



224 Lovely Street, Avon, CT 06001-4018
(860) 673-3301 www.stmatthewavon.org

JUNE WORSHIP SCHEDULE

June 4: Confirmation Sunday:

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Confirmation Service

June 11:

10:30 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service

11:30 a.m. Annual SMLC Picnic

June 18: Father's Day

9:00 a.m. Outdoor Worship

June 25:

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Confirmation Service

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Jack Pietrick, President
Sheila Jarka, Vice President
Meg Kraft, Secretary
George Spoering
Pastor Brian Rajcok

Ellen Ericson
Fred Fenn
Rick Hanson
Kevin Reichler
George Reider
Jason Lindquist

STAFF:

Brian Rajcok, Pastor
Sarah Schiener, Director of Music
Paul Martin, Church Administrator
Roy Zurell, Sexton
Steven Smolnik, Publisher



A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

This year the Day of Pentecost will be Sunday May 28th. Pentecost is considered the birthday of the church, the day when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples and empowered them to speak the message of Christ in many different languages. The Spirit gave them the words to say and the courage to speak. The Spirit gave them inspiration, empowerment, and a sense of clarity about their calling. The Spirit equipped them to change the world and showed them where to go.

In the same way the Holy Spirit continues to be active today. The Spirit continues to inspire and empower Christians worldwide. When we are touched by the Holy Spirit we are given the right words to speak and the right direction to go. Sometimes this may come in the form of a powerful Pentecost-like experience; other times it may be a gradual process of discernment. But whatever our specific situation is, the Holy Spirit is calling us to contribute to God's mission for the church in some way. Whether it is by assisting in worship leadership or serving on church committees, by volunteering for those in need or teaching children about the faith, by praying for those on our prayer chain or being a compassionate listener to a friend—we can all follow the Spirit's call to continue the work of Christ on behalf of the world.

In Second Corinthians 5, St. Paul writes about the ministry of reconciliation. He understands the church's mission as continuing to make God present in the world, just as Jesus did, as manifesting the reconciliation which Christ brought to the world. He says we are ambassadors for Christ, entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. We are called to help the world live in alignment with the divine. Doing so in our own lives and helping others do the same—so that we continue to manifest the Kingdom of God as Jesus taught. And it is the Holy Spirit which gives us the ability to do just that: to be Christ-like ourselves and to share the Good News of God's love and grace with a world that desperately needs to hear good news.

And so this month I hope we can all pay attention to the movement of the Spirit in our lives. To be mindful of the way in which the Spirit is active in us. To be intentional of following the Spirit's guidance into whatever work of love God is (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.

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.

(...continued) calling us to. And may we continue to manifest the Body of Christ in the world.
Peace be with you this Pentecost and always,
- Pastor Brian



ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC

The annual church picnic will be held Sunday June 11th following worship which will be at 10:30 a.m. that day, rather than the typical 9:00 a.m. Join us after worship for food, fellowship, outdoor games, and more!

Sign-up sheets are available on the bulletin board outside the office, or in the weekly Constant Contact email. If you have any questions about volunteering, or would like to RSVP, you can always [email the office](#) as well!

SUMMER OUTDOOR WORSHIP SCHEDULE

During the summer months we plan to hold worship outdoors in the backyard of the church the following Sundays at 9:00 a.m.:

- May 28
- June 18
- July 2
- September 3

Thank you to John Jarzbek and Deb Brodeur for setting up and using their sound equipment for these services. We hope you'll join us for these special services!

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR UPDATE

We have formed a search committee to hire a new Director of Christian Education at St. Matthew. We have created a job description and are using several outlets to find candidates. The hiring team will keep the congregation updated as the process moves forward.

THURSDAY BIBLE STUDY

Bible study will meet the first and third Thursdays of June: June 1st and June 15th at 10:00 a.m. in the conference room. All are welcome! These will be our final Bible Studies of the program year before taking a break for the summer in July and August.



MEN'S BREAKFAST

St. Matthew's men's breakfast will meet again on Saturday at 8:30 a.m. June 17th. Men of all ages are welcome! This will be our last breakfast of the program year before taking a break for the summer in July and August



CENTERING PRAYER

Centering Prayer group continues to meet every Thursday at 2:00 p.m. on zoom. We are currently reading [Forty Days to a Closer Walk with God: The Practice of Centering Prayer](#) by Rev. J. David Muyskens. All are welcome to try this wonderful contemplative practice!

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation Sunday is June 4th at 9:00 a.m. worship! Congratulations to our confirmands and their families!

Confirmation rehearsal will be Saturday June 3rd at 10:00 a.m.



CHOIR UPDATE

Sunday, June 11, will be the last service of the season for the St. Matthew Choir. Each Sunday over the summer, anyone interested in singing is invited to join Sarah in the back of the sanctuary 30 minutes before the service. There will be a brief warmup and exploration of the hymns in the service. No experience is needed, just a willingness to sing and learn!

MAY 2023 CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

- ⇒ The process to hire a Director of Christian Education has begun. A job description has been sent out to the congregation and throughout the synod.
- ⇒ A new welcome brochure has been created and will be mailed to new residents in the Farmington Valley. Additionally, follow-up postcards will be sent before the holidays.
- ⇒ The cell tower transaction is nearly completed and we are awaiting a closing date. New policies and procedures regarding the management of the new fund were voted on and accepted by the council.

