



# THE WORD

May/June 2026

with addendum

Pastor Robin Fero

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



## Pastor's Page



**"This Jesus God raised up,  
and of that all of us are  
witnesses"** (Acts 2:32).

Have you ever been called upon by the court system to testify in a case? I remember three specific times I had to appear in court as a witness. One was because I was the retail employee who watched a man deliberately walk out of the store without paying for the box of cigars in his hand. I was in court all morning for this, lined up with other retailers that he had stolen from, and the defendant made a plea agreement with the judge, and before the morning was over, I walked out the courthouse doors WITH the man who stole from my company. That was disheartening AND scary!

Another appearance I had to make was because of an automobile accident in which a woman scraped her front bumper all the way down the side of my car. She brought her front tire (!) into the court room, claiming the markings on her tire showed that I was the one who was at fault. The bailiffs got a hoot out of that, as if they had "seen everything now!"

The most comedic courtroom appearance for me to share with you was from my college days. A man had been breaking into apartments in the complex where my roommate and I lived, and we became victims. My roommate suffered more in his loss than I did. The man stole his soon-to-be fiancé's ring. What did I lose? Our microwave! For a college student to lose their microwave is like cutting off their oxygen supply. Well, their food chain supply...

When the prowler was finally caught, all the victims

showed up in court to name their losses at the hearing. Where is the comedy? One of the victims testified that his favorite expensive pair of jogging shoes was stolen. The prosecutors began giggling and they interrupted the judge and asked, "Your honor, could the shoes that the defendant is wearing in court be those very shoes?"

The judge immediately said, "I've seen enough!", and scheduled the man's trial date. My roommate's engagement ring? It was never found...BUT...the couple never got married to each other anyway, and everyone lived happily ever after.

In Eastertide, there is plenty for us to bear witness to. "We have seen the Lord!" We join the disciples in taking notes from each other and proclaiming what it is that God has done for us.

In Acts 2, Peter proclaimed to the people that God made good on God's promises and raised Jesus from the dead. We may not be firsthand witnesses to Jesus dying in Jerusalem and later appearing to the disciples, but we indeed are witnesses to Jesus' resurrection power which gives us new life every single day of our lives.

We are called to be witnesses. We are called to share our blessed Hope with those who have lost their hope.

As you read through this May-June issue of the Word, I encourage you to identify the ways in which St. Matthew Lutheran Church is bearing witness. Where are we falling short in not telling the story of Jesus?

I also ask you to thank God for overcoming death and the grave and leading us along through the good, the bad, and the ugly of life, into life everlasting.

-Pastor Fero

## Council Corner

Easter greetings to you! The Easter season continues throughout most of the month of May. I hope you will continue to share a *Happy Easter* greeting as you go about your day.

During this first third of the year, the Congregation Council has taken some time during our meetings to learn something about the church. And I mean capital "C" Church. We learned about the connected relationship between the congregation, conference, synod and churchwide expressions. We took notice of our neighboring Lutheran congregations in the Lancaster Conference. These short programs help us understand how we fulfill our responsibilities as listed in chapter 12 of our constitution.

We also talked about our connection to our predecessors who founded Saint Matthew all those years ago. Not only do we have a responsibility to each other to take care of our little corner of Pleasure Road, but also, we have a responsibility to those who had the vision to locate us here in the first place. Knowing that, I am reminded of the little statistic the treasurer gave us at the annual meeting last November. If each of our giving units added six dollars (that's it) to their weekly giving, we could be in a better position in offering our ministry. My question is; how are you doing at fulfilling that?

Finally, when you gaze at all the information on the bulletin boards, there is now a council corner on one of those boards. It includes our photos so you know who is currently serving on the council. It also includes photos of our bishops and two newly acquired photos of our companion congregation in the Konde Diocese of Tanzania. This space also includes information about council meetings along with additional opportunities for you to serve the ministry of Saint Matthew. As we move into this next third of the year, I invite your curiosity and involvement in the ministry of Saint Matthew.

-Cliff Eshbach, Council President

## Ministry Project Ideas

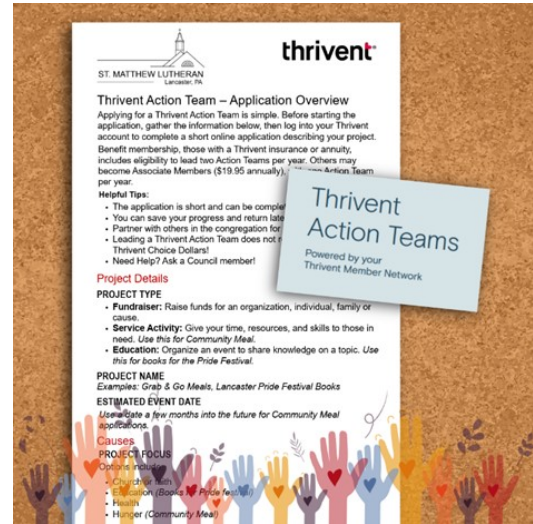
### Have an Idea for a Ministry Project?

