

FALL 2024

THE ORACLE

ST MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

St. Matthew's Family,

While attending 'Back to School Night' for my girls' last week, there was a constant refrain heard from teachers. Methods of teaching and grading are continually changing in order to keep up with artificial intelligence (AI). Unfortunately, this has placed many educators into the position of also teaching about ethics. For those to whom all of this is new, let me explain. Nowadays, I can simply ask my cell phone to write a two-page paper on (name the topic), and it will produce the final product within seconds. Sound tempting? Therefore, teachers need to not only find ways to ensure students' work is their own, but also convey the numerous negative consequences of choosing this easy path. As if on cue, Apple just released the new promotion for its latest iPhone and other devices, which will be heavily reliant on AI. Its tagline? "...to help you write, express yourself, and get things done effortlessly."

Multiple studies have been conducted since the pandemic which have revealed, by a significant margin, the main underlying reason for the steady drop in church attendance (actually all organized religion), especially in the past decade. Quite simply, society has changed drastically. The main cause? Technology. Now I fully confess my enjoyment of Amazon Prime, but one can readily see that the rapid ease with which we can get almost anything with so little effort and right at our fingertips can alter the way we look at the world around us, even our own lives. Life itself has become consumer-based. It is transactional. It is based too much on what is convenient for me. It also enables us to avoid all interaction with whatever and whoever doesn't align with our own outlook.

Yet in this weekend's Gospel, Jesus teaches us about losing one's life in order to truly save it, and that we need to take up our cross (not our cell phone) and follow him. Needless to say, this presents a radically different view. It is hard. It takes great effort. It is not primarily about us. It commands us to be sacrificial in our love for one another. But it is the only path that leads to a life of purpose, fulfillment, and peace.

As I've mentioned before, anything of lasting worth takes effort. There isn't an AI program that can make Olympic athletes, that can make one instantly become a surgeon, that can raise a family, that can lay down one's life in love for another, that can effectively run a church.

The latest figures from the Episcopal Church reveal that 2/3 of our parishes can no longer afford a full-time priest. Many of the remaining 1/3 can barely do so. St. Matthew's is truly blessed, and, by the grace of God, a great deal of effort pours into making this a vibrant congregation for the glory of Jesus Christ. I thank all of you who make the effort to support this parish in numerous ways, and, as we begin a new program year, I invite everyone to consider ways in which to further engage our family in Christ.

May all of you have a blessed fall season, and may our Lord continue to richly bless our efforts in gratitude for the life we have in his name.

With Love in Christ, *Rodney +*

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Fall Calendar

SEPTEMBER

September 21 - Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross,
9:30 am

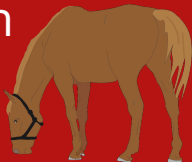
September 22 - Saint Matthew's Day!!

September 29 - Mwamba Foundation visit, Bishop Emmanuel Chemengich & his wife, Dorcas (9 & 10:30 am)

OCTOBER



October 6 -
Blessing of
the Animals
4pm (Rain
or Shine)



October 26 - Trunk
or Treat! 4 pm



October 26 - Society of the Companions of
the Holy Cross, 10 am

October 27 - Consecration Sunday (Pledging)

NOVEMBER

November 2 - All Soul's Day (Wine & Cheese Reception) 4:00pm

November 16 - Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross,
9:30 am

November 17 - Annual Meeting & Potluck Brunch Following the
Combined 10:00am Service

Music Ministries

Choir



“Farewell Summer - Hello Autumn!”

I hope you enjoyed our Summer special music offerings! And now, we look forward to choral music, handchimes, and some new hymnody.

I've been exploring traditional Anglican psalm chants and their harmonies. As the choir begins to add these psalms to our weekly lessons, I hope you will want to join in the melodies - they'll be in the Bulletin each week.

I've also been studying the '82 hymnal. There are many beautiful hymns in those pages. We'll be incorporating the old and some new this season.

We're always hoping for new members, both in our Handchime Group, and our Adult Choir. Part-timers are welcome! We're a fun-loving, welcoming group.

I'm always open to your comments and suggestions. Please feel free to say “hi!” at the console each week.

Strive to be the change you hope to see in the world!

Judi



Music Ministries

The Arise Band



This summer, the Arise band has been blessed to have guest musicians from our parish family to play with us. A big shout out to Zach LaValla, Derek Casey, and our youth, Alexa Roehner, Sophia Roehner, Xavier Buesgen and Noah Gildea-Walker. Thank you for sharing your gifts and talent to lead in worship. We look forward to playing with you all again!