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

On Sunday June 18th we will be recognizing our high school graduates during service and offering each a small gift. It will be outdoor worship and also is Father's Day that Sunday. We hope you'll join us for a time to honor and celebrate our high school grads and pray for them as they enter into the next phase of their life's journeys.

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				<h1>June 2023</h1> 		
				1 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	2	3 10:00 Confirmation Rehearsal
4 Confirmation Sunday 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service with Confirmation	5	6	7 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	8 2:00 Centering Prayer	9	10
11 10:30 Sanctuary Communion Service 11:30 Annual SMLC Picnic	12 7:00 Finance Committee	13 7:00 Avon Land Trust 7:00 Church Council	14 Flag Day 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting	15 VOICE DEADLINE 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	16	17 8:30 Men's Breakfast
18 Father's Day 9:00 Outdoor Worship	19 Juneteenth	20	21 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting	22 2:00 Centering Prayer	23	24
25 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service	26	27	28 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	29 2:00 Centering Prayer	30	

June 2023



A VIEW FROM THE PEW

Sacred

On the first floor of the Yale University Art Gallery is displayed a broken piece of plaster wall, painted in the 3rd century A.D., depicting Christ walking on the Sea of Galilee during a storm. In the background is a boat with several people in it, as described in the 16th Chapter of the Gospel of Matthew and the 6th Chapters of the Gospels of Luke and John. This painting was excavated in Dura-Europas, present day Syria, during an archeologic mission from 1928-1937.

I turn my attention to this fragment of art because it once decorated the wall of a room in what is believed to be the oldest Christian church ever discovered; a House Church built about A.D. 232, where Christians worshipped out of the view of the Roman authorities before Constantine's Edict of Milan in 313 decreed religious tolerance. In particular, this painting juxtaposes the demonstrative deity of Jesus with the tempest-tossed fears of the disciples, within the context of water. The painting was part of the most important room in the Church – the baptistry – where new adherents to the faith were sanctified.

This House Church, and, indeed, this very room, was sacred space, set apart, and introduced to anyone that entered as sacred by the conspicuous miracle that oversaw the room through this painting.

Now, though, I reflected with some dolefulness as I gazed on this piece of plaster. It was no longer part of a sacred space. It was now a mere artifact of what once was sacred. Its iconography was no less reverent than was intended by its devout maker. Something was missing. There were no longer any people among or within the space defined by this, and, no doubt, other images illuminating the Spirit alive within that baptistry. This painting, once consecrated to the Holy, was now a piece of plaster with faded pigments on it. Were that House Church still intact and this fragment of wall in its original place, the baptistry it illuminated and the whole building would be hallowed, perhaps even a site of pilgrimage.

What had changed? What makes a place sacred? Should we even contemplate the assignment of Cartesian space to the Divine? Cannot God be anywhere? Indeed, any place, and any experience, that provides *unio mystica* is sacred.

Sacred spaces differ from secular, or profane, spaces. Every sacred space implies a detachment of some area from the surrounding context and it becoming qualitatively different. By contrast, secular space appears and disappears arbitrarily and in response to the needs of its locality.

The Church's persistent promulgation of contemporaneous spiritual fulfillment in the face of the promise of what Max Weber called "the pious boredom of paradise" presents a continuous challenge to church leadership. Sacred spaces and experiences help provide that ontological bridge and a reference point for human fulfillment.

The evolution of the Church since 1517 did not change our human preference for God to be in holy places, divine ubiquity notwithstanding. The central themes of the Reformation included the elimination of magic as a means to salvation, but they did not, by any means, attenuate the role of the sacred. Hence, that evolutionary process broadened, rather than narrowed, our notion of the sacred. Indeed, the sacred need only point to the transcendent, without necessarily being grounded in any religious tradition. The temple, the solar alignment, the river, and the path all may provide us a gateway to the Divine.

That sense of belonging and connection does not, however, erupt spontaneously. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger delved into the sacred and proposed that it exists in three simultaneous planes.

First, Heidegger propounded the untranslatable concept of *Dasein*, which might be understood in context as the requirement the sacred imposes on people as being there. Perhaps being in the world – being both here and over there- captures this element. (continued...)

(...continued)

Second, he asserts that for people to experience the sacred, they must dwell in the sacred space. Not so much residing there as being fully present. This concept intellectually overlaps with *Dasein* when we evaluate the sacred.

Finally, Heidegger asserts that the sacred occurs at the intersection of humanity and the earth on which we live. This is often provided by a locale, such as a bridge over a river. Whereas before the bridge is constructed, the river is a geographic feature, but upon the arrival of the bridge, it becomes a place to be, to gather, to experience something.

Among many common themes implied by Heidegger's proposition is implied a sense of community that includes an acknowledgement of a space as sacred.

In Genesis, we learn of Jacob sleeping in the wild, with a rock for a pillow and dreaming of a staircase to heaven, with angels ascending and descending. God appears to Jacob in the dream and promises him the land around him, but not before enjoining it also to Jacob's descendants. The place is sacred, but only insofar as, and perhaps because, it is shared by a community.

Your own sacred space may be your church building, your river path, or your coffee shop. Anywhere you can be in the world that helps you transcend your existence, whether in communion with God or with strangers, is consecrated when you understand yourself in terms of community.

Selah

The author, Dan Smolnik, is a member of Spring Glen Church in Hamden, Connecticut

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