



THE WORD

March/April 2026

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



Pastor Robin Fero

Pastor's Page



Welcome aboard! Blessings on the journey as we March through Lenten days, to the cross with Jesus, into the tomb and right back out of that tomb in early April. We have our work cut out for us. March and April are busy months in the church year.

Bible Study. If you would like to take a deeper dive into the lectionary and the gems of the church year, please come to the table in the fellowship hall at noon time on Wednesdays. You will find gathered a handful of inquisitive, faithful disciples, just like yourself. There hasn't been a Wednesday yet that I personally haven't learned something at Bible Study.

40 days in Lent. The 40 days of Lent began on Ash Wednesday, February 18. Did you know that Sundays are not included in the counting of 40 days during the Lenten season? "Every Sunday is a mini-Easter", Resurrection Day, as a seminary professor would often remind me. In our baptismal vocations, as we are co-crucified with Christ, Sunday serves as a resurrection reminder. It's a game changer. It's life-changing. Please remember that this Lenten season. Find that Oasis of Grace in your traveling.

Even though St. Matthew is our primary Gospel referenced in this church Year A, the Gospel of St. John is used 10 out of 14 times during Lent, Holy Week and the Easter Season. The Revised Common Lectionary 3-year cycle uses patches of John throughout the 3 years, adding to Year A's Matthew, Year B's Mark, and Year C's Luke.

In the weeks of Lent, we will walk with Jesus as he converses with Nicodemus (John 3); as he seeks out and interrupts the Samaritan woman by the well (John 4); as he spits in the mud and rubs it into the

blind man's eyes (John 9); and as he calls his friend Lazarus up out of the grave (John 11). Our Epistle readings in Lent will feature bits of the Book of Romans, from chapters 4, 5 and 8.

Holy Week. On Palm Saturday and Sunday, we will enter Jerusalem with Jesus, as he heads into the Holy City. This is the beginning of Holy Week, when we learn much more about Jesus and his love for us. We certainly are not inactive bystanders at that time. Jesus continues to invite us into the way of the cross, and we learn much more about ourselves in the process, too.

On Maundy Thursday, April 2, at noon, you are invited to sit in the sanctuary and listen to the words of Jesus at the Last Supper. We will share communion at that time and will strip the altar and chancel area together, preparing for Good Friday, Jesus' death.

On Good Friday, April 3, there are identical services at noon and 7pm, featuring readings of the stations of the cross and hymn singing.

On Saturday, April 4, during our regular 5pm weekly service, we will celebrate aspects of the Easter Vigil, including the lighting of the Pascal candle. The Pascal candle reminds us of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and is lit during the Easter Season and at baptisms and funerals. We will also celebrate Affirmation of Baptism. As the body of Christ, we corporately affirm what God has done and will do in our baptisms.

Then, of course, on Easter Sunday morning, April 5, we will celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in traditional fashion.

Easter Season. The fifty days of Easter Season are all the days from Easter Sunday, leading up to and

including the Day of Pentecost, which this year is May 24. We walk with the disciples and new believers in the first couple of chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, and in some post-resurrection moments in John. I encourage you to put yourself in their shoes and ask the questions they would ask. "What is this?" and "What now?" If you stop and compare the Easter Season with the Season after the Epiphany, you will find the same questions were asked of the newly introduced Jesus, the Word made flesh. Together, we will see what a difference the resurrection makes to the importance of those questions.

On May 23 and 24, we will celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, the birthday of the body of Christ. Pentecost is the day the church received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Seasonal necessities. What should you take with you on the journey of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter? In the same mind as the instructions that Jesus gave his disciples for their ministry...bring plenty of humility. Bring an open mind. Bring a willing heart. Pray without ceasing. Read the scriptures. Listen closely to the Spirit's call, which comes from an unlimited number of sources in creation. Rest- that is what those sabbath days are for.

I told you we will be busy. Buckle up and "keep your hands and feet in the car during the ride". May God bless you every moment of the way.

-Pastor Fero

Council Corner

Peace to you as we engage this holy season of Lent and prepare to celebrate the great event of resurrection on April 5.

