



# THE VOICE

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH, AVON, CT February 2024

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



224 Lovely Street, Avon, CT 06001-4018  
(860) 673-3301 [www.stmatthewavon.org](http://www.stmatthewavon.org)

## **FEBRUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

### **February 4-25:**

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service  
10:20 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Forum

### **February 14:**

6:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service

### **February 22 & 29:**

6:00 p.m. Mid-week Lenten Service

### **COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

|                              |                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Jack Pietrick, President     | Ellen Ericson   |
| Sheila Jarka, Vice President | Fred Fenn       |
| Meg Kraft, Secretary         | Rick Hanson     |
| George Spoering              | Jason Lindquist |
| Pastor Brian Rajcok          | Kevin Reichler  |
|                              | George Reider   |

### **STAFF:**

Brian Rajcok, Pastor  
Sarah Schiener-Redenz, Director of Music  
Ryan Heckman, Director of Christian Ed.  
Paul Martin, Church Administrator  
Roy Zurell, Sexton  
Steven Smolnik, Publisher



**We Are Here For You** A reminder that your pastor is here for you whenever you have a pastoral need. The pastor is fully vaccinated and is making in-person visits. He can also talk and pray with you over the phone, in a Zoom meeting, outside, or socially distanced indoors at church. Please call the office if you have a pastoral need.

## **A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR**

The season of the church year we are currently in is the "Season after Epiphany." It is the time between Epiphany and Lent where the readings focus on the beginning of Jesus' ministry. So we get texts like Jesus' baptism, his first miracles, and the calling of the first disciples. As we reflect on Jesus' calling of the disciples at this time of year, we are presented with an opportunity to remember our calling to be disciples and recommit to following Jesus. And halfway through this month, Lent begins and we are again invited into deeper devotion and commitment to the journey of discipleship.

Discipleship is indeed a commitment. Of course we are loved, saved, and redeemed as a free gift of God's grace and because of God's commitment to us, not our own doing. And once we know this we can rest assured of our salvation and be free to do what we were created for: to grow up into the mature children of God we're created to be. We're free to follow Jesus, to let our light shine, to manifest God in the world and be Christ to one another. We do this not because we have to in order to earn God's love, grace, or reward—but because we've been so touched by God's love and grace that we want to enter this journey of being mature disciples. Discipleship is not about working to earn God's reward. Discipleship is about growing up. God is very much like a good parent who loves their child no matter what, but also desires to see them grow up into a successful adult. To paraphrase C.S. Lewis, every parent delights in their baby's first steps but no parent is satisfied with anything less than a strong, independently walking adult child.

And so, as we reflect on Jesus' call for us to follow him, let us dedicate ourselves to learning to walk, spiritually speaking. Let us dedicate ourselves to following Jesus and being faithful mature disciples. Not Christians who treat grace like a free pass to ignore our own spiritual development and remain spiritual infants, but rather Christians who take seriously Christ's call to costly discipleship. This month, pray about a spiritual discipline you might take on for 40 days during Lent. Make time for intentional periods of silence. Or commit to reading the Bible or a devotional text every day. Spend a day each week, or an hour each day, intentionally unplugged from your phone, TV, and computer. Or attend St. Matthew's Bible study twice each month or try out our centering prayer group. Ask for God's input and guidance on whatever it is you're called to do this Lent to grow spiritually. Commit to something specific and attainable. Be intentional about deepening your discipleship and let us learn to spiritually walk together!

Blessings,

Pastor Brian



### **STEWARDSHIP**

Thank you to all who have turned in an estimate of giving card for 2024. If you haven't yet it's not too late, we would very much appreciate anyone who can help us meet the 2024 budget.

Also, the stewardship team would like to invite you to consider remembering St. Matthew in your will. Tithing 10% of your will to the church is a wonderful way you can support the ministry of our congregation after you have transitioned into eternal life. Please consider making such a gift to St. Matthew in your will. Thank you for your support and generosity to Christ's church.