Sunday September 8th, the full band will be back and ready to praise and worship the Lord! It is always nice to have everyone together again!

As you may have noticed, there are a few changes in the area where the band plays. Many thanks to our parish carpenter, Fr. Dave Robinson, for building the beautiful storage cabinet to store our mixer, and the awesome partitions! They now unite the two sides of the church together.

The Arise Band is humbled and honored to lead worship with this great parish. May the Lord bless this new year at St. Matthew's Church!

Psalm 100 – Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

In Christ, *Martha Reynolds* (Coordinator) *Anne Flood* (Conductor)



Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) Sunday School Program

The Sunday School Teachers of Saint Matthew's are looking forward to an exciting new year with some room changes. Children ages 3 through Grade 5 are welcome! The goal of our program is to nurture each child's unique relationship with God.

Our program year will begin on Sunday, September 15th at 9:00 AM. We hope to see you there!



Level 1 with Mrs. Cunningham and Mrs. Williams, will be located in the office building, down the hall, the last room on the left.

Level 2 with Mrs. Baier and Mrs. Schindewolf, will be housed in the back of the parish hall. They will be working behind partitions.

Level 3 with Mrs. Groben, will have their program in the conference room of the office building.

Some Summer Activities...



Iron
Pigs
Game!



Blessing of the Backpacks



SCUBA

VBS

OUTREACH

MWAMBA

What can you buy for \$400? These days, it doesn't seem like much. However...



Partnering with Mwamba Foundation, each \$400 we donate pays for an entire year of secondary education for a young woman or man in Kitale, Kenya. Receiving this education not only improves their future outlook, but the lives around them as well. With each child that receives a chance at further education, the entire community is given a chance for a better future.



The Mwamba Foundation founders will be worshipping with us on **Sunday, September 29th @ the 9 and 10:30 services. It will be a time to learn more about this important work, as they prepare to provide scholarships to as many students as possible for the upcoming school year.**

The 2025 Funding Campaign will begin in November. As we approach this time, letters from some of the students who received scholarships from St. Matthew's will be posted for you to read. They are truly powerful in conveying what an impact receiving further education had on their lives.



About Mwamba

Mwamba Foundation was recognized as a 501(c)(3) non profit in 2003. Mwamba Foundation works towards transforming lives in the United States of America and in Kitale, Kenya by building mutual partnerships that enhance human capacity through education, sharing of resources and cultural exchanges.

OUTREACH

The Little Pantry

The Little Pantry is thriving, donations are flowing in from the parish and the community! It is nice to see that our community is supporting this ministry, recognizing the help that is needed in our area.

St. Matthew's was blessed to receive a \$1,000.00 donation from the Rotary Club in Horsham township. In addition to the generous donations from parishioners, people outside of our parish are also contributing donations, leaving items on the front porch of the church.

We also continue to access Garden of Health food distributor in North Wales. This helps fill in the gaps of items we still need. Stocking the pantry every day can be challenging with busy schedules, vacations, bad weather... thank you again to: Eliana King-Dietrich, Karen Becker, Angie Pack, John and Joan Achey, Jane Baker, Melissa Brown, and Kay Williams for dedicating your time and effort to this much needed ministry:

Many thanks to you all for keeping this ministry going, your donations are much appreciated!

"For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in"

~ Matthew 25:35

In Christ,

Martha Reynolds

Mattie Dixon Community Cupboard

St. Matthew's parishioners are longtime supporters of this Ambler based organization, and we thank you for all of your support. The folks there are always glad to see us when we deliver our donations, with many thanks and smiling faces! Food insecurity still remains a critical issue.

The Cupboard's present needs are:

Baked beans, coffee, cookies, crackers, juice and juice boxes, mac and cheese, meal sides (Knorr) oatmeal, pancake syrup, taco kits, tea, tomato sauce, dish soap, hand soap, laundry detergent, mouthwash, paper towels, poise pads, sandwich bags, sponges, tissues.

They do not need: cereal, tuna, peanut butter, or soup.

By Nancy Williams



TREASURER'S REPORT

The church's financial results throughout the course of the calendar year often breaks down into three "seasons".

- January to June – spending and collections are often roughly even
- July and August – the “dog days” of summer are not kind – spending outstrips collections
- September to December – the new program year begins and Advent is here before you know it – we “catch up” financially!

So, how did we do through our first two “seasons”?

The bottom line, total operating collections less total spending, is terrific. Through August spending exceeded collections by only \$1K – this is \$23K better than we had planned! How did that happen?