Do you know of a need in our church or community—or have an idea for a project—but aren't sure how to fund it? A Thrivent Action Team grant may be a great option.

Thrivent Action Teams provide \$250 in seed money, along with resources to help bring your idea to life. Projects can support fundraisers, service activities, or educational events—whether it's something new or an extension of an existing ministry.

Members have recently received funding to support the Community Meal ministry and to purchase

copies of *UnClobber: Rethinking Our Misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality*, the book being distributed at upcoming Pride festivals.



The application is short and can be completed in one sitting. Consider partnering with others in the congregation for ideas and support!

To be eligible, individuals must be Thrivent members. Those with a Thrivent insurance or annuity have benefit membership and may lead up to two Action Teams per year. Others may become Associate Members (currently \$19.95 annually) and are eligible to lead one Action Team per year.

Many St. Matthew members direct their Thrivent Choice Dollars to our congregation—please know that participating in an Action Team does not reduce or impact those dollars in any way.

If you're interested but unsure where to start, assistance is available. See the Congregation Council bulletin board for an Application Overview handout!

- Barb Eshbach, Treasurer

## Conversation Around the Corner

It's time for another Conversation Around the Corner!

On Tuesday, May 5, St. Matthew will host "Tales from the Beeyard," a presentation by Cornell University Certified Master Beekeeper Lori Stahl.

Lori felt called to beekeeping in the late 1990s, never imagining the journey she was beginning. Over time, her work with honeybees led to the founding of BeeBee's All Naturals, featuring products such as honey, beeswax candles, and soaps. She also offers bee education talks and rescues swarms, removing and rehomeing honeybee colonies each season.

In this engaging presentation, she will share her personal beekeeping journey while offering insights into the fascinating world of honeybees.

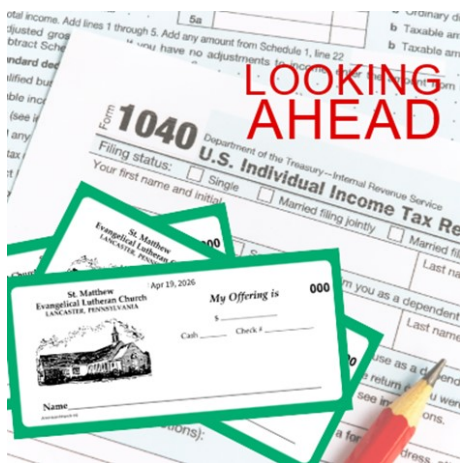
Lori earned her Cornell University Master Beekeeper certification in 2019 and currently maintains several apiaries throughout Lancaster and southeastern York County. She also serves on the Pennsylvania Honeybee Advisory Board and has represented the Pennsylvania State Beekeepers Association on the Pennsylvania Farm Council, chaired its legislative committee, and served as treasurer of the Lancaster County Beekeepers Society.



Through her work, she is committed to educating both the public and fellow beekeepers on ways to support and protect honeybees.

- Barb Eshbach, Evangelism Committee

### Charitable Giving Update



### A 2026 Update on Charitable Giving

Just when you thought you could stop thinking about taxes for the year, here's a quick update for 2026! In the past, charitable contributions could only be deducted if a taxpayer itemized deductions

on Schedule A of Form 1040. Beginning with tax year 2026, individuals who do not itemize may deduct up to \$1,000 in cash contributions to qualified charitable organizations (\$2,000 for those filing jointly).

While generosity is rooted in gratitude and faith rather than tax considerations, this change may be helpful as you plan your giving. As always, please consult your tax professional for guidance about your specific situation.

- Barb Eshbach, Treasurer

### Balancing Faith and Finance



The year-to-date snapshot shows that the congregation is essentially at break-even, with a slight deficit of \$72.89—a solid start to the year.

Let's keep it going!

January - March 2026	
	Actual
Regular Giving	\$ 32,322.00
Other Income	\$ 8,940.28
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 41,262.28</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 41,335.17</b>

(\$72.89)

- Barb Eshbach, Treasurer

### RIC Committee News

#### Why We're Showing Up: St. Matthew at Pride This June

This June, St. Matthew Lutheran Church will be participating in both Lancaster Pride (June 20<sup>th</sup> at Penn Medicine Park) and Lititz Pride (June 6<sup>th</sup> at 727 Furnace Hills Pike, Lititz) and we hope you'll consider joining us.