Over these cold winter months your Congregation Council has been faithful in its meetings. In addition to receiving updates on our ministries, we have taken time to review our responsibilities. We also took some time to get to know each other a bit better.

You may know that we have been searching for a person to serve as our musician/accompanist for some time. Applicants did not come knocking. At all. But then a spark of inspiration occurred which resulted in a solution we believe will work out just fine.

At our meeting in February, the council made a decision (a positive one I believe) to hire Ann Hossler as our musician/accompanist, on a part-time basis. You may remember that Ann was serving in this role some time ago. She is back! In addition to this, the council approved a salary increase for our Director of Music, Susan Feldmann. Sue has increased her workload these past months. These additional duties will continue. Sue will play Sunday morning on those weeks that Ann is not playing, as well as directing the

vocal and bell choirs, selecting music, maintaining the music library, all the while being that happy, special, faithful presence in our midst.

And...we have been able to bring back Ann, and better compensate Sue, all within the budgetary guidelines which we approved at our November 2025 annual meeting. It is an example of creative thinking and good stewardship on the part of the council and congregation staff.

Don't you just love it when a plan comes together?!

Finally, a new photo display of the council is now posted on a bulletin board in the "hallway of bulletin boards," just off the narthex. I hope you get a chance to check it out.

Thank you for your continued support of St. Matthew. It is greatly needed as we emerge from the cold months and into the expanded light of springtime.

*-Peace to you,
Cliff Eshbach, Council President*

Social Ministry News

A HUGE thank you to the St. Matthew family for your support of our local outreach program -- Lancaster County Food Hub. Our collection of food, clothing and personal care items for the Hub will help to make the winter months a lot warmer for some of our neighbors. This agency continues to help our community by "providing hope while fighting hunger and homelessness." St. Matthew continues to be mighty in its power of giving to those in need, and we are humbled to be a partner with the Hub.

Your positive support of Social Ministry programs has always been both generous and heartwarming. God's will is being done in so many ways through the family and friends of St. Matthew. Giving to those in need and discipling to others is part of God's plan for us.

- Sheila Charles

RIC Committee News

As we move through Lent and toward Easter, the Reconciled in Christ Committee has been reflecting on both where we've been and where God may be leading us next.

Last year was full of meaningful events and learning opportunities. While we are grateful for the conversations we hosted, we also recognize that the number of events felt like a lot—and attendance at some gatherings was lower than we hoped and significantly higher than we expected at other events. This has led us to thoughtfully consider how we best engage our congregation in 2026.

One idea we are exploring is shifting some educational opportunities into Saturday or Sunday worship. Hosting speakers during worship may allow more people to participate while also weaving learning more naturally into our life together. On the weekend of March 21-22, local seminarian Deklan Lewis, will speak and sing at both of our services. Our time with Deklan, a transgender male, is an example of this type of learning within worship. Deklan will help us to celebrate Transgender Day of Visibility. Additionally, we are in conversation with potential guest speakers and exploring whether a weekend format with possibly two different speakers may allow us to offer deeper learning while being mindful of speaker availability and congregational accessibility.

We also want to refocus on the core reasons we became a Reconciled in Christ congregation. Beyond hosting events open to the community, we want to ensure we continue educating ourselves on the foundational issues of inclusion. In a time when public conversations can be confusing or divisive, we believe faithful learning helps us listen, discern, and respond with Christ's love.

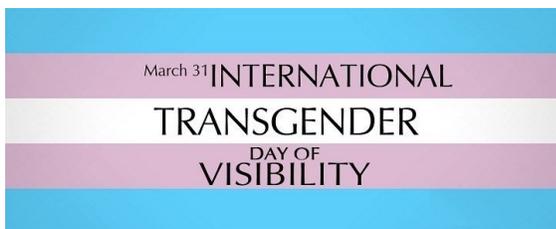
One way we are excited to do this, is by inviting members to briefly share during worship why they came to St. Matthew. Was it our RIC status? A sense of safety? A welcoming space during a time of transition? Because you are a neighbor in Grandview? These stories will help us better understand who we are today and why this work continues to matter.

