



# THE VOICE

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH, AVON, CT

May 2021

*"In Christ, we are digging deep, reaching out, changing lives."*



## MAY HIGHLIGHTS

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## 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

*For contact information, our online church directory is available to all members. Please reach out to the office for the code to access the directory.*

## 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

**St. Matthew Lutheran Church**  
 224 Lovely Street  
 Avon, CT 06001-4018  
 (860) 673-3301

Website: [www.stmatthewavon.org](http://www.stmatthewavon.org)

*If you need to stop by the office, please call (860) 673-3301 and Diane will be happy to receive you. You can mail contributions and communications to the church via USPS and drop off donations for outside organizations in the bins by the office door. Thank you!*

## **A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR**

**Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

Springtime is usually a time of great joy. As the days get longer and the air gets warmer, flowers blossom and birds sing. And after over a year of the coronavirus pandemic there is hope and optimism surrounding vaccines and a return to community life. While we're still not out of the woods yet, there is reason for optimism, hope, and celebration.

In our faith life also, there is reason for joy this time of year. It is the eternal joy and celebration we live into as Christians. While other seasons of the church year invite us into self-reflection, repentance, and spiritual discipline, the season of Easter invites us into celebration, new life, and joy! Cultivating joy is itself a spiritual practice.

The Christian life is full of joy, hope, and optimism. Our faith does not teach us to look at the world with rose-colored glasses, but rather to acknowledge the sin and suffering of this world while at the same time holding on to our joy in spite of it all. We cultivate joy by reminding ourselves daily of the gifts we have been given. We remind ourselves to have an attitude of gratitude. The human mind has a tendency to focus on the negative (which comes from a type of survival instinct), but we can make it a spiritual practice to look for reasons to be thankful, hopeful, and joyful. Being mindful of a beautiful, sunny day or listening to the sound of rain can draw us into the present moment and instill us with a feeling of sacred presence. Contemplating the Christian meaning of hope and joy will nourish our hearts, give us more enjoyment out of life, and energize us to help our neighbors in need.

So this month I encourage you to focus on cultivating joy in your heart. This isn't a joy we create in ourselves; it is a gift from God! The Resurrection of Jesus shows us there is reason for hope. There is reason for optimism. There is reason for joy. Thanks be to God, Alleluia!

*Pastor Brian*

**We Are Here For You** A reminder that your pastors are here for you whenever you have a pastoral need. We can talk and pray with you over the phone, in a Zoom meeting, outside, or socially distanced indoors at church. In some cases we can even visit with you in your home. It is easy to feel disconnected during this time of increased social isolation, so feel free to call the office or the pastors directly to set up a time.

## **CONFIRMATION SERVICE PLANNED FOR MAY 23, 11AM**



Five confirmands are preparing to make their Affirmation of Baptism on May 23 at the 11AM outdoor service. Please congratulate and pray for Ian Trimble, Hannah Lindquist, John Pascavis, Danny Stickles, and Bryce Krodel as they join us as adult members of the congregation.



**FIRST COMMUNION** Fifth grade students will receive First Communion on Sunday, June 6 at the 11:00AM outdoor service. There will be a preparation Zoom meeting on Thursday, May 20 at 6:00PM. Contact Pastor Brian if your child is in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and you believe they are ready to receive their First Communion.

## **YOUTH GROUP**

**Summer Mission Trip!** Youth group will be travelling to North Carolina this summer for a trip of mission and fun. It will be from July 31 – August 6 and we will be travelling with Emanuel Lutheran Church in Hartford. Let Pastor Brian know ASAP if you are interested!

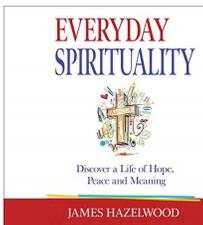
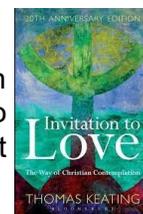


## **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Sunday School will meet the second and fourth Sundays of the month at 10:00AM. That is, May 9 and 23. We'll also be leading worship the third Sunday of the month, May 16. Newcomers are always welcome! Email Pastor Brian or the church office and we'll send you the Zoom link!

## **CENTERING PRAYER**

Centering prayer group meets every Tuesday at 6:00PM and every Thursday at 2:00PM on Zoom. We just started a new book *Invitation to Love* by Thomas Keating, so it's a great time to get started! Contact Pastor Brian or the church office and we'll send you the Zoom link and get you a book!

