



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

### DECEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

#### December 4 & 11: 2nd & 3rd Sundays in Advent

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service  
10:15 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Forum

#### December 18: 4th Sunday in Advent

9:00 a.m. Christmas Pageant Service  
10:15 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Forum

#### December 24: Christmas Eve

4:30 p.m. Holy Communion Service  
7:30 p.m. Holy Communion Service  
10:30 p.m. Holy Communion Service with Choir

#### December 25: Christmas Day

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service

#### COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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

#### STAFF:

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

*Christ is born!*

*Христос родился!*

*Khrystos rodysya!*



## A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

The Advent season is upon us! And once again we are bombarded with distractions to our spirituality: shopping deals, commercials, and signs of Christmas savings! It's almost as if some satanic energy has co-opted Christmas for its own evil purposes, with consumerism and materialism completely obscuring the true meaning of Christmas. Yet, I don't believe it's sacrilegious to buy gifts for each other around the holidays; and I think criticizing people for saying "Happy Holidays" is often just a diversion to make us feel less guilty about the ways we ignore the true meaning of Christmas and buy into consumer culture ourselves.

What really matters about Christmas is that God became incarnate in a human person, that is in Jesus Christ. And with so many non-Christians celebrating Christmas nowadays I think the church can use this as a marvelous opportunity for mission! Jesus was born into the world to save all people, not just those who are lucky enough to know him in this life. But since we are lucky enough to know him now, it's our responsibility and privilege to tell the world about him! And what shall we say? That on Christmas Day we celebrate the divine becoming human and adopting the human to become divine. That's the whole meaning of Christmas: that Christ is born in Bethlehem and in us too!

In my PhD program I took a class called the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. Franciscan theology is quite different from what Lutherans emphasize, but there are no fundamental contradictions between these two styles of Christianity. One of the most intriguing things about the Franciscans is they believe Christ would have come even if humans never sinned. The idea is startling at first, but when we put it in perspective it makes sense. In many branches of Christianity sin is at the center of the universe, with human mistakes forcing God to respond with Jesus. But for Franciscans (and other branches like the Eastern Orthodox Church), the Incarnation is at the center. In their theology, Christ becoming human is the point and (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) purpose of all creation. Jesus was not God’s “Plan B” after humanity sinned; Jesus was “Plan A” from the start! God’s plan all along was to become incarnate so that the human may interabide with the divine. God’s whole plan is to “christify” the universe, to make us participants of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). That’s why Christmas is so important—because it is God’s statement that the physical is a good and integral part of ultimate reality, being brought to fullness in Christ. It’s an optimistic message that the world needs to hear!

I hope you recognize the point of Christmas is not only to celebrate the birth of our Savior 2000 years ago, but also to encourage and honor the birth of Christ in you. That birth in all of us is the reason Christ became incarnate; it’s the purpose of Christmas, and the inevitable direction of the universe. It is the mystery hidden throughout the ages revealed to us: Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:26-27). Remember that this Christmas and tell it to a non-Christian friend. I imagine it might provide a new perspective for them on why we celebrate the birth of this baby whom we call the Son of God, and why we say we are all sons and daughters of God.

Advent & Christmas Blessings,

Pastor Brian



**CENTERING PRAYER**

Centering Prayer group continues to meet every Wednesday at 5:00 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!

**SUNDAY SCHOOL**

In December we look forward to having Sunday School the following dates. We also are excited for the Christmas Pageant on Sunday December 18th during the 9:00AM service. Also keep in mind the 4:30pm Christmas Eve service will be a family-oriented worship!