### **ADULT FORUM**

Adult Forum meets 10:20-11:20 a.m. on Sunday mornings after worship. Grab some coffee and refreshments and join us for forum. Here's a look at what's coming up in February:

- ✂ February 4: Ryan's Call Story & Ministry Vision
- ✂ February 11: Intergenerational Event: Valentine's Day
- ✂ February 18: History of the Church and Colonialism
- ✂ February 25: GHIAA (Pastor Bill White & Pat Speer)

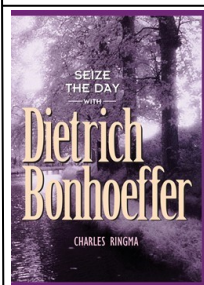


### **BIBLE STUDY**

Bible Study will meet at 10:00 a.m. in the conference room on the first and third Thursdays of the month: February 1st and 15th. All are welcome!

### **CENTERING PRAYER**

Centering Prayer group meets on Zoom, Thursdays at 2:00 p.m. Join us for a time of silent contemplative prayer followed by a time of *lectio divina* and conversation. All are welcome!



### **MEN'S GROUP**

Throughout 2024 the St. Matthew men's group will be reading [Seize the Day with Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#), a 365 daily devotional with excerpts from Bonhoeffer's writings. Order a copy yourself or contact the church office to obtain a copy.

February men's breakfast will be the third Saturday of the month, February 17th at 8:30 a.m. **RSVP by Thursday Feb. 15th** so we know how many to prepare for. See you there!

### **JANUARY COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS**

- \* All work on the parsonage is complete. Our contractor, Dan, stopped by the council meeting to share that it was a very positive experience working with our congregation.
- \* Christmas gifts for the staff were distributed in January. Thanks to all who donated.
- \* The finance committee and the council continued work on the 2024 budget. The budget was approved by the council and will be adjusted accordingly as pledges continue to come in. It will be presented for approval at the Annual meeting.
- \* Proposed changes for the Cell Tower funds were finalized in preparation for presentation to the congregation at the Annual meeting.
- \* The nominating committee continued work on contacting potential new council members.

### **ANNUAL MEETING RECAP**

Thank you to all who attended the annual meeting on Sunday January 21. We approved the 2024 budget, discussed the distribution of the cell tower funds, and elected new council members. Thank you to Greg Boyd, Erica Connors, Perry Hasson, and Ben Wright who will begin their terms on council in February. And thank you to Sheila Jarka, Jason Lindquist, Jack Pietrick, Kevin Reichler, and George Spoering who have finished their terms on council.

**LENTEN EDUCATION SERIES - "LENTEN LITURGICAL JOURNEY"**

Lent is a liturgical passage packed with symbolism, meaning and tradition. This year St. Matthew will be exploring some of this symbolism, meaning and tradition by examining our Lutheran patterns for worship called "liturgy." We will glimpse how God is at work in each element of our worship services and we'll come away having a deeper understanding of this question: "Why do we do the things we do on Sunday mornings?" This education series will take place after each midweek Lenten service (Feb 22, Feb 29, March 7, March 14, March 21).

**LENT MIDWEEK WORSHIP & EDUCATION HOUR**

We look forward to having special midweek offerings during the season of Lent. We will have worship Ash Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. as well as a drive-thru ashes before worship from 4:30-5:30 p.m. in the parking lot. Beginning Thursday February 22nd we will have Holden Evening Prayer at 6:00 p.m. followed an education hour beginning at 6:45 p.m. led by Director of Christian Education Ryan Heckman.

|                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ⇒ <b>Ash Wednesday February 14</b><br>◆ Drive-thru Ashes 4:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.<br>◆ Worship 6:00 p.m.                               | ⇒ <b>Thursday March 7</b><br>◆ Worship 6:00 p.m. – Holden Evening Prayer<br>◆ Education 6:45 p.m. – Lenten Liturgical Journey  |
| ⇒ <b>Thursday February 22</b><br>◆ Worship 6:00 p.m. – Holden Evening Prayer<br>◆ Education 6:45 p.m. – Lenten Liturgical Journey | ⇒ <b>Thursday March 14</b><br>◆ Worship 6:00 p.m. – Holden Evening Prayer<br>◆ Education 6:45 p.m. – Lenten Liturgical Journey |
| ⇒ <b>Thursday February 29</b><br>◆ Worship 6:00 p.m. – Holden Evening Prayer<br>◆ Education 6:45 p.m. – Lenten Liturgical Journey | ⇒ <b>Thursday March 21</b><br>◆ Worship 6:00 p.m. – Holden Evening Prayer<br>◆ Education 6:45 p.m. – Lenten Liturgical Journey |

**2024 ALTAR FLOWERS**

Our 2024 Altar Flower chart is now hanging outside the Sanctuary. If you wish to dedicate Altar Flowers throughout the year, please secure your date by either writing your name and dedication on the chart, or emailing the office. The cost is still \$40.00.



