are doing now in expanding our worship repertoire is a stretching exercise to prepare us for evangelism work to come. At the same time, the familiarity of worship is important for ritual memory (ask our adult forum participants about that!) and nurturing current members' spiritual lives.

Our planning for worship reflects this balancing. In response to specific feedback, in Lent we have returned to familiar words for the confession at the beginning and service. Easter, however, is a season of celebration, so we will follow the contemporary Lutheran practice of omitting the confession for the seven weeks of this season. We have also put out the hymn request box; since we aren't in the church right now, feel free to email favorite hymns! We are happy to program requested hymns every week.

Please consider this survey an open door to sharing your thoughts about worship. There is both a deep tradition and theology behind what we do in worship, but there is also a great deal of freedom. I look forward to continuing the conversation and worshipping with you.

*Pastor Julie*



## **UPCOMING ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES:**

**Sunday Morning Worship:** Join us on the church website, or Facebook page, to view our worship service at your regular worship time of 8:30 AM or 11 AM Sunday, or view it anytime that works for you: <https://www.stmatthewavon.org/>

**"Tuesdays Together At Ten":** At 10 AM on Tuesday for the next several weeks, we will meet together virtually via Zoom for a time of prayer, devotion, and fellowship. If you are interested in "attending" please respond to this email and let Pastor Brian know, or just log on to Zoom at 10 AM on Tuesday using this link: <https://zoom.us/j/5272546327>

**Thursday Lenten Worship:** In place of our Thursday evening services during Lent, we will be posting short readings and sermons to be viewed every remaining Thursday of Lent. We may be utilizing Facebook Live on Thursday evenings in the coming weeks.

## **COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS:**

- The Finance Committee reported to the Council that they have approved the purchase of new light-weight tables and chairs for the Hall of the Evangelists.
- Council approved a policy for donating securities to St. Matthew.
- Pastor Julie and Pastor Brian reported a summary of the Church Council Retreat.
- Pastor Julie reviewed the results of the recently completed Worship and Music Survey regarding people's satisfaction with worship at St. Matthew and discussed the role of council and worship and music committee in next steps.

## **GOOD THINGS:**

We have much to be grateful for in April!

- ✠ **In spite of not being able to worship together physically, we have stayed together virtually! Special thanks to Jason Lindquist who has helped Pastor Julie and Pastor Brian immensely in adjusting to our online format.**
- ✠ **Sunday morning worship services and Thursday evening Lenten messages were recorded and posted to the website, which can be found at <https://www.stmatthewavon.org/> .**
- ✠ **A new group formed in response to the quarantine called "Tuesdays Together." They met Tuesday March 24th and 31st at 10:00AM, and will continue to do so on Tuesdays in April. All are welcome to join!**
- ✠ **Executive Council, Congregation Council, Confirmation, and other groups met via Zoom.**
- ✠ **Youth group, instead of having the 30 Hour Famine sleepover this month, met for an hour the Saturday morning the Famine was scheduled for to break-fast together. They will reschedule the Famine for sometime later this spring or summer.**
- ✠ **Women's Group met virtually Friday morning March 27th!**
- ✠ **Men's Group met virtually Saturday March 28th!**
- ✠ **Thank you for your continued generosity! Keeping your financial giving up to date as possible during this time of social distancing is deeply appreciated.**

**God is good, all the time!**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Notes: Virtual Worship is online at <a href="https://www.stmatthewavon.org">https://www.stmatthewavon.org</a>	<b>April 2020</b>		1	2 Lenten Evening Prayer Virtual Worship	3	4
5 Palm Sunday: Virtual Worship	6	7 10 AM: Tuesdays @ 10 Virtual Prayer	8	9 Maundy Thursday Virtual Worship	10 Good Friday Virtual Worship	11
12 Easter Sunday: Virtual Worship	13 Evening Readers: Time TBD	14 10 AM: Tuesdays @ 10 Virtual Prayer	15 May VOICE Submis- sions Deadline	16	17	18
19 Virtual Worship	20	21 10 AM: Tuesdays @ 10 Virtual Prayer	22	23	24 5 PM: Fourth Friday @ Grace	25
26 Virtual Worship	27	28 10 AM: Tuesdays @ 10 Virtual Prayer	29	30		