At its core, Pride is about visibility, belonging, and celebrating the dignity of every person. As a congregation, this aligns deeply with who we are and what we believe: that all people are created in God's image and are worthy of love, welcome, and community.

Showing up at Pride is one way we live out our faith beyond our walls. It's a chance to say clearly and publicly: *you are welcome here*. For many in the LGBTQ+ community, that message has not always been something they've heard from churches. Our presence matters, it helps create a different

experience of faith, one rooted in compassion, inclusion, and grace.

### Why Your Presence Matters

You don't need to have all the right words. Simply being there, smiling, handing out materials, or walking alongside others—can be powerful. When people see a church showing up with openness and kindness, it can begin to rebuild trust and open doors for connection.

Whether you've participated in Pride before or this would be your first time, your presence helps reflect the heart of our congregation.

### What to Expect

If you're feeling unsure, you're not alone—and we want you to feel comfortable.

Here's what participation typically looks like:

- A joyful, welcoming environment with music, vendors, and community organizations.
- St. Matthew will have a table at both events and in the past has shared our table with other open and affirming congregations.
- Volunteers might help greet visitors, hand out small items, or simply engage in friendly conversation.
- You're welcome to come for as little or as long as you'd like, there's no pressure to stay the whole time.
- There's no expectation to debate, defend, or have all the answers. This is about presence, kindness, and connection.

We understand that for some, this may feel new or even a little outside your comfort zone. That's okay. Participating in Pride is not about being perfect; it's about being present.

If you've been looking for a way to live out your faith in a tangible, community-centered way, this is a meaningful opportunity.



We would love you to join us. Please talk to anyone on the RIC committee if you have questions and you can sign up on the bulletin board in the fellowship hallway.

-Erin Conahan

### Music Ministry News

The month of May begins in the Easter season and leads us to Pentecost.

The Bell Choir shared 2 anthems on Easter Sunday, one of which was a processional to start the service! This is the first time the bell choir has done a processional and it was exciting to try a new musical offering. Thank you to Nancy Pokopec for suggesting the idea of a processional! The second piece used the chimes which shared a new and different sound on For the Beauty of the Earth.

For Christians, Pentecost is celebrated 50 days after Easter (including Easter Sunday). It commemorates the day in Jerusalem when the gift of the Holy Spirit came down on the followers of Jesus. It also marks the birthday of the church and the Spirit's presence in our lives and ministries. Along with Christmas, Good Friday and Easter, Pentecost is one of the most significant festival days of the Christian Church.

The Chancel Choir shared a beautiful anthem on Easter and will end its music ministry season on Pentecost Sunday, May 24th. The choir will sing Come, Holy Spirit based on the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, let your peace live within us.  
Come, Holy Spirit, send your light from above.  
Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful,  
And enkindle in them the fire of your love.

I am very grateful for all of the faithful musicians in our choirs that offer special music to the glory of God! Blessed Pentecost.

- Sue Feldmann

### Evangelism Corner

Game Day was held on Sunday, March 15, also in recognition of Sammy Sweitzer's tenth birthday. The attendees enjoyed pizza and ice cream cake with a special round of Jeopardy featuring Phyllis Diller (Toni Sweitzer), Pastor Fero (himself), Sammy and mistress of ceremonies, Barb Eshbach. A fun afternoon was had by all.

Conversation Around the Corner continues to hold special importance for our congregation and the community. On Tuesday, May 5, 2026, Lori Stahl, Cornell University Master Beekeeper, will present "Tales from the Beeyard" in Fellowship Hall at 6:30pm. Discussion centered upon refreshments,

publicity on the Grandview Neighborhood Facebook page, Manheim Township Merchandiser and cost of her program which has generously been covered.

Further offerings have been suggested: Anthony Marcavage and his band, Raven Ridge Wildlife Rehabilitation and a September presentation by the Elephant Lady.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, May 17, 2026.

-Kay Gontner

### *A Pride Story*

*Tracy Longenecker stopped by St. Matthew's information table during the Lititz Pride Festival in 2024. A conversation began that day between total strangers and the conversation continues now each week in worship. Listen to Tracy's story....*

St. Matthew Church is warm and welcoming; unlike my last church which was confrontational; passing judgement of appearance saying what is proper according to pre-determined lists; saying what is ok for a man in attire, cosmetics, accessories.

Also, they had a formal vote that banned same sex marriage at that last church. This goes against my belief that somebody should be able to love who they want. They should not be ashamed of whom they love. And not to mention they are very transphobic. They repeatedly remarked that those people in the LGBTQ community will spend their eternity in hell. They always made it a point that the entire pride month was to be dedicated to shaming those that did not conform to their set standards.

