



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

JANUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

January 7-28:

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

January 21:

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service
10:00 a.m. Annual Congregation Meeting
10:20 a.m. Sunday School

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

Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year to you all! Christmas is a 12-day festival so we're still celebrating it as we begin January. It's ironic to me that our culture starts celebrating Christmas so early and then abruptly halts on December 26th (day #2 of this 12-day festival)—Christmas lights vanish from storefronts, Christmas trees are gone from living rooms, and holiday music disappears from the radio. Yet, we know the celebration continues!

I was blessed to have had such a wonderful Christmas with you all. I was reminded what a joy this season is watching children enact the Christmas story during this year's pageant, visiting homes to sing Christmas carols with our confirmation students, singing Silent Night in the candlelight during Christmas Eve service. It is truly a gift to experience this holy season.

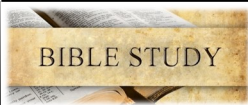
One of my favorite things about the time following Christmas is to watch the daylight come back. December 21st was the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year; and now we can watch the days grow longer. And then January 1st provides a time to make New Year's resolutions, to look at ourselves and consider how we want to live better lives in the coming year. This rhythm of the year is powerful and can reflect our spiritual lives. After the birth of Christ, light begins to shine longer in our hemisphere, and we are inspired to make new resolutions about how we can grow more and more into the people God calls us to be. Whether or not we keep our resolutions we know we are loved by God and promised eternal life with Him—but the joy of living in eternity is growing in our relationship with God, something we can mature into a little more each year. Perhaps by taking up a spiritual practice like centering prayer, or reading our Bible more faithfully, or reciting Psalms and singing a hymn each morning. There are many ways we can let our light grow in 2024 and I encourage you to pick a resolution that will enliven your flame and invite the light of Christmas to shine in your life the whole year round.

Blessings to you this New Year and may Christ shine ever brighter in your heart.

Blessings,

Pastor Brian





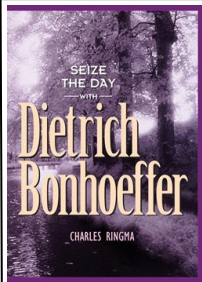
BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study will meet at 10:00 a.m. in the conference room on the first and third Thursdays of the month: January 4th and 18th. 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.

Our first men's breakfast of the new year will be the third Saturday of the month January 20th at 8:30 a.m. **RSVP by Thursday Jan. 18** so we know how many to prepare for. See you there!

THANK YOU TO SUNDAY SCHOOL AND CONFIRMATION

Thank you to our Sunday Schoolers who wrote cards for our homebound members and to our Confirmation students who sang Christmas carols at some of our older members' homes. They want to express their great appreciation for your kindness and well wishes during the holiday season. Thank you for sharing the Christmas spirit and the love of God!

Sunday School will meet every Sunday in January after worship from 10:20—11:20 a.m.

DECEMBER COUNCIL NOTES

- ⇒ Pledges continue to be made by members of the congregation and additional pledges can be forwarded to the church office. The finance committee is meeting to set the budget for next year. The final budget will be presented for approval at the Congregation Meeting.
- ⇒ Council nominations will be collected in the wooden box in the Gathering space. Prayerfully consider joining the council for a two year term as we continue the work of our church.
- ⇒ The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 21, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.** Please plan to attend.
- ⇒ The Uplift the Parsonage work is set to be completed in December. Thank you to all members for the support for this project!

2024 OFFERING ENVELOPES

If you expressed interest in a box of offering envelopes in 2023 or 2024, your box will be available for pick-up outside the Sanctuary on Sunday. Everyone who requested a box will have their name on their specific set of envelopes. Please do not take someone else's box! Alternatively, if you did not express interested in the last two years, but would like a box of your own please email the office. We have plenty of extra sets.

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.

COFFEE HOUR MINISTRY

Love coffee and snacks? We're building up our Coffee Hour Ministry and need your help! If you're a baker or just love putting together tasty treats, we want you on board. Let's make our post-church Sundays extra special. Whether it's cookies or muffins, salty or sweet, extravagantly complex or elegantly simple, every contribution counts. **If you're interested, please email the office, or coordinate with Anne Fenn on Sundays.**

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Since my first day on November 1st, it has been a whirlwind! The Sunday school had weekly classes, two intergenerational activities, and did a wonderful job with the Christmas pageant! I've also enjoyed giving the weekly children's message. The Confirmation class has met weekly, and I've worked with Pastor Brian to plan engaging lessons. They have also participated in two service opportunities: serving at Grace Lutheran's Friday Night Meal and Christmas Caroling. There was a Christmas Party for the High School youth on Friday December 22. And Finally, I have started the process of registering for the 2024 ELCA National Youth Gathering. Whew!

In the midst of all this, I have often reminded myself to stay centered on the central purpose of all these youth education and engagement opportunities: **to teach about the ways that God is revealing God's Kingdom to us.** This central purpose always guides me in my Christian Education work here at St. Matthew.

Several members at St. Matthew have asked about my vision for Christian Education. I think the above central purpose is the best description I have about what guides my vision. I firmly believe that every education opportunity we have, from Bible Studies to Adult Education, from Christmas Pageants to retreats at Camp, offers us an opportunity to engage with the Holy Spirit to catch a glimpse of how God is being revealed through what we are doing and learning.

I want to use the Christmas Pageant as an example because it recently took place. The children were able to embody the Christmas story by playing characters and singing. Performing the story helps them learn basic things like the sequence of events that led to the birth of Jesus. But they also learned so much more than the simple sequence of events. They engaged with the mystery of God becoming enfleshed - of God becoming incarnate in the world through Jesus Christ. They learned that the birth of Jesus is something really special because Angels were involved and those Angels were sent by God! They learned that shepherds visited Jesus because God told them a savior was born! The children learned that our entire congregation stops, listens, and watches when they dress up and tell us this amazing birth story! They learned that Jesus means something deeply important to their families, to our congregation, and to the world.

The implicit messages that our children learn through acting out the Christmas story in goofy costumes have built essential foundations for their later learning and engagement with major theological principles like: God's incarnation through Jesus Christ, Jesus's simultaneous divinity and humanity, the gifts of love, grace, and peace that Jesus Christ brought to us during his lifetime of ministry. And those same gifts of love, grace, and peace given to us eternally through the grace of God in Christ's death on the cross and resurrection.

My vision for Christian Education here at St. Matthew is to enrich each and every learning opportunity, whether that is with pre-kindergarteners or people well into their adult years, with an active engagement in the presence of the Holy Spirit who will help to reveal a glimpse of God's Kingdom right here in our midst! God is at work! Our learning, seeking, and questioning will help us know where God is working and how we can join God's work.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<h1>January 2024</h1>  						
	1 New Year's Day OFFICE CLOSED	2	3 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	4 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	5	6 EPIPHANY
7 EPIPHANY SUNDAY 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:20 Sunday School & Adult Forum	8 7:00 Finance Committee	9 7:00 Church Council Meeting 7:00 Avon Land Trust Meeting	10 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	11 VOICE Deadline 2:00 Centering Prayer	12	13 11:00 Altar Guild Meeting & Potluck
14 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:20 Sunday School & Adult Forum	15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	16	17 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	18 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	19	20 8:30 Men's Breakfast
21 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:00 Annual Congregational Meeting 10:20 Sunday School 5:00 Confirmation	22	23 6:00 Worship & Music Committee Meeting	24 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	25 2:00 Centering Prayer	26	27
28 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:20 Sunday School & Adult Forum 5:00 Confirmation	29	30	31 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal			

January 2024

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