- ◆ December 4                      Class
- ◆ December 11                    Class
- ◆ December 18                   Christmas Pageant & Intergenerational Christmas Party
- ◆ December 25                    No class

**CONFIRMATION**

Confirmation is being held Sunday evenings 5:00—6:00 p.m. and Monday evenings 7:00—8:00 p.m.. The same material will be covered during both meeting times. On Dec. 18 & 19 our classes will be singing Christmas carols to homebound members. This month’s schedule is below:

- ◆ December 4 & 5                Deborah
- ◆ December 11 & 12            Samson
- ◆ December 18 & 19            Christmas Carols
- ◆ December 25 & 26            No class



**ADULT FORUM**

Join us for Adult Forum this month! We look forward to:

- ◆ December 4                    Food for the Poor
- ◆ December 11                   Veterans’ Faith Stories
- ◆ December 18                   Intergenerational Christmas Party
- ◆ December 25                   No forum

**THURSDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Thursday morning Bible study will meet Thursday December 1st and December 15th. Meetings are at 10:00 a.m. in the conference room. All are welcome!

**MEN'S BREAKFAST**

St. Matthew's men's breakfast will meet again on Saturday, December 17th at 8:30 a.m. We'll enjoy our meal together and have discussion about Richard Rohr's daily devotional book [On the Threshold of Transformation](#). Men of all ages are welcome!

**CHRISTMAS WORSHIP**

**Christmas Eve worship** will be 4:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 10:30 p.m. The 4:30 p.m. service will be a family worship service with a children's message. Choir will sing at 10:30 p.m. There will also be a **Christmas Day service** at 9:00 a.m. as Christmas falls on a Sunday this year.

**SUSTAINABLE CT**

We are collecting donations for a partner of Grace Lutheran Church who picks up donations from local grocery stores and delivers them to Grace and other distribution sites. We are hoping to raise \$7500 which will be matched by Sustainable CT. Keep an eye out for more information to come.

**COUNCIL UPDATES**

1. We've held three recent in-person events which have provided a boost to our fellowship with one another. The **Halloween 'Trunk-or-Treat'** event was held in our parking lot, with great decorations and a lot of candy provided; **Operation Christmas Child** was held on November 6th, was well attended, full of energy and produced 50 boxes which are now on their way to children across the world; and the **Harvest Dinner & Old Fashioned Hymn Sing** was a great evening, full of good food, company and song. Thanks to all involved in planning and carrying out these events!
2. **Council nominations** are now being collected. Look for additional details in this newsletter.
3. **Activities survey** is coming! Be on the lookout for a questionnaire asking you for ideas and suggestions on activities and interests as we continue to ramp back up our fellowship and energy around events and gatherings.

**FINANCE UPDATE**

Year-to-date operating income through October 31, 2022 is \$17.5 thousand - well ahead of budget - due to higher than budgeted offering income coupled with lower than budgeted expenses. Thank you for your faithful giving to support St. Matthew!

**ENDOWMENT UPDATE**

Due to the severe market downturn and high October Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 7.7%, the Endowment Fund does not have any available equity for distributions in 2023. As you know, we move the exact percentage of the Consumer Price Index over to the Inflation Protected Principal. The Inflation Protected Principal (IPP) can not be touched or distributed either internally or externally as written in the by-laws. Anything left after the IPP has been adjusted could be gifted, however, our IPP is currently higher than our account value. If you have any questions, please contact Sheila Jarka.

**2023 OFFERING ENVELOPES**

It's that time of year again! If you wish to continue to use offering envelopes in 2023, please call or email the office. The option to automatically give through Vanco is also available, and can also be set up through the office.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>December 2022</b>			1 10:00 Bible Study  7:00 Endowment Meeting	2	3
4  9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:15 Sunday School & Adult Forum 5:00 Confirmation	5  7:00 Confirmation	6  7:00 Church Council	7 9:30 WW Meeting 5:00 Centering Prayer 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 GHIAA Summit 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	8	9	10
11 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:15 Sunday School & Adult Forum 5:00 Confirmation	12  7:00 Confirmation 7:00 Finance Committee	13	14 9:30 WW Meeting  5:00 Centering Prayer 5:15 WW Meeting  7:00 Choir Rehearsal	15 VOICE Deadline  10:00 Bible Study	16	17 8:30 Men's Breakfast
18 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:15 Sunday School & Adult Forum 5:00 Confirmation	19  7:00 Confirmation	20	21 9:30 WW Meeting 5:00 Centering Prayer 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	22	23	24 Christmas Eve.  4:30 Worship Service. 7:30 Worship Service. 10:30 Worship Service. With choir
25 CHRISTMAS DAY  9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service	26	27	28 9:30 WW Meeting  5:00 Centering Prayer 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	29	30	31 New Year's Eve

