



SUNDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

September 5 & 12

9 a.m. Indoor & livestreamed

September 19 Rally Day & St. Matthew Day

8:30 a.m. Indoor & livestreamed

9:45 a.m. Adult Forum

11 a.m. Outdoor Family Worship &
Sunday School registration

September 26

8:30 a.m. Indoor & livestreamed

9:45 a.m. Adult Forum

11 a.m. To be determined

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Jason Lindquist, President	Kevin Reichler
Fred Fenn, Vice President	George Reider
Lanelle Gallo, Secretary	George Spoering
Debbie Steinberg, Asst. Treasurer	Dan Tuve
Bette McIntire	Ben Wright
Jack Pietrick	Pastor Julie Reuning-Scherer
Bill Parchen	Pastor Brian Rajcok

STAFF:

Julie Reuning-Scherer, Lead Pastor
Brian Rajcok, Associate Pastor
Richard Silbereis, Director of Music
Diane Oates, Church Administrator
Roy Zurell, Sexton
Steven Smolnik, Publisher

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

"Tricks for Handling Motion Sickness"

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! II Cor. 5:17

When I was a kid, I used to get motion sickness very easily. My parents had to travel with an extra plastic bag whenever we took a car trip, even if it were simply a trip back from a restaurant! It seems that my stomach was not good at quick changes in location, and it rebelled when I didn't take the extra care it needed.

I was thinking about motion sickness the other day as I pondered the sudden changes the Delta variant has brought to our lives. It has felt like taking a step backwards to many people: having to put our masks back on, wondering about safety and what may come in the colder months. Uncertainty is back, just when we were beginning to make plans for more 'normal' life. It occurred to me that Covid is like being in the back seat on a long car ride. We are in a constant state of change. We do not get to determine our destination, and sometimes we feel as if we are getting thrown about as we careen around a hairpin turn. It's enough to give you that queasy and uneasy feeling in your stomach: motion sickness.

Some years ago, I learned a trick to deal with motion sickness: get into a place in the car where you can see out the front window. Motion sickness is primarily a mismatch between what your eyes see, and what your body experiences. If you can look down the road where you are going, your body naturally makes micro-adjustments that align your head and body with your inner ear's equilibrium. In addition, if you open a window, the fresh air can help you slow down your breathing, and calm both your senses and your stomach.

I think these tricks can help us with the motion sickness we experience when we come into times of change --- times where we have a mismatch between what we expect and what is. At times like this we cannot see (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 pastors are here for you whenever you have a pastoral need. The pastors are fully vaccinated and are making in-person visits. We 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) very far down the road in front of us, but simply orienting ourselves to what we can see helps to reset our equilibrium. In times of great change, we cannot plan for the whole journey; too much is unknown. What is required is assessing the immediate road ahead and responding to those conditions.

Perhaps you've heard the saying, 'when God closes a door, God opens a window'? Times of change are perfect opportunities for innovation. In fact, they demand creativity and flexibility. So open a window and let the winds of the Spirit blow in your hair and reset your expectations.

The leaders and staff at St. Matthew are embracing this time of change with both of these strategies - look ahead to the next two months of fall as a time for figuring out how we can offer a fuller range of church programs and ministries, while still providing for the safety of all in changing circumstances. You'll see inside this newsletter some traditional offerings, some modified ones, and some things that are completely new! We are definitely keeping our eyes on the road ahead, and opening a few windows to let the Spirit's guidance in.

St. Paul said in Second Corinthians, *So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!* The truth is, the resurrection is about embracing change. We may not be driving the car, but we can trust the One who is guiding us, and fashioning each of us into a new creation. May the Spirit remake us and our world, taking us through the motion sickness, to the destination of Christ's healing and restoration.

Pastor Julie

REOPENING TASK FORCE MARKS ONE YEAR OF SERVICE

The Reopening Task Force (RTF) marked their one year anniversary in July. During 2020- 2021, the RTF met over 30 times to evaluate health data, share information about best practices in meetings and worship, and recommend policy and protocols to the council. Below is their latest report. Thank you, Reopening Task Force, for helping keep us safe during the past year!



