



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

SUNDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

February 6 New Council Members Installation

8:30 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service
9:45 a.m. Adult Forum
11:00 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service

February 13

8:30 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service
9:45 a.m. Adult Forum
11:00 a.m. Family Worship in the Hall

February 20

8:30 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service
9:45 a.m. Adult Forum
11:00 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service

February 27

8:30 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service
9:45 a.m. Adult Forum
11:00 a.m. Family Worship in the Hall

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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

STAFF:

Brian Rajcok, Associate Pastor
Richard Silbereis, Director of Music
Diane Oates, 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

Times of transition are hard. Times of transition can be stressful. Times of transition require more thinking, more planning, more effort than usual. But times of transition also invite us into intentional discernment and prayerful consideration of what happens next. And in this way, times of transition can be spiritually renewing experiences.

In the weeks following Pastor Julie's announcement that she would be concluding her ministry at St. Matthew and beginning a new call in Ohio, I noticed that I felt a deeper trust and surrender to God than usual. I wondered where this peaceful feeling came from, and I realized that I had been praying every day for God to guide my future and the future of St. Matthew. I usually pray every day, but recently I'd been much more intentional about praying specifically for guidance and discernment in my life; and I have no doubt that this contributed to that feeling of great calm and trust in whatever the unknown future may hold.

Prayer is a tremendous gift from God. It connects us, refreshes us, and opens us to God's guidance and direction. Prayer binds us to God and to one another. And so, as St. Matthew begins the transition process, the first thing I invite you to do is pray. Pray for guidance for your life and for this congregation. Pray for Pastor Julie in her new call. Pray for me in my discernment. Pray for whomever the new pastor may be in their discernment, and that God guides the right person to St. Matthew. Pray for the synod, the ELCA, and the church worldwide. Times of transition invite us into prayer, and make our connection with and reliance on God more apparent. God bless you in this time of transition and discernment; it is an exciting time to be at St. Matthew!

Blessings to you this month, Pastor Brian

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.

LENT

Ash Wednesday is March 2nd and we will have services at 12:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., with drive-through imposition of ashes 4:30-5:30 p.m. Our first Lenten book study session will follow Ash Wednesday service from 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Midweek Lenten worship will be held every Thursday starting March 10th at 6:00 p.m. and continue every Thursday through Holy Week. A Lenten book study group starts at 6:45 p.m. as we read *Unbinding Your Heart: 40 Days of Prayer & Faith Sharing* by Martha Grace Reese.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School had plans to meet again starting in February, but unfortunately due to the recent increase in covid cases we have made the decision to not meet in-person until the fall. We will, however, continue to have Family Worship twice each month, which we hope is a fulfilling Christian education experience for the whole family.



We are still planning on celebrating fifth graders' First Communion this spring. The training will be Thursday evening, April 21 on Zoom, and First Communion will be Sunday, May 1 at the 11 a.m. worship service.

FAMILY WORSHIP

Family Worship will be meeting the second and fourth Sunday of the month, February 13th and 27th in the Hall of the Evangelists. We are starting a series on the Old Testament, with a different story every week and a child-focused sermon time, activity, or project. All ages are welcome!

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation will meet February 7, 14, and 28. We will **not** meet February 21 as it is Presidents' Day. February 7, we will have a speaker from [Hands on Hartford](#) present at our class, and February 14 we will visit Hands on Hartford.

Confirmation students are collecting items for Hands on Hartford's food pantry. We are collecting the following items and invite congregation members to bring them to church and place them in our bins:

Pantry items:

- * Peanut Butter & Jelly
- * Pasta & Sauce (especially whole wheat pasta)
- * Canned Fruit & Vegetables (especially fruit in light syrup or water)
- * Canned soups and stews (especially light or low sodium varieties)
- * Tuna canned in water
- * Rice
- * Canned beans



ADULT FORUM

Adult Forum will meet every Sunday in February 9:45 a.m.—10:45 a.m. We will be learning about the timeline of the Bible.

MEN'S GROUP

The men's group will meet Saturday February 12th at 8:30 a.m. on Zoom. This year we are once again reading through Richard Rohr's book *On the Threshold of Transformation: Daily Meditations for Men*.



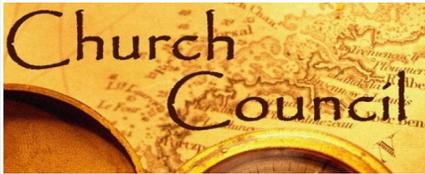
BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study will meet on Thursday February 3rd and Thursday February 17th at 10:00 a.m. either on Zoom or in the Hall of the Evangelists. Check for updates through our weekly Constant Contact as to whether we are meeting in-person or virtually.



CENTERING PRAYER

Centering prayer group meets every Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. and every Thursday at 2:00 p.m. on Zoom. Contact Pastor Brian or the church office if you'd like to join us. All are welcome!



COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Starting off our council meeting we prayed for blessings on a new year. We discussed role changes and our continued Church missions. Financial and endowment reports were discussed in preparation for the annual meeting.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

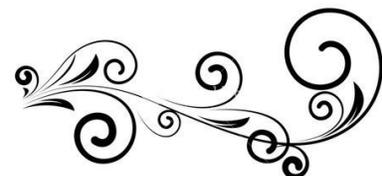
Greetings fellow members. Once Pastor Julie announced her resignation on December 8th, the Council immediately turned its attention to the transition process, engaging in discussions with our Synod, specifically with our assigned liaison, Rev. Sara Anderson, Associate to the Bishop. As we prepare to call our new senior pastor, including the formation of a Transition Team and a Call Committee, we also understand the need for continuity of our services and programs. We are fortunate to have Pastor Brian available to us during this transition period to cover preaching and pastoral care. We are also in discussions to bring in a Transition Consultant, a rostered minister within the NE Synod, who is trained specifically in the transition process and equipped to assist our congregation as we move through our discernment process. This is a model in use in a number of congregations around us at this time. More details will be provided as we move through this planning phase. We ask that you continue to pray for the work ahead of us, and for St. Matthew, as we move forward.



GOOD THINGS:

- ✠ We said goodbye to Pastor Julie on Sunday, January 9th. Members had an opportunity between services to greet her at a sendoff celebration in the Hall of the Evangelists, as well as at a parking lot drive-thru greeting after the second service. Despite the poor weather prediction, service was well attended and our live-stream attendance quadrupled for the day!
- ✠ Council met with Pastor Sara Anderson, Associate to the Bishop in the New England Synod, to discuss the transition process.
- ✠ Treasurer Debbie Steinberg and Assistant Treasurer Amy Pelehach prepared for the yearly audit, and the 2021 Finance and Endowment Audit will be conducted by Kris Pearson, Larry Anello, and Dave Erb. Thank you for all your hard work!
- ✠ Several St. Matthew members met with Pastor Brian to move items out of the intern apartment for our refugee family's temporary housing. The following week a crew of cleaners from our four congregation team volunteered to clean the apartment and prepare it for the family's stay. Thank you to Roy Zurell, Ben Wright, and Jack Pietrick who helped with the first day and to Robin Lindquist and the group of others who helped on the second.
- ✠ The annual meeting was held January 30th via Zoom, with a small contingent in the Hall of the Evangelists participating virtually from there.
- ✠ Stewardship pledges are currently \$304,000, which is greater than at this time last year. We are so grateful for your continued generosity to St. Matthew and the ministry we are accomplishing together!

God is good. All the time!



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
February 2022						
		1 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Centering Prayer	2	3 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	4	5
6 8:30 Sanctuary Communion Service 9:45 Adult Forum 11:00 Sanctuary Communion Service	7 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Finance Committee 7:00 Confirmation: Hands on Hartford speaker	8 6:00 Centering Prayer	9 7:00 Church Council	10 2:00 Centering Prayer	11	12 8:30 Men's Breakfast via Zoom
13 8:30 Sanctuary Communion Service 9:45 Adult Forum 11:00 Family Worship in the Hall	14 Valentine's Day 7:00 Confirmation-Hands on Hartford Food Pantry	15 VOICE DEADLINE 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Centering Prayer	16	17 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	18	19
20 8:30 Sanctuary Communion Service 9:45 Adult Forum 11:00 Sanctuary Communion Service	21 Presidents' Day OFFICE CLOSED	22 1:00 Staff Meeting 6:00 Centering Prayer	23	24 2:00 Centering Prayer	25	26
27 8:30 Sanctuary Communion Service 9:45 Adult Forum 11:00 Family Worship in the Hall	28 1:00 Staff Meeting 7:00 Confirmation	Notes:				



February 2022

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





FINANCIAL NEWS - 2021 AND BEYOND

Our 2021 Anticipated Giving for the Operating Fund was \$311,696. With our parishioners' generous gifts, we surpassed that by \$24,566 or almost 8%!

Due to the pandemic, Weight Watchers has not used our building since March of 2020. To make up for that lost income stream in 2021, we budgeted \$40,000 from the Operating Fund's Future Staffing Restricted Fund. This fund comprises dollars accumulated over the years from unused Endowment gifts and positive year end net incomes.

Due to our congregation's generosity, we brought into income less than half of the \$40,000 - \$19,577 - to bring the deficit to zero.

And your generosity continues into 2022: We have 9 more pledging households in 2022 than 2021, with almost \$3,000 more in anticipated giving.

REOPENING TASK FORCE

The Reopening Task Force (RTF) continues to closely monitor Covid infection data and vaccination rates in Connecticut. RTF continues to follow the State of Connecticut guidance for Covid-19 protocols as well as guidance from the CDC and ELCA.

Masks continue to be required at all times while in the building, based on State of Connecticut public health guidance as well as ELCA recommendations as noted above. In light of the easily transmitted Omicron virus, we continue to support this approach in order to protect all individuals, including those most at-risk in our St. Matthew family who wish to attend in-person, including older individuals, the unvaccinated, and unvaccinated children. We appreciate everyone's patience as the COVID profile in relation to vaccination outcomes continues to evolve.

The RTF continues to work closely with the Church Council to share information about Covid and to coordinate any RTF recommendations with guidance from the Church Council.

Sunday Services :

- Masks are required upon entering and exiting the building.
- All individuals attending Sunday services in the Sanctuary are required to wear masks for the entire duration of the service, regardless of vaccination status.
- Please continue to social distance, if you are not in a pod.
- Singing is encouraged, and mask wearing is required.

Ministries and committees may meet indoors and outdoors. Small groups (up to 15 attendees) meeting indoors are asked to:

- Wear masks at all times and maintain social distancing (6 feet)
- Small groups of 15 or fewer may meet in the Hall of the Evangelists or Sanctuary.
- No food is to be served at this time for all indoor activities.



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