



THE WORD

February 2024

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church
700 Pleasure Road, Lancaster PA 17601
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Pastor Robin Fero

Pastor's Page



Welcome to another season of learning—the Season of Lent.

God has blessed us with a brand-new year to step faithfully into, and our worship community has done well with that task in the Christmas and Epiphany seasons.

For a church that only averages 40 in attendance on a typical weekend, we sure offer plenty of opportunities for members and friends and loved ones and total strangers to take part in. The “take part in” is the action portion of our welcome statement, encouraging the total community to participate fully in God’s work in this fabulous creation.

In the season after Epiphany, we watched Jesus, God in the flesh, invite others into full participation. Time and again he would proclaim that the kingdom of God is “here” or very “near”. He always showed those whom he encountered the gift of living and breathing in full fellowship with God and others.

During our five weeks of Lent and into Holy Week, I encourage you to boldly invite others into the work of the kingdom of God.

Here are some upcoming activities that all are welcome to. Every one of them is a “toe dipper” into the ministries at St. Matthew, and an invitation into walking in the kingdom of God.

- ⇒ Wednesday Bible study at 12noon. First timers always welcome.
- ⇒ Learning & Loving (Mental Health topic) February 3 & 4. These events will be held in the fellowship hall and there is food involved!

- ⇒ Worship services on Saturday or Sunday.
- ⇒ Ash Wednesday’s unique services (noon and 7pm)
- ⇒ Game Day on Sunday, March 10, after worship
- ⇒ Quilting Workshops. 3rd Saturday in the fellowship hall. No experience necessary. I can even tie the knots or cut the squares. It’s fun for all ages.

Blessings!

-Pastor Fero

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

The RIC Committee: Learning & Loving, is thrilled about the abundant opportunities in 2024 to learn from and express love within our community. Your valuable survey responses have guided us, and we are excited to focus on the following topics throughout the year:

- **Mental Health (February 3/4)**
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging (May 4/5)**
- **Refugees & Immigrants (August 3/4)**
- **Homelessness (November 9/10)**

Embedded in these themes and in our identity as an RIC Congregation is a commitment to being “trauma-informed.” This approach seeks to assist

individuals in finding meaning and purpose, fulfilling valued roles, and engaging in community life while recognizing them beyond their traumas. Being trauma-informed involves:

- Recognizing that many behaviors and symptoms stem from traumatic experiences.
- Acknowledging that treating individuals with respect, kindness, and empowering them with choices is crucial for recovery, rooted in the principle of "do unto others" as you would want to be treated.
- Understanding the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). To learn more about ACEs, you can search for "ACEs Tedtalk with Dr. Nadine Burke Harris."

As we continue to celebrate our public commitment to being an Open and Affirming congregation with the belief that "God's Doors Are Open to All," let us be reminded that we are wonderfully whole as God made us. Together, we are fashioned to be a community, bound by love. We anticipate that the Loving and Learning series this year will reinforce our dedication to the community by discovering how we can best support and walk alongside our congregation and neighbors.

We look forward to kicking off our 2024 year by learning more about mental health and how we can show up for our neighbors with love and acceptance with our guest speaker, Bethany Kyper, MSW, LCSW February 3rd and 4th.

- Erin Conahan



Music Ministry News—Thank You!

Hymn Story - I Need Thee Every Hour

Behind every hymn is a story.

On Sunday, February 4, Pastor Brenda Ritterpusch will share the special music and play an arrangement of *I Need Thee Every Hour* on flute.

1. I need Thee every hour, most gracious Lord;
No tender voice like Thine can peace afford.

- *Refrain:*
I need Thee, oh, I need Thee;
Every hour I need Thee;
Oh, bless me now, my Savior,
I come to Thee.

2. I need Thee every hour, stay Thou nearby;
Temptations lose their pow'r when Thou art nigh.

3. I need Thee every hour, in joy or pain;
Come quickly and abide, or life is vain.

4. I need Thee every hour; teach me Thy will;
And Thy rich promises in me fulfill.

5. I need Thee every hour, most Holy One;
Oh, make me Thine indeed, Thou blessed Son.

--Poem by Annie Sherwood Hawks (1835-1918)
Refrain and Music by Robert Lowry (1826-1899)

Annie Sherwood Hawks began writing poetry as a young girl and regularly contributed her poetry to newspapers as early as the age of 14. Over her lifetime, she wrote over 400 hymn texts, but *I Need Thee Every Hour* is the only one that is still sung today.

Annie Sherwood married Charles Hawks in 1859. Her life became busy taking care of the family home and their three children. The Hawks family attended church in Brooklyn, New York where Dr. Robert Lowry was the Pastor. Dr. Lowry was a well-known writer of Gospel songs and he encouraged Annie Hawk's gifts in poetry. He wrote the refrain and the music to her poem. With his refrain, the hymn repeats "I need Thee" twenty times!