**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Music at Greenwood: Saturday, March 9th, 4:00 p.m.**

Pianist Paul Bisaccia will provide the exciting debut of our 2024 concert series on Saturday, March 9th, at 4:00 p.m.! A light reception will follow the performance. Mark your calendars, and keep an eye on upcoming bulletins and newsletters for more details. We hope to see you there!



**FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:**

This month, the global Christian church will enter the liturgical season called Lent.

Lent is a period of 40 days and 40 nights (excluding Sundays) where we journey together through God's Word becoming humble and quiet witnesses to a remarkable moment in creation's history: the final moments of Jesus's ministry and his ultimate sentence to die for all of creation on the cross.

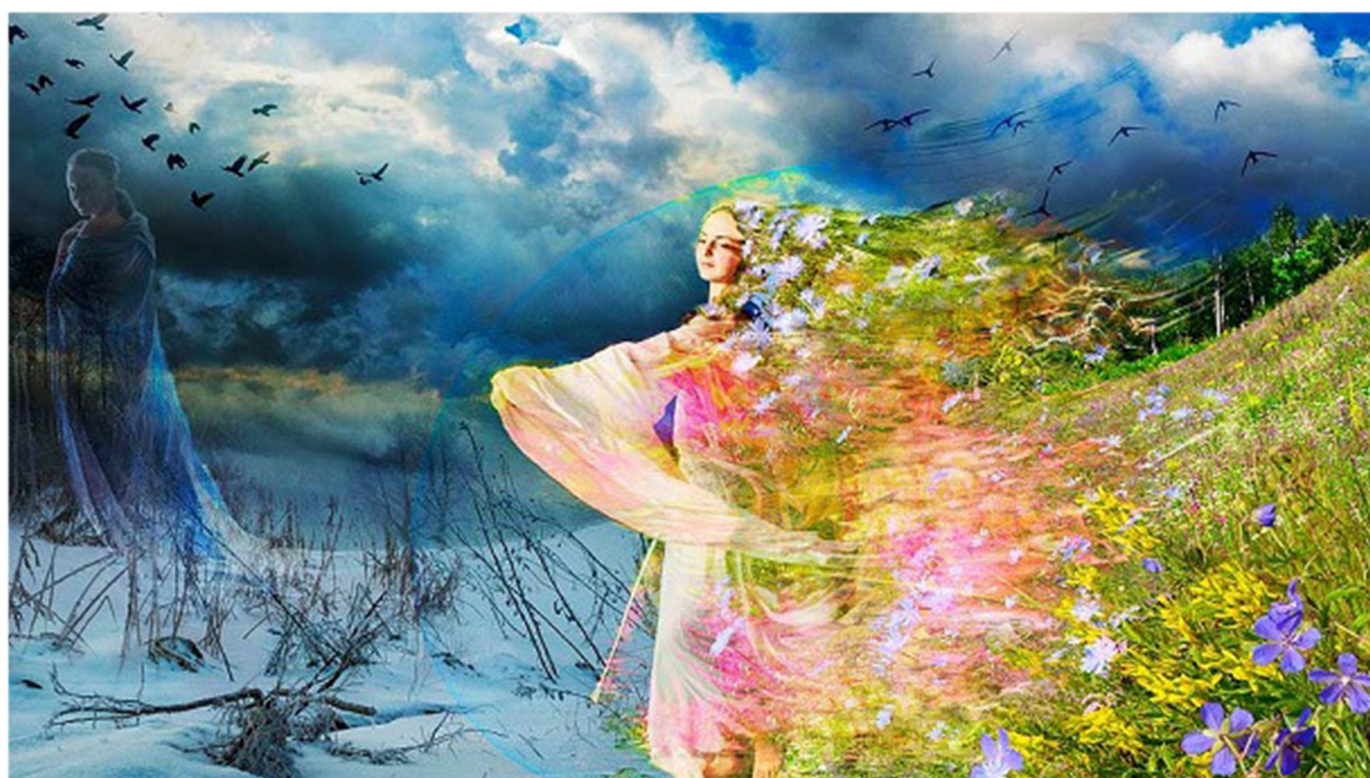
Lent is not a passive time of waiting for inevitable events that we know will take place on the cross. We become active witnesses to, and participants in, these greatest events in creation's history. We take part through our liturgical traditions during our worship services. We begin Lent by remembering that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Death is a reality in the world and we mark this by smearing ashes on our forehead during the liturgy of Ash Wednesday. We kneel humbly each Sunday in confession and we "hide away" our alleluias as we witness Jesus's journey to the cross which is ultimately marked by stripping our altars bare. However, we emerge from Lent on Easter Sunday to the sounds of trumpets and bells, the sparkle of white and gold altar coverings, the flowing of baptismal waters, the bright pastels of joyful outfits, and the aromas of flowers! We celebrate because we are marking God's ultimate promise - that death is not the final answer - because Christ is risen!

