

**Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
**First Communion Sunday**  
**9:00 a.m., May 11, 2025**



**Welcome to worship this morning!**

We are glad you're here! **Children** are welcome to remain in worship; they are also welcome to take a break in our "Kid's Korner" in the Gathering Space where the service audio is played through speakers. **Bathrooms** are located down the hall, past the church office. **Hymns** are printed in the red book (ELW) available in the pew rack.

All who desire the sacrament of Holy Communion are welcome; you may also come forward to receive a blessing. During the distribution of Holy Communion, ushers will direct the congregation forward to receive communion in a continuous line. Our pastors will distribute communion wafers, which you may intinct (dip) into the red wine, or white grape juice, held by communion assistants. Please **do not drink** from the chalices. Gluten free wafers are also available. A pastor will deliver the sacrament to anyone unable to come forward. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit, available at the usher's table.

All are welcome!

**PRELUDE:** *Belmont*

**Jacob B. Weber**

**WELCOME**

**THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM**

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**He is risen, indeed. Alleluia!**

In the name of ✠ the One  
who was, who is, and who is to come.  
**Amen.**

Baptized into Christ's death and resurrection,  
and called to live the baptized life,  
let us give thanks for the gifts of baptism.

Holy God,  
we give you thanks for the waters of baptism,  
waters that make a people your own,  
that restore to wholeness,  
and empower us to be witnesses in your name.  
Baptized into you, O Living One,  
**make us one as you are one.**

We give you thanks for the waters of baptism,  
waters that strengthen believers  
and give new life to beloved servants of your church;  
waters that extend your boundless love  
and cross barriers of our own making.  
Baptized into you, O Living One,  
**make us one as you are one.**

We give you thanks for the waters of baptism,  
waters that open the hearts of believers  
and give a voice in the night to those in captivity;  
waters that set your people on a new path,  
rejoicing in the Spirit's power.  
Baptized into you, O Living One,  
**make us one as you are one.**

Grant us grace, love, and life, O Living One,  
that our every day is shaped by these waters  
that give us our very lives in you.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Crucified and Risen One. **Amen.**

## OPENING HYMN: *This Joyful Eastertide*



1. This joy - ful Eas - ter - tide, a - way with sin and  
2. My flesh in hope shall rest and for a sea - son  
3. Death's flood has lost its chill since Je - sus crossed the



sor - row! My love, the Cru - ci - fied, has  
slum - ber till horns from east to west shall  
riv - er. Lov - er of souls, from ill my



sprung to life this mor - row.  
wake the dead in num - ber.  
pass - ing soul de - liv - er.



Had Christ, who once was slain, not burst his three-day pris - on, our



faith had been in vain. But now has Christ a - ris - en, a -



ris - en, a - ris - en, a - ris - en.

## GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
**And also with you.**

# THIS IS THE FEAST



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 1 Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb



who was slain, whose blood set us free to be peo - ple of God.



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 2 Pow - er, rich - es, wis - dom, and



strength, and hon - or, bless - ing, and glo - ry are his.



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 3 Sing with all the peo - ple of



God, and join in the hymn of all cre - a - tion: Bless - ing, hon - or,



glo - ry, and might be to God and the Lamb for - ev - er. A - men.

*Refrain*

This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,  
 al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 4 For the Lamb who was  
 slain has be - gun his reign. Al - le - lu - ia.

*Final refrain*

This is the feast of vic - to - ry for our God.  
 Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God of peace, you brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep. By the blood of your eternal covenant, make us complete in everything good that we may do your will, and work among us all that is well-pleasing in your sight, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

*The congregation may be seated.*

## FIRST READING: Acts 9:36-43

*Dorcas was a faithful and devoted woman of charity in the community of Joppa. Her kindness and her work with clothing were well-known, especially to the widows in town. When she fell ill and died, Peter raised her back to life through the power of prayer.*

A reading from the Book of Acts:

<sup>36</sup> Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. <sup>37</sup> At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. <sup>38</sup> Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." <sup>39</sup> So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. <sup>40</sup> Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. <sup>41</sup> He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. <sup>42</sup> This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup> Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

## CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Pastor Brian

### SECOND READING: Psalm 23

We will now read responsively from the Book of Psalms:

<sup>1</sup> The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not be in want.

