



THE WORD

December 2023

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church
700 Pleasure Road, Lancaster PA 17601
(717) 394-9607 www.stmatthewelc.com



Pastor Robin Fero

2 Big Events happening at St. Matthew on December 9th!

Marie Engle		A Thrill of Hope Concert SATURDAY DECEMBER 9 3:00-4:00 P.M.		Melody Fader
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Come to the concert at 3:00 p.m. and stay for a light meal and for Caroling Around the Corner from 5:00-7:00 p.m. There will be singing, hot chocolate, flashlights, and fun! The Caroling will take the place of our Saturday worship service on December 9.

AROUND THE CORNER

CAROLING



**SATURDAY
DECEMBER 9
5:00-7:00 P.M.**



Pastor's Page



People define St. Matthew and its ministries in many ways.

General Election Day, November 7, was a mild autumn day with no precipitation, so I took the opportunity to spend more time than usual on the sidewalk outside the church, greeting

neighbors. That task is a little tougher than you would suspect!

The Democrats and Republicans have their own tables set up within their legal boundaries of the polling station which is set up inside St. Matthew's fellowship hall. I stand there with my clerical collar on and try not to block the sidewalk and try not to gravitate towards one political table over the other. I've found in the last seven years, the best place for me to be is just off the sidewalk, in the grass, smiling and greeting neighbors as they make their way towards the doors of the church. It's certainly the best place to meet dogs and their walkers and invite them to the annual Blessing of the Pets. On that day, I got to hear fresh perspectives on what the "little church with the big heart" is all about.

Some of the 300+ neighbors who voted that day reminisced about activities that have occurred at the church over the years. Some were married here. Some "ran around the aisles of the church", as children. Some have only voted here. Some were brand new to the polling station and had never been inside our church until that day. Occasionally, a neighbor will ask about a current St. Matthew member. Some of you are popular in the neighborhood!

This year, I heard a couple of appreciative comments about the positive messages that are written on the church's lighted sign. A handful of people loved our rainbow-colored doors on the lawn. The election judges can't sing St. Matthew church's praises enough for this space to operate in. It's no secret that the poll workers are good cooks and I get to reap the benefits of that behind the scenes, too. Ha!

These are just a few of the lenses expressed about the "little church with the big heart", from our neighbors. This is a recap of one day of conversation on the sidewalk. This does not include the countless people who are impacted monthly by the groups that meet here and by the presence that our church has in the wider community. When we are called to serve God, we will most likely never know the full impact of that service.

I hear your lenses often, too. St. Matthew's ministries intersect with individuals' needs in various ways. The work of the Holy Spirit is to connect this creation's needs with its gifts. Whether I am standing in the

grass interacting with neighbors, or hosting families that are grieving the loss of a loved one at a funeral at St. Matthew; whether I am walking with you as you minister to each other and the community around us, or listening to your stories of your day by day walk in life, I have the greatest joy watching God at work at 700 Pleasure Rd.

How do you use words to describe what God is doing at St. Matthew? When one is involved in an organization, it is often hard to see where they fit in the picture, or just how many lives are impacted by the organization.

As was evidenced in my recollection of the interactions with neighbors on Election Day, it's not always easy to know how many people have been touched by the gifts that God has called us to share.

One way of looking at St. Matthew ministry is by looking at the membership/friends information that we maintain.

There is currently a total of 88 people who are involved in some way with St. Matthew. Here is the breakdown by attendance and by how we send communications to people.

- 43- official members, who are actively involved in worship, activities, and giving
- 26- official members who either attend or give occasionally
- 7- Friends (or non-members) who are actively involved in worship, activities, and giving
- 12 Friends (or non-members) who either attend or give occasionally

Not everyone attends worship every week. In October, our Saturday average attendance was 13. Our Sunday average attendance was 22.

How does St. Matthew communicate direct messages to our congregation?

Out of the 88 active congregants, 56 have email addresses and 32 do not. Because of the high cost of postage, we hand printed materials out to people in worship before we opt to mail the newsletter, for instance, to a congregant.

Note that these mailing figures are only for the 88 active congregants. There are 20+ additional people loosely related to St. Matthew, who also receive emails.

Also note that the Good News is communicated additionally through those who view our Facebook page and our church website, stmatthewelc.com. And last but certainly not least, the Good News is lived out in each one of you.

As we close out this church year and head into our preparatory moments of Advent, I thank God for the various ways that each of you are involved in the

ministries of St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church. Please join me in counting it a joy to serve Jesus Christ here. I'm excited about what is next... looking forward to all the ways that God will surprise us in the new year.

-Pastor Fero

Growing in God's Love...Living our Welcome Statement

Our Reconciling in Christ (RIC) team had its final meeting of 2023 on November 8th. We reflected on the educational and outreach events that were planned and implemented over the past year and looked ahead to 2024.

Here is a summary of 2023 RIC events.