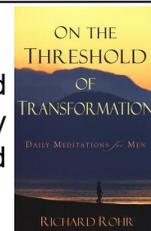


## **TUESDAYS TOGETHER**

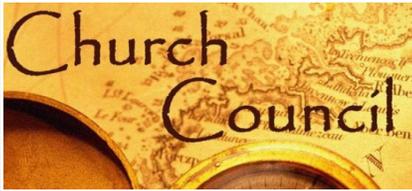
Tuesdays Together continues to meet every Tuesday morning 10:00-10:30AM on Zoom. We are currently reading Bishop Hazelwood's book *Everyday Spirituality*. Contact the office or Pastor Brian if you would like a copy. And even if you aren't reading the book, you are always welcome to join us any Tuesday!

## **MEN'S GROUP**

Men's group will meet on Zoom Saturday, May 15, 8:30-9:30AM. We are reading Richard Rohr's *On the Threshold of Transformation: Daily Meditations for Men*. Copies of this daily meditation book are available for free to anyone who would like one; just come to church and pick up a copy. This book will be the basis of our discussions this year.



**BIBLE STUDY** Bible Study meets every first and third Thursday at 10:00AM on Zoom. This month that will be May 6 and May 20. A link will appear in St. Matthew's weekly Constant Contact for all who wish to attend. Newcomers always welcome!



## **COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS**

This month's Council meeting covered topics such as parking lot services, mission trips to Easter Egg hunts! Pastor Julie shared her gratitude for the council and together we prayed for continued vision for our Church as we experience "a God on the move."

In this vein, the marketing team leader, Missy Lindquist revealed the new logo for St. Matthew. The Logo was well received as it captured our mission statement in our Church community: *Digging Deep, Reaching out, and Changing Lives*. This new logo stimulated discussions around the book of Unbinding the Gospel (why Christ now?), and the future of our Church and Generation Z. These discussions are healthy (and needed) as we move forward with God during these changing times.

## **GOOD THINGS:**

- ✦ Holy Week was different this year, with outdoor and virtual offerings. While we missed being in our beautiful sanctuary, we loved welcoming neighbors and friends to join us in the parking lot for Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday worship, to the back yard for the first annual egg hunt, and online on Good Friday and Easter! We were able to return to the back yard to celebrate Easter, with 70 in attendance. Special thanks to the Reopening Task Force, the confirmation class, zoom worship leaders, John Jarzbek and Deb Brodeur on sound and altar guild, and the staff who made these services happen.
- ✦ The confirmation class participated in a clean up day at a group home in Bloomfield run by Mosaic, an organization with Lutheran roots that supports people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.
- ✦ We have been blessed with good weather and have been worshipping on Zoom at 9am and outdoors at 11am. Thanks to our re-formed usher crew: Ernie, Bob, Kevin, George, John, Tom and Doug!
- ✦ Seminarian Kurt Saenger-Heyl preached a sermon on First John chapter 3.
- ✦ Office volunteers Judy Haag, Leslie Peterson and Ann Eberhard compile the monthly newsletter for mailing and update the parish registry. We are grateful for their work!
- ✦ 4 Seasons did an amazing job cleaning up our church property before Easter. Thank you to our property committee who over see this work and look out for your opportunity to help keep our grounds looking good this summer! If you can help us weed a bed, please let us know!
- ✦ Our income remains ahead of budget, due to pre-paid pledges. This is especially wonderful in a year of financial challenge for all churches, including St. Matthew which lost the rental income of WW. Thank you for your generosity!

**God is good, all the time!**



## **CENTENARIAN AMONG US!**

On May 17, long time member Shirley Slattery turns 100! We invite you to send her a card to wish her a happy birthday at 22 Forest Hill Drive, Simsbury, CT 06070. We thank God for Shirley's unique spirit and lively presence in our community.