Ms. Hawks wrote about how *I Need Thee Every Hour* came to be:

"One day as a young wife and mother of 37 years of age, I was busy with my regular household tasks during a bright June morning [in 1872]. Suddenly, I became so filled with the sense of nearness to the Master that, wondering how one could live without Him, either in joy or pain, these words were ushered into my mind, the thought at once taking full possession of me -- 'I Need Thee Every Hour.'"

Dr. C. Michael Hawn, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Church Music at Southern Methodist University, writes, "These personal devotional hymns by 19th-century women have their place. They provide glimpses into the lives of women segregated from the positions of leadership (even in the Church) by gender, leading lives separate from their spouses primarily in domestic settings, and with little or no voice in the public arena." Yet, their songs are still sung today.

After her husband died, Annie Hawks contemplated the strength of the words to *I Need Thee Every Hour*:

"I did not understand at first why this hymn had touched the great throbbing heart of humanity. It was not until long after, when the shadow fell over my way, the shadow of a great loss, that I understood something of the comforting power in the words which I had been permitted to give out to others in my hour of sweet serenity and peace."

(This article is a summary of Dr. C. Michael Hawn's article on "I Need Thee Every Hour," found at <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-i-need-thee-every-hour>)

- Susan Feldmann

Social Ministry



Our container of pop tabs in Fellowship Hall is being filled for the second time. We began collecting these aluminum tabs in July of 2022 to raise money for the Ronald McDonald House in Hershey. The "Pop Tab" program is important because it provides extra revenue that can help make up for the donations that families cannot make. The monies raised help care for families who stay at the House each year. The cost to house one family at the Ronald McDonald House Charities© of Central PA is between \$100-\$140 per night. Families are asked for a \$10 per night room contribution, but no family is turned away based on their ability to pay. It takes approximately 1,128 pop tabs to equal one pound. The value of a pound of pop tabs is typically between \$0.40 to \$0.50. Ronald McDonald House partners with Consolidated Scrap Resources, Inc., which buys the tabs and then sends a check back to RMH Charities. Since 1997 over \$283,000 has been raised. An average of 2,000 pounds of tabs is donated monthly. The tabs can come from drinks, soup cans, or anything with a metallic tab. Please rinse the tabs as you collect. So... Let's try to fill our container to the brim by the beginning of this July!!

- Sheila Charles

St. Matthew Christmas Nativity

How many people know how the Christmas Nativity Set came about for St. Matthew? I have been a member of this congregation for 20 years now and used to put the characters out on the lawn, but I'm not the first to do this.

There was a member named Bob Ort who used to faithfully place these pieces out on the lawn before Advent started and would have them up through the season, adding a few more pieces till on

Christmas Eve he would have all pieces out including Joseph and Mary with the baby Jesus in her arms.

Bob passed away and no one was putting the pieces out, so I asked Pastor Bettger, if I could take over the activity. Back then, I discovered the pieces were starting to separate because they were made of plywood, which is what they are still made of. So, I decided to remake these pieces over again.

I got my brother involved with this project by getting the plywood from a local lumber yard and cutting each character by using the old pieces as a model. After he had them cut out, I brought them home and started painting them. I used tissue paper to trace the faces of the old characters and the animals and with a marker retraced those faces onto each piece, including the animals, and then painted the face and the outlines of legs, sheep skins, etc.

The stakes that originally went in the ground were wood stakes and of course, they were bad. My brother got involved again, using railroad ties and a special drill bit to make one of the holes in them bigger to be able to bolt the pieces to the metal ties and anchor them in the ground.

This is an activity I can no longer manage since I have had joint surgery bilaterally, so I was incredibly pleased when I saw the pieces in Fellowship Hall this Christmas, brought up from the closet where they are stored. What a joy to have them be part of the decorations this year, even though they were not outside.

I have had many questions asked about these pieces, so Pastor Fero asked if I would write this article and he has a picture to go with it.

Thank you all,

- Council President, Barbara Elsen



Evangelism Committee Corner

The Evangelism Committee convened at 11:30 am on January 14, 2024 in Fellowship Hall with five members in attendance. Devotions were led by Barb Eshbach, chair, focusing upon today's hymn, "Here I Am, Lord," reminding all of us of God's power and love, along with a call to action. Not only does He want us to serve Him but to also serve each other and hold each other in our hearts. Continuing with our prayer, Barb encouraged us to help and guide, bearing God's light and serving Him in every way as we listen and love our neighbors and those in the world.

Turning next to upcoming events, Conversation around the Corner will feature Steve Feldmann, speaking about Essential Estate Planning on Wednesday, January 17th from 6 to 7 pm in Fellowship Hall. We brainstormed further speakers, suggesting Michael Meloni who has authored "Murder at the Accomac", as a future guest.

A neighborhood book club was likewise discussed with further discussion pending. February 3 and 4, 2024 will focus upon mental health as part of our Learning and Loving Series, Saturday at 6pm, Sunday at 11:15am. Our next Game Day is scheduled for March 10, 2024, following our church service with pizza being served.