We are also excited about building relationships beyond our walls. We have connected with the RIC Core Team at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd as they begin their journey toward becoming Open and Affirming. Our RIC team hopes to meet in the coming months to share experiences and encouragement and explore a potential pulpit swap as part of strengthening this partnership.

As we continue this journey, we are mindful of creating spaces that are not only welcoming but safe, especially when discussing topics that can feel vulnerable or controversial. Your prayers, participation, and honest reflections are part of how we grow together.

Thank you for walking this journey of reconciliation with us. We look forward to what God will continue to do through St. Matthew in the year ahead.

-Erin Conahan



Evangelism Corner

- The Evangelism Committee convened on Sunday, February 15, 2026 at 11:30am with Barb Emmerich leading the group in prayer.
- Barb is willing to assume the chair of this committee as her time and resources allow. Her willingness was much appreciated by the members.
- Game Day is scheduled for Sunday, March 15, at 11:15am, also being held in recognition of Sam Sweitzer's birthday. After enjoying pizza and birthday cake, he and Barb Eshbach will be initiating a special game plus BINGO for everyone. Small group games will then follow. We encourage those attending to bring their own game if they so choose.
- Conversation Around the Corner continues to be of special importance in engaging the community. Suggested topics include Elephant Rescue, Penn State Extension Services, Acorn Acres/ Raven Ridge Wildlife Rehabilitation, and our neighbor, Anthony Marcavage and his band for an evening of musical entertainment.
- It was noted that Sheila Charles is preparing a sign-up sheet for the various Evangelism events that will be occurring in this coming year.
- There being no further discussion, we adjourned at 12:15pm. Our next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, March 8 at 11:15am.

-Kay Gontner

Balancing Faith and Finance



The year began a bit slower than anticipated, with regular giving approximately \$2,000 below budget in January. However, February brought encouraging news.

St. Matthew received a generous \$5,000 gift from The Charles E. Beard, Jr. Charitable Fund, along with an unexpected \$750 donation from the Grandview Heights 100th Anniversary Committee. These special gifts are a wonderful reminder of the broader community's support for our ministry and mission.

Thank you to all who continue to give faithfully and make our work possible.

*-Blessings,
Barb Eshbach, Treasurer*

Support St. Matthew

Support St. Matthew — Just by Going Out to Eat!

Did you know that two local diners give back to our church?

Park City Diner and Knight & Day Diner support local churches through their Sharing Our Success community giving program. When you dine there, simply tell your server at checkout that you are from St. Matthew. A percentage of your bill will be credited to our church, and we receive a quarterly check based on the total participation.



There is no extra cost to you — just enjoy a meal and mention St. Matthew before you leave. And since they're open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, you could go right now!

If you're already planning to eat out, this is an easy way to support the ministries of our congregation while supporting local businesses as well.

Thank you for helping us grow this simple but meaningful partnership!

- Barb Eshbach, Treasurer

Game Day—March 15



Sunday, March 15
11:15 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Join us for a fun afternoon of games, pizza, puzzles, and fellowship — and help us celebrate Sammy Sweitzer's birthday! Bring a favorite game to share or play one of ours.

- Barb Eshbach, Treasurer

Music Ministry News

During the month of March, which encompasses most of our Lenten journey, our Chancel and Bell Choirs will be busy preparing special music for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. Both of our choirs are always looking to welcome new singers and ringers! Prior experience is not needed. We all learn together! If you would like to see what either choir is all about, now would be a great time to step in. Come give either or both choirs a try! Please contact Sue Feldmann for more information. (info@stmatthewelc.com; 717-394-9607)

Bell Choir Spring Schedule

- March 5 - Thursday Rehearsal - 6-7 pm - Bell Choir Room
- March 12 - Thursday Rehearsal 6-7 pm - Bell Choir Room
- March 19 - Thursday Rehearsal 6-7 pm - Bell Choir Room
- March 26 - Thursday Rehearsal & Record 6-7 pm - Sanctuary
- April 2 - Holy Week -- Maundy Thursday - **NO REHEARSAL**
- April 4 - Saturday Rehearsal 10 am-11 am - Sanctuary
- April 5 - Easter Sunday - Report time 9:10 am for run-through of our pieces. Easter Worship Service begins at 10:00 a.m.