## **Calling All Gardeners!**

We are looking for folks to weed, trim and beautify our property! Come on your own time, or on designated days to join with others to work and socialize. Contact Pastor Julie for more information.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>May 2021</b>						1 10:00 CT Cycling Rest Stop 4:00 Zoom Worship Rehearsal
2 9:00 Virtual Worship via Zoom 11:00 Outdoor Worship Service with Baptism	3 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Finance Committee	4 10:00 Tuesdays at 10 6:00 Centering Prayer 7:00 Church Council	5	6 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	7	8 10:00 Baptism 4:00 Zoom Worship Rehearsal
9 9:00 Virtual Worship with Holy Communion via Zoom 10:00 Sunday School via Zoom 11:00 Outdoor Worship Service	10 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Confirmation In-Person	11 10:00 Tuesdays at 10 6:00 Centering Prayer	12	13 2:00 Centering Prayer	14	15 VOICE DEADLINE 8:30 Men's Breakfast via Zoom 4:00 Zoom Worship Rehearsal
16 9:00 Virtual Worship via Zoom, led by Sunday School students  11:00 Outdoor Worship Service	17 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Confirmation In-Person (8th grade only)	18 10:00 Tuesdays at 10 6:00 Centering Prayer	19	20 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer 6:00 First Communion Prep via Zoom	21	22 4:00 Zoom Worship Rehearsal
23 9:00 Virtual Worship with Holy Communion via Zoom 10:00 Sunday School via Zoom 11:00 Outdoor Worship Service with Confirmation	24 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Worship & Music via Zoom	25 10:00 Tuesdays at 10 6:00 Centering Prayer	26	27 2:00 Centering Prayer	28	29 4:00 Zoom Worship Rehearsal
30 9:00 Virtual Worship via Zoom 11:00 Outdoor Worship Service	31 MEMORIAL DAY Office closed					

May 2021



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

**FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS****Operating Income:**

- Offering income was \$37K higher than budget 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 Operating Income was on budget as the higher income offset the lower money received from Endowment.

**Operating Expenses:**

- Total Operating Expenses were \$9.1K lower than budget, with most categories being below budget.
- Property was on \$1.1K higher than budget year to date, primarily due to the timing of snow removal. 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.

**Net Operating Fund Activity:**

- Net Operating Activity was positive \$45K for the month vs. the budget of \$36.4K due to lower expenses as noted above. Note that net income would have been \$37K higher than budget had we requested and received the funds from Endowment, due to the pre-payment of pledges.

**Cash and Restricted Cash:**

- We continued to receive Capital Campaign contributions and paid \$1,500 towards the Endowment loan principal.
- The Endowment Pass Through Fund includes \$35K received to fund the external contributions approved at the annual meeting. Those funds are being disbursed on April 5th.

**Loans:**

- The balance of the loan from Endowment is \$12,454.60 at January 31st.
- We are working with People's to submit our application for PPP loan forgiveness and expect the full amount of the loan to be forgiven.
- We have determined that St. Matthew is not eligible to receive a grant under the second round of PPP loans.

**A MESSAGE FROM THE REOPENING TASK FORCE**

The Reopening Task Force continues to monitor the weekly COVID-19 infection rates for Avon, Canton, Farmington, and Simsbury and also the positivity rate for the state of CT.

Given the volatile nature of Covid-19 infection rates, as well as the improving weather conditions, the Task Force continues to recommend outdoor worship as the safest possible option at this time. Outdoor worship offers the opportunity for increased numbers of attendees, including potential new members. In addition, several members of the congregation have expressed how much they enjoy and value outdoor services.

Registration for the outdoor Sunday service will no longer be required. If there is inclement weather or activities need to be cancelled, we will continue to use the SMLC website for notification.

The Task Force also recognizes the importance of balancing a safe environment for worship as well as offering additional outdoor opportunities for small group ministries to meet, including the June 2021 SMLC picnic.

The Task Force is planning for resuming in-person indoor worship and in person small group ministries in the coming weeks. More information will be forthcoming.

***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.*

## **VIRTUAL NEW ENGLAND SYNOD ASSEMBLY – SATURDAY, JUNE 12**

*Synod Assembly is going virtual this year! Our voting members are Sandy Betsch and Debbie Steinberg, along with Pastor Brian and Bill Parchen who serve on Synod Council, and Pastor Julie.*

### **“We've never done it this way before”**

Our theme for this year's synod assembly reflects the thought many of us have had, repeatedly, over the past year. If we're honest, it is what we often think when we're asked to make a change in the church or elsewhere. It is as true for us New England Lutherans now as it has ever been.

Much we know and expect about the church has changed: worship, fellowship, pastoral care, communion, funerals and even giving. It will continue to change. As we slowly and cautiously re-enter the world after a year of pandemic-related closure, we know we're not going back to normal - the hybrid church is here to stay.

So, our Synod Assembly is an attempt to acknowledge all these changes, as well as propose a shift into a new way of being the embodiment of Christ walking this 21st century road of life. Won't you join us on this journey?

*You are invited to join the Assembly on June 12, from 8:45am - 2pm, as a visitor on the live stream available at [nelutherans.org](http://nelutherans.org)! No registration required, just come check it out, and see what's happening among Lutherans in New England!*



### **MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKENDS SCHEDULED FOR FALL**

If your marriage has had some struggles during the Coronavirus, you are not alone! The virus has put a great deal of stress on a lot of marriages, and others just need some time away to just be a couple; so now is the perfect time to sign up to attend a Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend designed to renew and revitalize your marital relationship no matter whether you have been married a year or 60+ years.