**December 2022**



### **NOMINATIONS FOR CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL– DUE JANUARY 6**

The Congregation Council is accepting nominations for 2023! Council members are elected spiritual leaders of the congregation, who promote the mission of the congregation and provide financial and organizational oversight.

Please give prayerful consideration as to who you think would make a good Congregation Council member and submit their names for consideration. Our Nominating Committee will follow up with all nominees in January to ascertain who is willing to serve. The official vote will occur at our Annual Meeting which is scheduled for Sunday, January 22nd.

Nominations can be submitted in person in the receptacle in the Gathering Space, or remotely by calling the church office at (860) 673-3301 or emailing [office@stmatthewavon.org](mailto:office@stmatthewavon.org). A special thank you goes to Ben Wright as he completes six years on Council as a member.

Congregation Member responsibilities:

- a. Actively communicate with members of the Congregation to both convey information about the direction of the church and to listen to people's feedback on all aspects of our community life at SMLC.
- b. Regular attendance at monthly Council meetings.
- c. Participate in one annual Saturday morning retreat per year.
- d. To serve as Council Liaison to one standing Church Committee, to be assigned annually.

### **CHRISTMAS CHOIR INVITATION**

The St. Matthew Choir will be singing at the 10:30 p.m. Christmas Eve service. We would love to welcome singers for this occasion who might not usually be able to participate in the choir. We ask you to please attend at least the 2 Wednesday evening rehearsals prior to Christmas. If your schedule does not allow this, Sarah Schiener will be happy to work with you to arrange other ways for you to learn the music. We would be delighted to have you sing with us! If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Sarah or the office.

### **ORDER CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS**

Poinsettias will grace the sanctuary this Christmas season. If you would like to purchase one or more, please email or call the office with your order by Monday, December 12.

You may dedicate them in memory of loved ones, in honor of a celebration, in thanksgiving, or simply for the glory of God! Cost is \$20 each, and can be paid by check to SMLC with "poinsettias" noted in the memo. Checks may be placed in the offering plate or mailed to the church. You may take home your poinsettias after worship on January 1, 2023.



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**ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT ST. MATTHEW**

**November 27, First Sunday of Advent**

**9:00 a.m. Holy Communion in the Sanctuary**  
*Lighting of the Advent Wreath*

**December 4, Second Sunday of Advent**

**9:00 a.m. Holy Communion in the Sanctuary**  
*Lighting of the Advent Wreath*

**December 11, Third Sunday of Advent**

**9:00 a.m. Holy Communion in the Sanctuary**  
*Lighting of the Advent Wreath*

**December 18, Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**9:00 a.m. Christmas Pageant Service in the Sanctuary**  
*Lighting of the Advent Wreath*

**December 24, Christmas Eve**

**4:30 p.m. Christmas Worship Service**  
*Includes Children's Message*

**7:30 p.m. Christmas Worship Service**

**10:30 p.m. Christmas Worship Service**  
*Includes Choir Performance*

**December 25, Christmas Day**

**9:00 a.m. Christmas Worship Service**



*“Look there at the star! I, among the least,  
Will arise and take A journey to the East.  
But what shall I bring  
As a present for the King?  
What shall I bring to the Manger?  
I will bring my heart And give my heart to Him.  
I will bring my heart. To the Manger.”  
—Langston Hughes, from “Shepherd’s song at Christmas”*

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