Chancel Choir Spring Schedule

- March 5 - Thursday Rehearsal - 7-8 pm - Music Room (off of Fellowship Hall)
- March 12 - Thursday Rehearsal 7-8 pm - Music Room
- March 19 - Thursday Rehearsal 7-8 pm - Music Room
- March 26 - Thursday Rehearsal & Record 7-8 pm - Sanctuary
- April 2 - Holy Week -- Maundy Thursday - **NO REHEARSAL**
- April 4 - Saturday Rehearsal 11 am-12 noon - Sanctuary
- April 5 - Easter Sunday - Report time 9:30 am for run-through of our anthem. Easter Worship Service begins at 10:00 a.m.

- Sue Feldmann

Congratulations Barb Eshbach!



Congratulations!



Congratulations to our own Barb Eshbach, who was recently awarded Emerita Status from Penn State University. This special recognition came from the president of the university and the Dean of Penn State University Libraries in recognition for her years of creative initiative and faithful service as Head Librarian of the York campus library.

Thank You

Dear Pastor Fero and St. Matthew family,

It is with a grateful heart that I want to thank all of you for supporting me during the time of my hip fracture.

My deepest appreciation to my St. Matthew Family for all of the phone calls, cards and get-well wishes.

I have really missed worshiping with you and seeing all of you weekly. I'm working hard to get back.

Thanks again for everything.

Respectfully,
Anna Neal

New Members—The Nightingales



A Brief Autobiography as told by Harold.

We have been attending St. Matthew for several years, but we joined in December 2025. We wanted a church with a simpler format.

Kathleen and I were born in Paterson, New Jersey. She was born in 1940 and I was born in 1938. We both attended Eastside High School in Paterson. After graduation Kathleen studied to be an X-Ray technician and I went to Newark College of Engineering for a Civil Engineering degree. I worked in the construction business since 1959 and bought into a local construction company in 1972.

We had three children: Brian who died in 1990 in a

motorcycle accident, Norine who is married to John Wojtanowski, and Colleen who is married to Douglas Jones. Norine has two girls and Colleen has two boys.

I was not much of a church goer until my son's death. Kathleen who was raised Catholic agreed to join a church with me. We became members of St. Peter's first until we joined St. Matthew. We found that the Saturday evening services better suited our spiritual needs.

My career allowed me to work overseas in Greenland and on Missile bases in North Dakota. Our daughter Norine worked as a member of the Secret Service for 32 years, and her oldest daughter is currently a member of the Secret Service. Our daughter Colleen had her own business until she became a stay at home mother. Our son was a commercial pilot at the time of his death.

Our experience with St. Matthew has been positive from the very beginning with the friendliness of the members and how we have been welcomed into the congregation.

- Phyllis Wimer

Birthdays

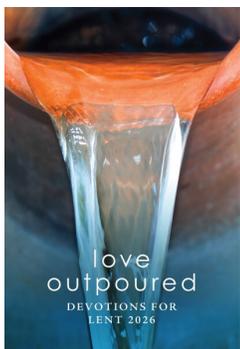
Barb Emmerich 3/9	Sammy Sweitzer 3/10
Buzz Rothweiler 3/14	Pat Smith 3/14
Ray Shaub 3/17	Sandy Tucker 3/25
Sarah Teichmann 3/27	
Judith Miller 3/30	Kim Murray 4/1
Nick Boehm 4/16	Bradley Charles 4/21
Cliff Eshbach 4/25	William Overly 4/26
Linda McIntyre 4/30	

Anniversaries

Robert & Phyllis Wimer 4/15



Lent Devotional Booklet



Copies of this year's Lenten devotional booklet, *Love Outpoured*, are now available in the church lobby.

Love Outpoured focuses on portions of the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans. In words that continue to speak to us today, Paul lays out foundational beliefs for a life of faith in Christian community. The daily devotions for each day, from Ash Wednesday to the Resurrection

of Our Lord / Vigil of Easter, begin with evocative images and brief scripture texts. The writers then bring their diverse voices and pastoral wisdom to the texts with quotations to ponder, reflections, and prayers.