<sup>2</sup> **The Lord makes me lie down in green pastures  
and leads me beside still waters.**

<sup>3</sup> You restore my soul, O Lord,  
and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

<sup>4</sup> **Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;  
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

<sup>6</sup> **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.  
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Music: Brian O'Connell and Christopher Walker  
Words: United Methodist Church and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
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## HOLY GOSPEL: John 10:22-30

*Jesus responds to questions about his identity with the remarkable claim that he and the Father are one. Those who understand this are his sheep; they hear his voice, follow, and will never be snatched from his hand.*

The Holy Gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

<sup>22</sup> At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. <sup>24</sup> So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered, “I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me; <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup> The Father and I are one.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON:

Rev. Ryan

HYMN OF THE DAY: *The King of Love My Shepherd Is*

ELW 502

## NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
And the life of the world to come. Amen.

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of resurrection, healing, wholeness, and new life, we come before you in prayer for the church, the world, and all who are in need. I invite you into a prayerful posture of kneeling, standing or sitting.

*A brief silence.*



You guide your people to the waters of life. Make your church a nourishing place for all who are thirsty for hope, healing and wholeness. Renew us in the waters of baptism and send us forth as signs of your love active in the world. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You tend to the earth, sustaining life in all places. Revive fragile ecosystems and restore species in danger of extinction. Teach us new ways of living in balance and harmony with our non-human neighbors. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You lead all peoples along right pathways. Grant wisdom and compassion to judges, lawyers, mediators, and legal advocates. As we see healing and wholeness in Christ's ministry of forgiveness, help us to dismantle systems of mass incarceration, empower processes of restorative justice, and encourage all who strive for healing in our communities. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You wipe away the tears from every eye. Tend to all who struggle with anxiety, depression, loneliness, sickness, disease or despair. Enfold all who are in any need in your shepherding care. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

This Mother's Day, bless mothers, grandmothers, and all who offer mothering care. Come close to those whose relationships with their families are difficult, and console all who grieve the loss of mother figures or the loss of children. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Today we pray in great thanks to you O God, that you come to us in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We especially give thanks for Michael, Charlotte, Alina and Joey who participated in a First Communion Workshop this week and are now ready to experience your real presence in bread and wine today. Hear us O, God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give you thanks this day for the one year anniversary of Rev Ryan's ordination. We thank you for his ministry and ask you to bless our congregation as we follow your call together. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We commend these and all our prayers to you, O God, trusting that you are always with us; in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Savior. **Amen.**

## PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*The congregation may be seated.*

## OFFERING

*At this time, ushers will pass the offering plate if you desire to give a financial gift. Donations may also be given online at [stmatthewavon.org/give](http://stmatthewavon.org/give) or mailed directly to the church. Thank you for your continued generosity and faithfulness!*

## OFFERTORY: *Loving Shepherd of Thy Sheep*, arr. Marie Pooler, text by Jane E. Leeson

Loving Shepherd of thy sheep,  
Keep thy lamb, in safety keep;  
Nothing can thy pow'r withstand,  
None can pluck me from thy hand.

Loving Savior, thou didst give  
Thine own life that we might live;  
And the hands outstretched to bless  
Bear the cruel nails' impress.

I would bless thee every day,  
Gladly all thy will obey,  
Like the blessed ones above,  
Happy in thy precious love.

Loving Shepherd, ever near,  
Teach thy lamb thy voice to hear;  
Suffer not my steps to stray  
From the straight and narrow way.

Where thou leadest, I would go  
Walking in thy steps below,  
Till before my Father's throne  
I shall know as I am known.  
Loving Shepherd, bless thy lambs.

Loving Shepherd of thy Sheep, Marie Pooler © 1962, Augsburg Publishing House. All rights reserved.

## DOXOLOGY

*All rise as the gifts are brought forward.*

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
praise him, all creatures here below;  
praise him above, ye heav'nly host;  
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

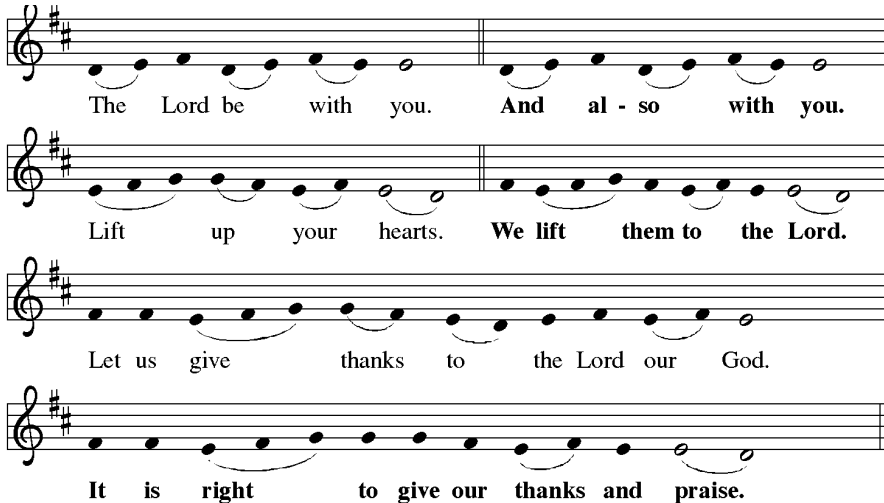
## OFFERING PRAYER

Risen One,  
you have gathered us around your table of grace  
along with these gifts we bring.  
Come among us again,  
breathe your life into us,  
and enliven us with this meal,  
that we may live as your risen body in the world. **Amen.**