As many of you are aware, recent guidance from the CDC recommends mask wearing indoors for both the vaccinated and unvaccinated to help slow the latest rise in Covid cases. The CT. Department of Public Health has also provided recent guidance strongly recommending all counties, including Hartford, to mask up indoors. This is for both the vaccinated and unvaccinated 2 years of age and up.

In August, the Task Force conducted air flow studies once again in the sanctuary, and updated their risk analysis study with current infection and vaccination data in the towns St. Matthew serves. The good news is that being at St. Matthew indoors and masked, or outdoors without masks, continues to be very safe. We will therefore continue our current protocols of mask wearing and social distancing indoors. Masks are not currently required outdoors.

The Task Force will continue to assess this approach as we know more about the trajectory of the pandemic, and as all age categories become eligible for vaccination, recommending revisions to our protocols, as needed.

The sanctuary will continue to be open for Sunday in person worship. Small group ministries, meetings, worship, and classes may meet indoors and/or outdoors. Masks will still be required for all indoor activities. Please contact Diane at the office to reserve space in the building or outdoors.

The church building is open to the public. The building is open during office hours, Monday through Friday 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Please ring the office door bell for admittance if the door is locked. Masks are required.

The Reopening Task Force will continue to monitor the evolving guidance from the CDC and State of Connecticut, and will continue to provide recommendations to Council as additional updates become warranted.

CONFIRMATION BEGINS SEPTEMBER 27

Confirmation kicks off with a Parent/Student Meeting, September 27, 7 p.m. in the Hall of the Evangelists. Classes this year will be on Monday evenings, and will focus on Luther and the Reformation, as well as a New Testament overview. We welcome your 7th or 8th grader! Please reach out to the office to register or receive more information.

**ADULT FORUM BEGINS SEPTEMBER 19**

Join our adult forum at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday mornings. We are kicking off the year with a six-week study entitled, "The Autumn of Christian Life," about the unique aspects of the faith journey in the last quarter of life. Some are blessed with retirement during this time, but no matter employment status, certain faith questions come up at this stage of life, as well as questions on how to live well. Join us as we engage the questions and mine the scriptures and our own experience! We are hoping we can welcome you both in person and virtually. Watch future Constant Contacts for more information.

ENDOWMENT FUND REQUESTS

The Endowment Fund makes yearly disbursements to outside charities as well as to important internal needs. The Endowment Committee would like to invite the congregation to **submit requests for any outside charities or internal needs for consideration**. The potential disbursements will be considered by the Endowment Committee, voted on by the Church Council, and then approved at the Church's annual meeting. To submit your requests, please send an email to the office@stmatthewavon.org no later than November 1. *Please include why you believe your suggested charity should be considered, and a web address and contact name for the organization.*

ALTAR FLOWERS

Beginning September 19, altar flower sign-ups will resume. Sign up on the Flower Chart in the narthex/entryway at church, or email Diane at office@stmatthewavon.org **by the Wednesday before the Sunday you are signing up for**, with the name of the person(s) to be honored and for what occasion (in memory of, in honor of, in celebration of birthday, anniversary, etc.). **The cost is \$40**. Checks should be made payable to St. Matthew Lutheran Church and can be mailed, placed in the offering plate, or dropped off at the church office. Please indicate "Altar Flowers" in the memo.

**COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS**

The Council met for their summer meeting in early August. They reviewed the church calendar (available on the church website), which outlines the planning leaders and staff have been doing to launch fall ministries and considered the possible impact of the Delta variant of the virus. They will continue to work with the Reopening Task Force to determine next best steps for ministry and safety. They heard updates on live streaming and approved using previously appropriate dollars to purchase equipment that will enable hybrid (some people in person, others virtual) meetings, education and small worship services. The Council is planning a Leader Retreat on September 18, on the topic of welcome and prayer. The meeting wrapped up with a tour of the pre-K - Kindergarten classroom, which is moving to a Montessori style Sunday school model this fall called Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

GOOD THINGS:

- ✠ Prayer and Popsicle summer evening worship was a fun experience. Thank you to Stephanie Montminy for organizing summer worship assistants. Thank you to all who volunteered in those roles. And thank you to John Jarzbek and Deb Brodeur for running sound.
- ✠ Youth group enjoyed a mission trip to North Carolina the first week of August and will lead worship and present their journey to the congregation on August 22nd.
- ✠ July's Yoga Challenge was a success—thank you to Lanelle Gallo for your yoga ministry!
- ✠ Bishop Hazelwood joined Tuesdays Together on Zoom on July 20th as the group finished his book *Everyday Spirituality*.