This booklet finishes on Easter Sunday, but can be started/finished at any time.

-Pastor Fero

Daylight Saving Time



Don't forget to Spring Forward on Saturday night March 7!

Worship Assistants—March

Altar Care for March – Barb Elsen & Linda Tice

February 28 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Matthew Kolb
- Reader: Matthew Kolb

March 1 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Linda McIntyre
- Reader: Peg Sampson
- Greeters: Andrea Farris & Kaye Ames
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Pam Frye & Brad Charles

March 7 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Sheila Charles
- Reader: Sheila Charles

March 8 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Steve Feldmann
- Reader: Linda Tice
- Greeter: Toni Sweitzer
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Brenda Stauffer & Carol Rothweiler

March 14 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Nancy Pokopec
- Reader: Nancy Pokopec

March 15 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Linda McIntyre
- Reader: Roxanne Koch
- Greeter: Kay Gontner
- Usher: OPEN
- Counters: Pam Frye & Linda Tice

March 21 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Brad Charles
- Reader: Brad Charles

March 22 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Barb Elsen
- Reader: Peg Sampson
- Greeter: Carol Rothweiler
- Ushers: Andrea Farris & Kaye Ames
- Counters: Brad Charles & Sandy Tucker

March 28 – Palm Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Matthew Kolb
- Reader: Matthew Kolb

March 29 – Palm Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Barb Emmerich
- Reader: Linda Tice
- Greeters: Andrea Farris & Kaye Ames
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Carol Rothweiler & Brenda Stauffer





2026 Church Council Members (Left to right)

**Seated: Barb Eshbach (Treasurer), Cliff Eshbach (President),
Laurie LaBar (Vice-President), Kay Gontner (Secretary)**

**Standing: Roxanne Koch, Peg Sampson, Rev. Robin Fero,
Toni Sweitzer, Barb Elsen, Andrea Farris**



Officers (2026)

Rev. Cliff Eshbach, President

Laurie LaBar, Vice President

Kay Gontner, Secretary

Brad Charles, Financial Secretary

Barb Eshbach, Treasurer

Staff

The Rev. Robin Fero, Pastor

Susan Feldmann, Director of Music

Ann Hossler, organist

Church Council

Rev. Cliff Eshbach Barb Eshbach

Barb Elsen Kay Gontner

Andrea Farris Peg Sampson

Roxanne Koch Toni Sweitzer

Laurie LaBar 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

March 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10am - Worship	2 12pm - Better Bones at St. Matthew	3 12pm - Better Bones at St. Matthew	4 12:00pm - Bible Study 6:30pm - M.T. Democratic Committee	5 6:00pm - Bell Choir Reh 7:00pm - Vocal Choir Reh	6 5pm - Worship	7 5pm - Worship
8 10am - Worship 11:15am - Evangelism Mtg	9 5:30pm - CPR Class	10 12pm - Better Bones at St. Matthew	11 12:00pm - Bible Study 12:30pm - Head Start Mtg 6:30pm - RIC Committee Mtg	12 6:00pm - Bell Choir Reh 7:00pm - Vocal Choir Reh	13 1:30pm - CPR Class	14 5pm - Worship
15 10am - Worship 11:30am - Game Day	16 9am - Community Meal 7:00pm - Church Council	17 12pm - Better Bones at St. Matthew	18 12:00pm - Bible Study	19 6:00pm - Bell Choir Reh 7:00pm - Vocal Choir Reh	20 9:30am - CPR Class 2:00pm - Quilting Workshop 5pm - Worship	21 9:30am - CPR Class 2:00pm - Quilting Workshop 5pm - Worship
22 10am - Worship	23 6:30pm - Grandview Heights CAN	24 12pm - Better Bones at St. Matthew	25 12:00pm - Bible Study 5:30pm - Optimist Club Contest	26 6:00pm - Bell Choir Reh 7:00pm - Vocal Choir Reh	27 1:30pm - CPR Class	28 5pm - Palm Worship
29 10am - Palm Worship	30	31 12pm - Better Bones at St. Matthew				

ST. MATTHEW

700 Pleasure Road
Lancaster, PA 17601

(Return Service Requested)

The Little Church with the Big Heart