- Four congregational learning events -- Making Space for Transgender Kids video by Dr. Sarah Garwood followed by discussion; History of Pride and Lancaster Pride Information by the RIC team; Daring to Grow: A Look at Gender Understandings Then and Now by Pastor Brenda Ritterpusch and Susan Feldmann; Special Education and Ways to Support People with Autism and Special Learning Needs by Stephanie Renninger-Reiser, Special Education Coordinator for the School District of Lancaster.
- One Conversation Around the Corner in partnership with the Evangelism Team – Giving Life and Value to All: Exploring Our Unconscious Ideas About Gender by Pastor Brenda Ritterpusch and Susan Feldmann.
- Faces of Jesus display showing different artists' depictions of Jesus on the rolling bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall by Phyllis Wimer and Pastor Brenda Ritterpusch.
- Participation in the Lancaster and Lititz Pride Festivals.
- Participation with a hospitality table and with our church building as cooling and restroom station during the Grandview Neighborhood Yard Sale.
- Reconciling in Christ Weekend Worship in October.
- Resource and support for Redeemer Lutheran Church in a panel discussion about our RIC journey by Phyllis Wimer and Steve Feldmann. Redeemer Lutheran Church has since voted to become an Open and Affirming congregation!
- Candle-lighting and observance of Transgender Day of Remembrance (11/20) in our Worship

services on 11-25/26 remembering three Lancaster County transgender or nonbinary youth who died in the last year: Brayden Snyder, Theadora "Thea" Cassidy and River Paige Olmsted.

- Creation and Tabulation of Congregational Educational Interest Surveys for 2024 by Erin Conahan.

Here are dates and topics being planned for 2024 based on the congregational learning interest surveys. Our learning events will have a new name: Learning and Loving Series. Additional events will be discussed and planned at the beginning of the new year.

- 2024 Learning and Loving Series Dates/Topics
 1. 2/3-2/4: Mental Health
 2. 5/4-5/5: Anti-Racism & Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 3. 8/3-8/4: Refugees
 4. 11/9-11/10: Homelessness

Erin Conahan will be the new chairperson of our St. Matthew Reconciling in Christ team beginning in January. As we pray for God's continued guidance for growing into our Welcome Statement, Erin's gifts and leadership bring new ideas and community connections to the ministry of our team. Thank you, Erin for leading us in the new year and thank you for the faithful ministry of all of the members of our RIC team: Erin Conahan, Barb Emmerich Steve Feldmann, Pastor Fero, Neely Frye, Nancy Pokopec and Phyllis Wimer.

- Susan Feldmann



Music Ministry News

St. Matthew is filled with music in December as the Bell Choir, Chancel Choir, small groups and individual musicians prepare music for Worship and community sharing during the Advent and Christmas seasons!

- The Bell Choir is rehearsing from 6-7 pm in the lower-level Bell Choir room.
- The Chancel Choir is rehearsing from 7-8:15 pm in the Music Room off of the Fellowship Hall.

On Saturday, December 9th at 3:00 pm, St. Matthew is hosting Concert and Caroling Around the Corner. The concert is presented by Marie

Engle, a New York-based mezzo-soprano, accompanied by collaborative pianist, Melody Fader. The program entitled *A Thrill of Hope* will feature both art songs and carols. Following the concert, there will be light fare refreshments. Caroling in front of the church will begin at 5:00 pm and continue around the Grandview neighborhood.

Please plan now to attend the December 9th concert and caroling as well as worship services during Advent and on Christmas Eve, December 24 at 4:00 pm.

- Susan Feldmann

Social Ministry

A HUGE thank you to everyone who helped support neighboring families at Brecht Elementary School. Food is being provided so these families might have a more plentiful holiday season this year. Twenty-three families within our community were helped this month. Wow, that was a lot of boxes and bags that were delivered on November 14th!!

St. Matthew donated two quilts to the Lutheran Camping Corporation of Central Pennsylvania for their 2023 Quilt and Craft Auction on November 5th at Camp Nawakwa. This year's auction raised over \$15,900 for the Endowment Fund which helps to financially sustain the LCC's ministries so that many future campers can experience a joyful and faith-building outdoor ministry. Our two donated quilts brought a total of \$1105.

- Sheila Charles

Evangelism Committee Corner

The Evangelism Committee met on November 12, 2023 at 11:30a.m. with nine members in attendance. Devotions and prayer were led by Barb Eshbach, chair, refreshing ourselves as Paul did to the Thessalonians to encourage one another. She reminded us to keep our lamps lit and our name tags on as we ready ourselves for any opportunity to share God's word.

Regarding upcoming events, we focused our attention on Saturday, December 2 when the church will sponsor a Christmas market with the S.U.N.N.Y. Scouts from 1 to 3 p.m. Time was spent reviewing how the market will proceed including a special story, two craft tables and a game which each scout will receive and will be able to share with their family at home.