Lent is a liturgical passage. So, this year during the season of Lent, I will be presenting a five part series on our liturgical life together at St. Matthew. We will explore our most sacred traditions that take place in our sanctuary and we'll use the structure of our worship service - Gathering, Word, Meal, Sending - as our guide. This five part series will take place on Thursday evenings after the Lenten midweek service (Feb 22, Feb 29, March 7, March 14, March 21).


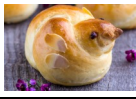

I hope you will join me each week as we dig deeper into our liturgical tradition to see how the promises God makes to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ shine through each part of our worship service.

Peace,

Ryan Heckman



*Winter into Spring*

| Sun                                                                                                                         | Mon                | Tue                                                                         | Wed                                                                                                                                                                            | Thu                                                                                  | Fri                                                                                                                | Sat                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
|  <h2 style="margin: 0;">February 2024</h2> |                    |                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                | 1<br>10:00 Bible Study<br><br>2:00 Centering Prayer                                  | 2 <a href="#">Candlemas</a><br> | 3                          |
| 4<br>9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service<br>10:20 Sunday School & Adult Forum<br><br>5:00 Confirmation                         | 5                  | 6 10:00 A.A.                                                                | 7<br>9:30 & 5:15 WW Meeting<br>7:00 Overeater's Anonymous<br>7:00 Choir Rehearsal                                                                                              | 8 VOICE Deadline<br><br>2:00 Centering Prayer                                        | 9                                                                                                                  | 10                         |
| 11<br>9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service<br>10:20 Intergenerational Valentine's Day Event<br><br>5:00 Confirmation            | 12                 | 13 10:00 A.A.<br><br>7:00 Avon Land Trust Meeting<br>7:00 Finance Committee | 14 ASH WEDNESDAY & Valentine's Day<br>9:30 & 5:15 WW Meeting<br>4:30—5:30 Drive-thru Ashes<br>6:00 Ash Wednesday Service<br>7:00 Overeater's Anonymous<br>7:00 Choir Rehearsal | 15<br>10:00 Bible Study<br><br>2:00 Centering Prayer                                 | 16                                                                                                                 | 17<br>8:30 Men's Breakfast |
| 18<br>9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service<br>10:20 Sunday School & Adult Forum                                                 | 19 Presidents' Day | 20 10:00 A.A.<br><br>7:00 Church                                            | 21<br>9:30 & 5:15 WW Meeting<br>7:00 Overeater's Anonymous<br>7:00 Choir Rehearsal                                                                                             | 22<br>2:00 Centering Prayer<br>6:00 Mid-week Lenten Service<br>6:45 Lenten Education | 23                                                                                                                 | 24                         |
| 25<br>9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service<br>10:20 Sunday School & Adult Forum                                                 | 26                 | 27 10:00 A.A.                                                               | 28<br>9:30 & 5:15 WW Meeting<br>7:00 Overeater's Anonymous<br>7:00 Choir Rehearsal                                                                                             | 29<br>2:00 Centering Prayer<br>6:00 Mid-week Lenten Service<br>6:45 Lenten Education |                                                                                                                    |                            |
|                                          |                    |                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                      |                                                                                                                    |                            |

February 2024

Non-Profit Organization

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