Our next meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2024.
- Kay Gontner

Optimist Club of Lancaster

Lancaster's Best Kept Secret- Optimist Club of Lancaster

Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis are all well known service clubs, while the Optimist Club of Lancaster is one of Lancaster's best kept secrets. Our motto is "FRIEND OF YOUTH". The Optimist Club is an International Organization that strives to benefit young people.

Quarterly, we provide Welcome Bags to the domestic violence center for women and children who often arrive with little more than the clothes on their backs. In addition, we provide goody bags to the above shelter and two homeless shelters for women and children on Valentines' Day and Halloween.

Other local activities we contribute to include:

1. The Envirothon, for middle and high school students, which is a program centered on the study of nature and the environment.
2. The Hospice Bereavement Camp, by providing comfort teddy bears for children attending who have lost a loved one.
3. Camp Optimist operated by Lancaster Recreation Commission with a donation and assist at their

Fall Festival.

Locally, we provide opportunities for Lancaster County students to participate in contests leading to scholarships. There is both an oratorical and an essay opportunity. They start at our local level and progress to a national level. Our own St. Matthew Lutheran Church has been graciously providing space for the judging of the Oratorical Contest. The district has started a Photography Contest for interested students.

So you can see that like "the little church with the BIG heart", the Optimist Club is active in our community. We meet the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30pm at the Olde Hickory Grill, 701 Olde Hickory Rd., Lancaster. We welcome anyone interested in finding out more about Optimism.

- Peg Sampson

Thank You

Dear St. Matthew Family,

I wanted to write a note to thank you for the kind and generous gift at Christmas. It is such a great joy to share in ministry together with this church family...a gift I cherish all year long.

Thank you, Pastor Fero, Phil, the Council and the Congregation for the love and support that I continually receive from you. I am grateful to God to be a part of our little church with the big heart. Thank you for all of the ways you bless my life as we journey together.

Gratefully, Sue Feldmann

Dear congregation,

Thank you so much for the Christmas gift. Very unexpected and appreciated. It has been a joy to play at St. Matthew and especially to work with the choir each week.

Thank you!

Phil

Birthdays

Eric Teichmann 2/11

Louise Lilley 2/21

Jennifer Piersol 2/22

Nancy Maurer 2/24

Anniversaries

James & Mabel Frazier 2/4

Neely & Pam Frye 2/25

Worship Assistants

Altar Care for February – Barb Elsen & Carol Rothweiler

February 3 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Nancy Pokopec
- Reader: Nancy Pokopec

February 4 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Steve Feldmann
- Reader: Peg Sampson
- Greeter: Toni & Sammy Sweitzer
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Barb Elsen & Carol Rothweiler

February 10 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Barb Emmerich
- Reader: Barb Emmerich

February 11 – Sunday 10am

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

February 14 – Ash Wednesday 12pm

- Assisting Minister: Sheila Charles
- Reader: Steve Feldmann
- Greeter: OPEN
- Usher: OPEN

February 14 – Ash Wednesday 7pm

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

February 17 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Nancy Pokopec
- Reader: Nancy Pokopec

February 18 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Barb Elsen
- Reader: Peg Sampson
- Greeter: Carol Rothweiler
- Usher: Brenda Stauffer
- Counters: Brenda Stauffer & Brad Charles

February 24 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Brad Charles
- Reader: Brad Charles

February 25 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Steve Feldmann
- Reader: Barb Elsen
- Greeter: Nancy Smith
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Linda Tice & Carol Rothweiler





Officers (2024)

Barb Elsen, President

Barb Eshbach, 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

Barb Eshbach

Kay Gontner

Nancy Pokopec

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

February 2024

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|----------------------------|--|---|---|--------|---|
| | | | | 1 6:30pm – Vocal Choir Rehearsal | 2 | 3 9am – M.T. Democrats Event 5pm – Worship 6pm – Learning & Loving |
| 4 10am – Worship 11:15am – Learning & Loving | 5 | 6 12pm – Better Bones at St. Matthew | 7 12pm – Bible Study 6:30pm – M.T. Democratic Committee | 8 5:30pm – SUNNY Scouts 6:30pm – Vocal Choir Rehearsal | 9 | 10 5pm – Worship |
| 11 10am – Worship | 12 | 13 12pm – Better Bones at St. Matthew 7pm – Church Council Mtg | 14 12pm – Ash Wednesday 7pm – Ash Wednesday | 15 6:30pm – Vocal Choir Rehearsal | 16 | 17 2pm – Quilting Workshop 5pm – Worship |
| 18 10am – Worship 11:15am – Evangelism Mtg | 19 9am – Community Meal | 20 12pm – Better Bones at St. Matthew | 21 12pm – Bible Study 6:30pm – RIC Committee Mtg | 22 5:30pm – SUNNY Scouts 6:30pm – Vocal Choir Rehearsal | 23 | 24 5pm – Worship |
| 25 10am – Worship | 26 | 27 12pm – Better Bones at St. Matthew | 28 12pm – Bible Study | 29 6:30pm – Vocal Choir Rehearsal | | |

ST. MATTHEW

700 Pleasure Road
Lancaster, PA 17601

(Return Service Requested)

The Little Church with the Big Heart