## HOLY COMMUNION

Today we rejoice with the following children and their families as they celebrate their First Communion:

## GREAT THANKSGIVING



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

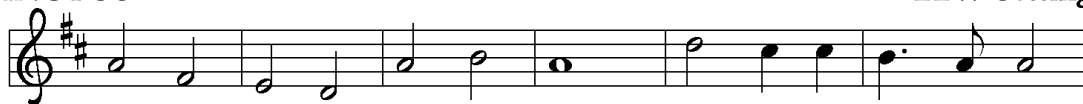
It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,

that we should at all times and in all places  
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,  
for the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ,  
the true Paschal Lamb who gave himself to take away our sin;  
who in dying has destroyed death,  
and in rising has brought us to eternal life.

And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection,  
with earth and sea and all their creatures,  
and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## SANCTUS

## ELW Setting 4



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.



Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes



in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Blessed are you, O God of the universe.  
Your mercy is everlasting  
and your faithfulness endures from age to age.  
Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth.

Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood.  
Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea.  
Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness  
to the land of milk and honey.  
Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one.  
Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ.  
Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.  
Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

With this bread and cup  
we remember our Lord's passover from death to life  
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:  
**Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

O God of resurrection and new life:  
Pour out your Holy Spirit on us  
and on these gifts of bread and wine.  
Bless this feast.  
Grace our table with your presence. **Come, Holy Spirit.**

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread.

Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world.  
Breathe new life into us.  
Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love. **Come, Holy Spirit.**

With your holy ones of all times and places,  
with the earth and all its creatures,  
with sun and moon and stars,  
we praise you, O God,  
blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.  
**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

*At this time, ushers will direct the First Communicants and their families to commune at the rail. After First Communicants are finished the ushers will direct the congregation to form two lines in the center aisle. After you receive a communion wafer from the pastor, walk to the side of the altar where you may intinct (dip) the wafer into the red wine or white grape juice. Please do not drink from the chalices.*

The risen Christ is made known to us in the breaking of the bread.  
Come and eat at God's table.

### **THE DISTRIBUTION**

The body of Christ, given for you.

**AGNUS DEI**

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

**ELW Setting 4**



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the



sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

COMMUNION HYMN: *The Lord's My Shepherd*

ELW 778

**BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION**

May the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Living One,  
in this feast you have made yourself known to us.  
Send us now to tell of your wonders,  
sing of your glory, and proclaim your risen life  
to a wounded and weary world. **Amen.**

**BENEDICTION**

The triune God,  
who was, who is, and who is to come,  
Sovereign, † Savior, and Spirit,  
light your way with resurrection dawn,  
now and always. **Amen.**

**CLOSING HYMN: *Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia!***

**ELW 369**

## **DISMISSAL**

Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
Go in peace. Share the good news!

**Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**  
**Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

## **POSTLUDE**

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Today's Altar flowers are given for the glory of God!

## **MANY THANKS FOR TODAY'S VOLUNTEER WORSHIP LEADERS**

**Acolyte:** Ivy Nadeau

**Altar Guild:** Lynn Metz & Kathy Alsgaard

**Assisting Minister:** Rick Hanson

**Lector:** Ben Wright

**Livestream:** George Spoering

**Usher:** Kevin Reichler

**Coffee Hour:** Kathy Kurtich, Jane Hanson, and the Reiders

## **TODAY'S ADULT FORUM**

### **The Force: A Star Wars Tribute to the Holy Spirit**

Rev. Ryan will be presenting a Star Wars themed Adult Forum this week on connections between The Force and the Holy Spirit. Inspired by May the Fourth (last week!) we'll explore allegorical connections between the Biblical Scriptures and the Star Wars film franchise. Using clips from the films, the Bible and our own creativity, we'll engage with ideas like: God's Ruach (breath), God's Voice, and the Holy Spirit. We'll come away with a deeper sense of how the Holy Spirit connects us and gives us power as the People of God – perhaps as The Force connects the Jedi and the Rebel Resistance to each other giving them power to topple The Empire.