April 2020



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

## **APRIL VOICE ANNOUNCEMENTS:**



**EASTER LILIES:** 35 Easter lilies have been pre-ordered for the church. Since we are not able to sign up for plants, or have Easter services, we decided to offer up a time to pick up a lily at the church before Easter. Please contact Deb Brodeur if you would like one and she will notify you about what day and time you can pick it up the week before Easter (it will depend on the weather). They will be set up on the sidewalk outside, in the front of the church. Deb will be there to confirm (from a distance) that you got your lily. You can then send in a \$16 check made out to St. Matthew Lutheran Church with "lily" in the memo. Hopefully this is a little something that will brighten your Easter.



**EVENING READERS:** The April meeting will be virtual . . . details to come. Since we did not have a meeting in March, we will discuss both the March and April books at the April meeting. Please contact Debbie Steinberg for more information or to be included on the book club email list.

- **April 13<sup>th</sup>, Time TBD** - A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles  
*(We will also discuss the March book at this meeting, "And Then There Were None" by Agatha Christie)*
- **May 11<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 PM** - Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

**GRACE RESEARCH TEAM UNDERWAY:** The Team exploring the possible enhancement of our working relationship with Grace Lutheran Church in Hartford is underway. Pastor Rick of Grace Lutheran participated in our February meeting. He explained the many remarkable endeavors underway to assist the people in the church's neighborhood. St. Matthew has provided over five thousand meals for their Friday evening community dinner and monthly helps serve dinner. We also provided financial support for kitchen equipment, transportation and for the staff and volunteers to attend summer camp. Your dollar support for the meals prepared by our Outreach Committee helps make this service to others possible. God's hand has guided and is guiding the enrichment of this joint venture with Grace Lutheran. Thank you!

**ST. MATTHEW CLEAN UP DAY:** We are hoping church activities will pick up in May! On **Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>**, please come help us with our 2020 Spring Clean-Up (back by popular demand!), hosted by the St. Matthew Property Committee. We will provide coffee and donuts starting at 9 AM and there will be a list of fun tasks to do, both inside and outside the church. We will plan to be done and have you on your way around noon-ish to enjoy the rest of your Saturday. Look for more information soon, on the bulletin board! Please contact Ben Wright with any questions.



**GALLERY WALK:** The St. Matthew Gallery Walk - originally scheduled for Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 - has been rescheduled for May 2021.



**NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER:** A celebration of the National Day of Prayer is scheduled to be held at 12 PM / Noon at the Carmon Family Center, 301 Country Club Road in Avon on **Thursday, May 7, 2020.**

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."* Clergy and lay people from several places of worship and the town will lead us in prayer for our towns, state and nation. The colors will be presented. There will be special music, including a group of students singing from Avon High School. 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. Optional, please bring a bag lunch if you would like to join us afterward for lunch.

***"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.



**MEN'S BREAKFAST:** A Men's Breakfast will be held in the Intern Apartment on **Saturday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8:30 AM.** Please email Pastor Brian or the office if you'd like to attend.

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**RECEIVED FROM ELCA:**



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

Dear People of St. Matthew,

Our thoughts and prayers are with you in this time of anxiety, and we wanted to say a special thank you for your ongoing gifts to ELCA World Hunger in 2019. By giving every month, you insure that we're working church to church until all are fed. Thank you!

May God bless us all as we discover new ways to be church in this time. May God bless you all!

Robin Brown  
ELCA World Hunger

People of St. Matthew,

Thank you for your faithful mission support and for giving beyond your pledge. Your generosity helps resource congregations through times of discernment and call process, share opportunities for leadership development and encourage mission starts. Thank you for your witness.

In these times of social distancing, please know you are held close in prayer.

Blessings,  
Pastor Sam Anderson

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