We have so many good things to be grateful for!

God is good.

All the time!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
September 2021 Notes:			1 6:30 Focus Group Meeting	2 2:00 Centering Prayer	3	4
5 9:00 Sanctuary Worship with Holy Communion	6 LABOR DAY Office Closed	7 6:00 Centering Prayer 7:00 Finance Committee 7:00 Church Council	8	9 2:00 Centering Prayer	10	11 8:30 Men's Breakfast
12 9:00 Sanctuary Worship with Holy Communion	13 1:00 Staff Meeting	14 6:00 Centering Prayer	15 VOICE DEAD-LINE	16 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	17 4:00 Cheryl Oncken Memorial Service	18 9:00 Council Retreat
19 RALLY DAY/ST. MATTHEW DAY 8:30 Sanctuary Worship with Holy Communion 9:45 Adult Forum 11:00 Outdoor Family Worship & Sunday School registration	20 1:00 Staff Meeting	21 6:00 Centering Prayer	22	23 2:00 Centering Prayer	24	25
26 8:30 Sanctuary Worship with Holy Communion 9:45 Adult Forum 11:00 To be determined	27 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Confirmation-Parent/Student meeting	28 6:00 Centering Prayer	29	30 2:00 Centering Prayer		

September 2021

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



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Operating Income: Offering income was \$22K higher than budget YTD due primarily to prepayments of pledges (note the straightline budget was adjusted in February to account for holdover pledges from 2020).

The budget included a \$37,500 transfer from Endowment that we have not yet requested.

Total YTD Operating Income was \$15.5K lower than budget as the higher income partially offset the lower money received from Endowment.

Operating Expenses: Total YTD Operating Expenses were \$24.5K lower than budget, with most categories being below budget.

Property was \$6.9K lower than budget, with various line items better or worse due to the timing of expenses. We'll be requesting reimbursement from Endowment for the \$6.3K in HVAC expenses incurred year to date as this is part of their amounts set aside for internal distributions.

The insurance premium for the property/liability renewal is slightly higher than budgeted amount for existing coverage. We also added coverage for Cyber Liability for an annual cost of \$1.3K. Workers' Compensation renewed at a slightly lower rate than budgeted.

The Fidelity Bond renews in August, so the budget timing is off for that expense.

Net Operating Fund Activity: Net Operating Activity was negative \$9.2K for the month and positive \$3.1 YTD vs. the budget of negative \$5.8K YTD, due to the items noted above. Note that net income would have been \$46.5K higher than budget had we requested and received the funds from Endowment.

Cash and Restricted Cash: The Endowment external contributions approved at the annual meeting were distributed in April, with the exception of \$5,000 for Grace Lutheran Church, which will be distributed for a specific project.

Loans: The balance of the loan from Endowment is \$11,754.60 at June 30th; we received a \$500 Capital Campaign contribution in July that will be used to pay loan principal in August.

We submitted our application for PPP loan forgiveness and are waiting official word from People's that the loan has been forgiven. That being said, we can see a notice from the SBA on our account noting they have forgiven the loan.

THE MUSIC OF WORSHIP DURING THE FALL SEASON As always, our endeavor is to lift up the love of Jesus Christ as the heart of the Church's liturgy and its music. What does that mean at this challenging time?

First of all, due to the ongoing public health crisis, our choir members have in general expressed a hesitancy to undertake the risk of a weekly round of rehearsal, warm up, and choral eucharist. In this regard some have cited their concern for the safety of their as yet unvaccinated grandchildren.