## **STAFF**



**Pastor:** The Rev. Dr. Brian R. Rajcok – [pastorbrian@stmatthewavon.org](mailto:pastorbrian@stmatthewavon.org)  
**Associate Pastor:** The Rev. Ryan Heckman – [revryan@stmatthewavon.org](mailto:revryan@stmatthewavon.org)  
**Director of Music:** Sarah Schiener-Redenz – [music@stmatthewavon.org](mailto:music@stmatthewavon.org)  
**Office Administrator:** Paul Martin – [office@stmatthewavon.org](mailto:office@stmatthewavon.org) or (860) 673-3301  
**Sexton:** Roy Zurell – contact the office

### VISIT US ONLINE

**Website:** [www.stmatthewavon.org](http://www.stmatthewavon.org) **YouTube:** @StMatthewAvon  
**Facebook.com/SaintMatthewLutheranChurch Instagram:** @stmatthewlutheranavon

### THE WEEK AHEAD

Sunday	10:20am: Sunday School & Adult Forum			10:30am: Confirmation Class	
Tuesday	10am: A.A.	12:30-2pm: Women's Fellowship	2pm: Choir Rehearsal	7pm: Avon Land Trust	7pm: Finance Mtg.
Wednesday	9:30am & 5:15pm: W.W		6:30pm: Usher Training & Pizza Party		7pm: O.A.
Thursday	10am: Bible Study			2pm: Centering Prayer	
Saturday	8:30am: Men's Breakfast		4pm: Music at Greenwood – Elliott Davis		
Sunday	9am: Sanctuary Worship w/ Holy Communion		10:20 - 11:15am: Sunday School & Adult Forum		10:30am: Confirmation Class

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP MEETING - UPDATE

**Tuesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025 12:30 pm - 2:00 pm**

Please join us for our final Women's Fellowship meeting of the year. As a continuation of our mission of Open Heart - Helping Hands, we are asking for donations of paper products to be given to Canton Foodshare. The following items have been suggested: Toilet Paper, Kleenex, Paper Towels.

We are an amazing group of women, and we are all so good at caring for others that

we thought we would take the opportunity to do a little self-care to kick off our meeting. MJ Sandell will lead us in a 20-minute chair yoga session along with some relaxation methods. After which we will enjoy our brown bag lunches. Drinks and dessert will be provided. We will wrap up our meeting with some discussion about ideas for next year. We hope to see you there!

### **USHER TRAINING & PIZZA PARTY**

**Wednesday May 14<sup>th</sup> @ 6:30 pm**

Please join St. Matthew's usher training event on Wednesday May 14. We'll start with pizza together at 6:30 and at 7:00 will cover the duties and practices of being an usher. We hope to designate several usher teams, with several members on each team, to serve once per month. Please sign up on the bulletin board or contact the church office if you plan to attend. Contact Kevin Reichler or Pastor Brian with any questions.

### **MUSIC AT GREENWOOD | SAVE THE DATE**

**Saturday, May 17th @ 4:00 pm**

Virtuoso violinist Elliott Davis will perform five of Eugene Ysayë's Sonatas for Solo Violin in the second concert of our 2025 season. After the performance, stay for a reception of light appetizers. An offering will be received at the door (suggested donation: \$10). All are invited!

### **SMLC ANNUAL PICNIC**

**Sunday, June 1st after special 10:30 am Worship time**

On Sunday, June 1st, worship service will be held at 10:30 am immediately followed by the annual church picnic held on the back lawn (or Hall of the Evangelists, if necessary). Join us for food, fellowship, and fun! The menu includes hamburgers, veggie burgers, hotdogs, salads, and make your own ice cream sundaes.

**Donations** - In addition, a collection box will be present if you would like to join us in outreach with the following items: toilet paper, paper towels, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, hand soap, laundry detergent, and/or small bottles of dish soap. We will also accept food items such as canned fruit, applesauce, tomato soup,

Chunky soup, and/or coffee. These items will be donated to the Zion Lutheran Church - "Meals for Neighbors" program that's run out of Bristol, CT. Items are not required for attendance, but greatly appreciated!

RSVP by signing up on the bulletin board in the Gathering Space, or contacting the church office. If you don't get a chance to sign up, come anyway! All are welcome for fun and games, or just to sit a spell.

**ST. MATTHEW 140th ANNUAL PROPERTY CLEAN-UP**

**DATE CHANGED to June 7th @ 8:30 am**

Coffee and Donuts provided. We'll be here from 8:30 until we're done. Come whenever you can... Leave whenever you must. If you have a trailer, please bring it along to aid with any larger brush clearing projects.

Contact Ben Wright (Chair), Roy Zurell (Sexton), or the office if you have any questions.

**ONLINE GIVING**

Make a one-time gift, or set-up recurring donations, via Vanco! You may use the QR code below to access the website, or visit: [stmatthewavon.org/online-giving](https://stmatthewavon.org/online-giving)

*We ask those that wish to set-up recurring donations, please select the "GENERAL OPERATING FUND" and choose withdrawals to take place on either the 1st or 15th of the month. Thank you! If you have any difficulty, please contact the church office or see one of the Pastors after service!*