The registration fee has been waived for this year, so you pay only the amount specified on the website for 2 nights in your group-rate hotel room and 5 meals for each of you. Also, scholarship funds are available for anyone in need. Simply e-mail or call us at the information below before you register.

Which Weekend will work for you:

October 1-3, 2021 -- Heritage Hotel Lancaster in Lancaster, PA--Famous for its Robin Hood-inspired restaurant, Loxleys

October 15-17, 2021 -- Hyatt Place, Pittsburgh/Cranberry--spacious modern decor guestrooms with couches--an hour north of Pittsburgh

Should complications arise, your payment is refundable up to a month before the Weekend. Weekends begin at 8 PM on Friday night and end at approximately 3 PM on Sunday. REGISTRATIONS WILL BE LIMITED, so sign up NOW while there are still openings. Simply go to: [www.GodLovesMarriage.org](http://www.GodLovesMarriage.org), find your chosen Weekend, fill out the form, and pay the amount specified with a credit card, or print the form and mail with a check. Don't miss this opportunity to create a more intimate and joyful marital relationship!

For questions, please contact Northeast US Directors of Lutheran Marriage Encounter, Fred & Julie Schamber, [fjschamber@comcast.net](mailto:fjschamber@comcast.net) or call: 724-325-3166.

## **THANK YOU, ST. MATTHEW, FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!**

Through the St. Matthew Endowment, we were able to give away \$36,000 to ministry partners nearby and around the world! Here are a few of the ways these dollars are making a difference in our community:



Dear Friends at Saint Matthew Lutheran Church,

Thank you for the very kind and generous Benefactor Level donation of \$1000.00 to the Farmington Valley Visiting Nurse Association. We are so pleased that you chose to donate through your Endowment Fund to our agency at this time.

The VNA is currently working diligently in the community in home healthcare, immunizations, hospice, and the food bank. Gifts from individuals, churches, and corporations, along with those from town support, allow us to serve our local area's health needs, even providing care for those unable to pay. Our website [www.farmingtonvalleyvna.org](http://www.farmingtonvalleyvna.org) has COVID-19 updates and information. These are challenging times, and we are encouraged by your help and support.



Dear Pastor Julie Reuning-Scherer and Congregation,

On behalf of the Town of Avon, Department of Social Services, I would like to personally thank you for your donation of \$2000.00 to the Avon Food Pantry.

Our Avon residents in need are so grateful for the kindness of our donors. The generosity of the community restores their hope; something possible because of thoughtful and generous contributions from groups like St. Matthew Lutheran Church! Thank you again for your support.



Dear Congregation of St. Matthew Lutheran Church:

Thank for you for the very generous donation to the Burlington Fuel Bank. Your assistance helps the less fortunate residents in our town during this pandemic crisis. Your thoughtfulness is very much appreciated.



Dear Pastor Reuning-Scherer,

On behalf of the Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association, I would like to thank you for your very generous donation of One Thousand (\$1,000.00) dollars.

As you may imagine donations such as yours help our volunteer organization tremendously. These donations allow us to minimize the financial gap between insurance reimbursements and necessary funding to staff two Advance Life Support Ambulances, attract well-trained Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) and Paramedics, update emergency equipment and replace frequently used emergency supplies. With funding, through tax-deductible donations, our organization is able to continue to provide the best possible emergency services and care to our growing community and provide an invaluable service to the citizens of Simsbury. Thank you again for your generous donation!

## **HOW YOUR GIFTS TO ELCA WORLD HUNGER MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

### **ELCA World Hunger projects**

#### **in Rwanda and Malawi**

#### **provide 2021 focus for New England Synod**

Our ELCA World Hunger emphasis in New England this year is supporting projects in Rwanda and Malawi. A women's self-help group provides women with loans at a 5% interest rate to expand their businesses. We can help these women and their families buy seeds, cultivate more land and buy animals – all of which help support themselves and their families. As one woman said: "I am so thankful to the Rwandan Lutheran Church and her American partners, the ELCA!" Thank you, New England

Checks can be written to The New England Synod with a note in the memo line: "WH Rwanda & Malawi 2021." Checks may be mailed to: The New England Synod, P.O. Box 13, Worcester, MA 01614. Or you may give online at [www.nelutherans.org/donate](http://www.nelutherans.org/donate) and indicate in the special instructions line: "WH Rwanda & Malawi."



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