- Keep in mind that we planned for an \$11K loss for the full year (before capital spending)
- Pledge and Plate collections are within 1% of plan – Thank You Parishioners!
- PreSchool collections are within 2% of plan – Very Good PreSchool Families!
- Church operating expenses are almost exactly equal to budget – Great Work Parish Manager & Vestry!
- Investment Dividends/Interest are \$5K (50%) above plan – good, but hard to count on in the future.
- PreSchool expenses are \$18K (8%) below plan – this sounds good, but is likely not sustainable at that rate.

And, we received an unbudgeted Bequest gift of \$10,000 this year. (Something we should all be thinking about.)

How does all of that affect how much we have in Cash and Investments?

- Our total Cash and Investments at August 31 were \$1.4M, up from \$1.3M last December
- Most of that \$100K increase is due to overall favorable investment markets through August
 - o remember, market conditions can change!
 - o significant capital spending from investments is under consideration – stay tuned!

Join me in rejoicing at our many blessings as we enter our third “season”. Sunday School begins! Arise and the choir is singing!

St. Matthew's Day is just around the corner! Praise be to God!

-Jim Garrison

PRESCHOOL UPDATE

As the vibrant colors of autumn approach, our nursery school is gearing up for a momentous start to the new academic year. On Monday, September 9, 2024, we proudly open our doors not only for the new school year but also to celebrate our 32nd anniversary in the community. This year is particularly special as we embark on a new chapter as a licensed school, reinforcing our commitment to high-quality education and safety standards.

We are excited to kick off the year with thoughtfully designed introductory events to ensure a smooth transition for our youngest learners:

- **2 ½-Year-Old Class:** Our smallest students will begin their school journey with a special visiting day. Parents are invited to join their child at school, where they will explore the classroom, participate in activities, and meet the teacher and aide. This initial visit aims to make both children and parents feel comfortable and excited about the school experience.
- **3-Year-Old Classes:** The 3-year-olds will start with a phased approach. The class will be split into two groups, each attending a one-hour session on separate days. This method allows children to adjust to the new environment gradually, making their transition smoother.
- **4-Year-Old and Pre-K Classes:** For the 4-year-olds and Pre-K students, the year begins with a full school day. By the second day, most children are already engaged and enjoying their time, ready to embark on the exciting activities the year has to offer.

We are thrilled to introduce several new educators who will be joining our dedicated team this year:



Mrs. Chelsea Lohse -
teacher,
2.5 year-olds,
Tues/Thurs



Mrs. Kristy Chiaradonna -
assistant,
3 year-olds,
Mon/Wed/Fri



Mrs. Loralee Courtney - assistant,
4 year-olds,
Mon/Wed/Fri



Mrs. Kristine Dubyn -
assistant,
Pre-K,
Mon - Fri



Mrs. Jocelyn Weidner -
assistant,
3 year-olds,
Tues/Thurs

We are confident that these talented new staff members will bring fresh perspectives and creativity to our classrooms, enriching the learning experience for all students.

PRESCHOOL UPDATE *con't*

Our students will benefit from a range of enriching activities this year, including:

- **Chapel** with Father Rodney
- **Music** with Mrs. Martha Reynolds
- **Gym** with Mrs. Jocelyn Weidner and Mr. Barry Weidner
- Visits from community organizations such as the **Horsham Fire Company, Horsham Police Department, and a traveling farm**
- **Field trips** for the 3- and 4-year-olds to various local attraction.
- The 4-year-olds will also enjoy weekly enrichment classes like **Mathemagic, Science, Book and Cook, STEAM, Kreative Kids, and Reading Writing and Fun.** Meanwhile, the 3-year-olds can participate in **Kids in Motion** with Mrs. Gehlhaus and Sensational Art.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Father Rodney and the Vestry for their unwavering support, which has been vital in the improvements made to our facilities over the summer.

For families considering enrollment, there are still a few openings available. If you or someone you know is looking for a nurturing and dynamic nursery school experience, please contact us at **215.646.4466** or via email at **nurseryschool@saintmattsec.org**

We eagerly anticipate another year of growth, learning, and joy as we celebrate our 32-year legacy and embrace the exciting school year ahead.

-Jackie Anderson

Halloween
Parade
2023



A preview of this year's stewardship theme...



Walk in love, as Christ loved us
and gave himself for us, an
offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:2

DID YOU KNOW?

- ~ That you could save money on taxes by directing some or all of your Required Minimum Distributions to charity?
- ~ That gifts of appreciated stock can be more beneficial (to YOU) than cash gifts?

*For more information, please
go to our Giving page, here:
saintmattsec.org/giving/*

OR



Saint  Matt's