Meanwhile, several cantors have come forward to lead the *Kyrie* each Sunday, along with other musical elements. In addition, one of our parish instrumentalists has offered to join the keyboard in enriching our Sunday worship on a regular basis.

Perhaps most importantly, we are making a focused effort to provide the congregation with familiar hymns that can be sung as truly heartfelt expressions of prayer and praise.

Lastly, our music director is preparing a series of monumental organ classics, along with popular favorites, to share on a monthly basis. Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever* (for the Labor Day holiday weekend), Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in d minor* (for Halloween/Reformation Sunday), and Mendelssohn's *Sonata in A Major* are currently planned for the fall season.

If you have a musical gift and are comfortable sharing it, we'd love to include you! Please reach out to Dick Silbereis, music director, at the church office.

*When morning gilds the sky, our hearts awaking cry: May Jesus Christ be praised!
In all our work and prayer we ask his loving care: May Jesus Christ be praised!*



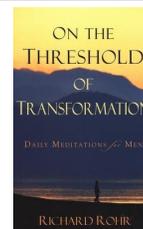
CENTERING PRAYER

Centering prayer group meets every Tuesday at 6 p.m. and every Thursday at 2 p.m. on Zoom. We are currently reading *Invitation to Love* by Thomas Keating. Contact Pastor Brian or the church office and we'll send you the Zoom link and get you a book!

MEN'S GROUP

Men's group will meet for breakfast on the back lawn Saturday September 11th 8:30-10 a.m. We'll have continental breakfast outside and sit socially distanced. This plan may change depending on the trajectory of the pandemic. If the in-person breakfast is canceled, we will still meet via Zoom that day 8:30-9:30 a.m.

This year we are reading Richard Rohr's *On the Threshold of Transformation: Daily Meditations for Men*, which will be the focus of much of our discussion. Copies of this daily mediation book are available for free to anyone who would like one, just come to church and pick up a copy!



BIBLE STUDY Bible Study will begin meeting again on September 16th at 10 a.m. and meet every first and third Thursday thereafter. We currently plan to meet in-person again for Bible Study, barring a resurgence of the pandemic. We will also offer a virtual option.

SUNDAY SCHOOL Sunday School's Rally Day will be September 19th at 11 a.m., followed by a celebration of St. Matthew Day after church. Registration forms may be accessed [here](#). Because of the COVID delta variant, Sunday School will not be meeting indoors this fall. Instead we have opted to try something new and creative during the months of September and October: outdoor family worship. This service will be every other week and will be geared toward children and families. It will not have a traditional sermon, but will include an active Sunday School lesson instead. It will be a time of creativity and experimentation, an opportunity to explore new ways of worshiping and learning about God's love. People of all ages are encouraged to join us for this intergenerational worship service.



We will be postponing the opening of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd atrium, our new Sunday School approach which was highlighted in the July VOICE [here](#). We invite families to schedule a tour of the atrium to learn more about the program, and are happy to offer individual instruction and exploration of this new way of growing in relationship with Christ. Please reach out to the church office to schedule your visit!

STREAMING WORSHIP — WE WANT YOU TO JOIN US!



As you may know by now, St. Matthew is streaming Sunday worship **live** on our own YouTube channel! We had some hiccups the first few weeks as we learned all about the hardware (camera, mics, Audio and A/V mixers, etc.), and the camera software. But throughout the learning process, we've kept notes so we can train others going forward.

As of August 8, the St. Matthew YouTube channel has 112 subscribers! That's wonderful, but we'd like more. So, check out this link for the August 8 stream <https://youtu.be/YOLjB4bGGvE> and be sure to click "subscribe". We've also had viewers from the greater community at large, an encouraging trend! Those who are unable to attend in person can join from home, either at 9 a.m. or at a later time at the church website.

In the coming weeks, we'll be adding live chat to the stream and fine tuning our streaming process. We'd love to have some Junior Assistants ... or even some Senior Assistants! So, if you or a family member is interested in learning about streaming worship, please contact the office or send a note to Ben Wright or George Spoering. Hope to see ya down the Stream!