Saturday, December 9th will include a Thrill of Hope Concert from 3 to 4 p.m., a brief supper to enjoy following the concert and then from 5 to 7 p.m. for our second year of Caroling Around the Corner.

The next Conversation Around the Corner will most

likely be held in January 2024 concerning estate planning, presented by Steve Feldmann. Dates and time will be forthcoming.

Our meeting concluded with the Lord's Prayer, adjourning at 12:45 p.m. with December 17 scheduled for our next meeting.

-Kay Gontner

Birthdays

Phyllis Wimer 12/4	Cathy Stephens 12/8
David Ritterpusch 12/12	Kay Nolt 12/17
Norman Drescher 12/20	Jesus Christ 12/25
Elsa Teichmann 12/27	Daniel Mink 12/29

Worship Assistants

Altar Care for December - Brenda Stauffer & Barb Elsen

December 2 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Barb Elsen
- Reader: Phyllis Wimer

December 3 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Barb Emmerich
- Reader: Peg Sampson
- Greeter: Carol Rothweiler
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Brad Charles & Linda Tice

December 9 – Saturday 3pm Concert & Caroling Event

December 10 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Linda McIntyre
- Reader: Linda McIntyre
- Greeter: Kay Gontner
- Usher: Brenda Stauffer
- Counters: Brenda Stauffer & Barb Elsen

December 16 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Sheila Charles
- Reader: Norm Drescher

December 17 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Barb Elsen
- Reader: Steve Feldmann
- Greeter: Anna Neal
- Usher: OPEN
- Counters: Carol Rothweiler & Brad Charles

December 23 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Barb Emmerich
- Reader: Barb Emmerich

December 24 – Sunday 10am—Advent Four

- Assisting Minister: Steve Feldmann
- Reader: Linda Tice
- Greeter: OPEN
- Usher: OPEN
- Counters: Linda Tice & Brenda Stauffer

December 24 – Sunday 4pm—Christmas Eve

- Assisting Minister: Sheila Charles
- Reader: Peg Sampson
- Greeter: Nancy Pokopec
- Usher: OPEN

December 30 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Brad Charles
- Reader: Mimi Ruth

December 31 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Linda McIntyre
- Reader: Linda McIntyre
- Greeter: OPEN
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Barb Elsen & Carol Rothweiler





Officers (2023)

Barb Elsen, President

Sheila Charles, Vice President

Phyllis Wimer, Secretary

Brad Charles, Financial Secretary

Steve Feldmann, Treasurer

Staff

The Rev. Robin Fero, Pastor

Susan Feldmann, Director of Music

Phil High, Musician

Church Council

Barb Elsen

Phyllis Wimer

Steve Feldmann

Nancy Smith

Sheila Charles

Brad Charles

David Ostrander

Pastor Fero

**St. Matthew Lutheran Church
Statement of Welcome, Affirmation
and Full Participation**



Welcome to St Matthew, the little church with a big heart.
We are a Reconciling in Christ (Open and Affirming) congregation, so when we say
"all are welcome", we really mean it.
We strive to live that out in our actions as well as our words. We publicly and humbly
commit to do what it takes to truly be a sanctuary filled with warmth, love,
understanding, safety, respect and care for all who enter here.

*(Please see our Full Statement of Welcome, Affirmation and Full Participation
on our website: www.stmatthewelc.com. Copies of the Full Statement are also
available in the Education and Resources Stand in the Fellowship Hall.)*

St. Matthew

December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 7am – Church Seasonal Decorating	2 1pm – Christmas Market 5pm - Worship
3 10am – Worship	4	5 12pm – Better Bones at St. Matthew	6 12pm – Bible Study 6:30pm – M.T. Democratic Committee	7 6pm – Bell Choir Rehearsal 7pm – Chancel Choir Rehearsal	8	9 3pm – A Thrill of Hope 4pm - Refreshments 5pm – Caroling Around the Corner
10 10am – Worship	11	12 12pm – Better Bones at St. Matthew 7:00pm – Church Council	13 12pm – Bible Study	14 5:30pm – SUNNY Scouts 6pm – Bell Choir Rehearsal 7pm – Chancel Choir Rehearsal	15	16 5pm - Worship
17 10am – Worship 11:15am – Evangelism Mtg	18 12pm – Community Meal	19 12pm – Better Bones at St. Matthew	20 12pm – Bible Study	21 6pm – Bell Choir Rehearsal 7pm – Chancel Choir Rehearsal	22	23 10am – Bell Choir Rehearsal 11am – Chancel Choir Rehearsal 5pm - Worship
24 10am – Worship – Advent Four 4pm – Christmas Eve Service	25	26	27 12pm – Bible Study	28	29	30 5pm - Worship
31 10am - Worship						

ST. MATTHEW

700 Pleasure Road
Lancaster, PA 17601

(Return Service Requested)

The Little Church with the Big Heart