- Tracy Longenecker



### *Thank You*

Dear Pastor Robin and St. Matthew Church Family,

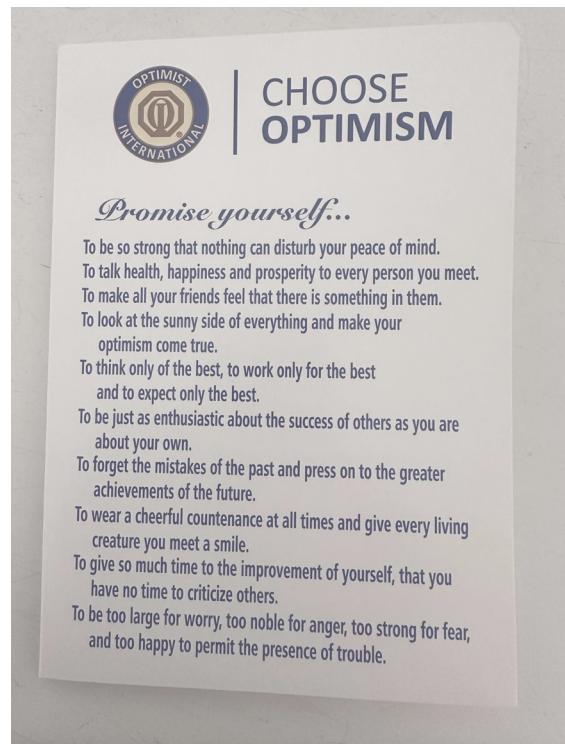
Thank you for your generous offering of your church for our Oratorical Contest-Lancaster Optimist Club. Our partnership means much to our club.

Your hospitality, kindness and thoughtfulness is beyond comparison.

Our Christian heritage is alive and well in Lancaster.

Again, thank you for allowing us to use your church building.

Optimistically, Sue and Optimist Club of Lancaster



### *Birthdays*

- |                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Nancy Smith 5/4          | Bob Wimer 5/5     |
| Mimi Ruth 5/9            | Lunda Shaub 5/19  |
| Cynthia Longenecker 5/22 | Linda Tice 5/24   |
| Mark Smith 5/24          |                   |
| Bernice Scheetz 6/6      | Roxanne Koch 6/17 |
| Victoria Syvertson 6/25  | Beth Woodley 6/27 |
| Benjamin Kendall 6/29    |                   |

### *Anniversaries*

- |                                |
|--------------------------------|
| Brad & Sheila Charles 5/2      |
| Paul & Donna Kilgore 5/17      |
| Sarah & Erik Teichmann 5/19    |
| Steve & Sue Feldmann 5/28      |
| Nick & Ellen Boehm 6/14        |
| Ned & Cynthia Longenecker 6/18 |
| Sandy & Scott Tucker 6/25      |

## *Worship Assistants—May*

**Altar Care for May** – Linda Tice & Barb Elsen

### **May 2 – Saturday 5pm**

- Assisting Minister: Nancy Pokopec
- Reader: Nancy Pokopec

### **May 3 – Sunday 10am**

- Assisting Minister: Linda McIntyre
- Reader: Linda McIntyre
- Greeter: OPEN
- Usher: OPEN
- Counters: Carol Rothweiler & Pam Frye

### **May 9 – Saturday 5pm**

- Assisting Minister: Sheila Charles
- Reader: Sheila Charles

### **May 10 – Sunday 10am**

- Assisting Minister: Barb Emmerich
- Reader: Peg Sampson
- Greeter: Kay Gontner
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Brad Charles & Brenda Stauffer

### **May 16 – Saturday 5pm**

- Assisting Minister: Matthew Kolb
- Reader: Matthew Kolb

### **May 17 – Sunday 10am**

- Assisting Minister: Steve Feldmann
- Reader: Linda Tice
- Greeter: OPEN
- Usher: OPEN
- Counters: Sandy Tucker & Linda Tice

### **May 23 – Saturday 5pm**

- Assisting Minister: Nancy Pokopec
- Reader: Nancy Pokopec

### **May 24 – Sunday 10am**

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

### **May 30 – Saturday 5pm**

- Assisting Minister: Brad Charles
- Reader: Brad Charles

### **May 31 – Sunday 10am**

- Assisting Minister: Linda McIntyre
- Reader: Linda Tice
- Greeter: OPEN
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Pam Frye & Brenda Stauffer



# *Easter 2026*



## April Quilting Team



### *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](http://www.stmatthewelc.com). Copies of the Full Statement are also  
available in the Education and Resources Stand in the Fellowship Hall.)*

# St. Matthew

May 2026

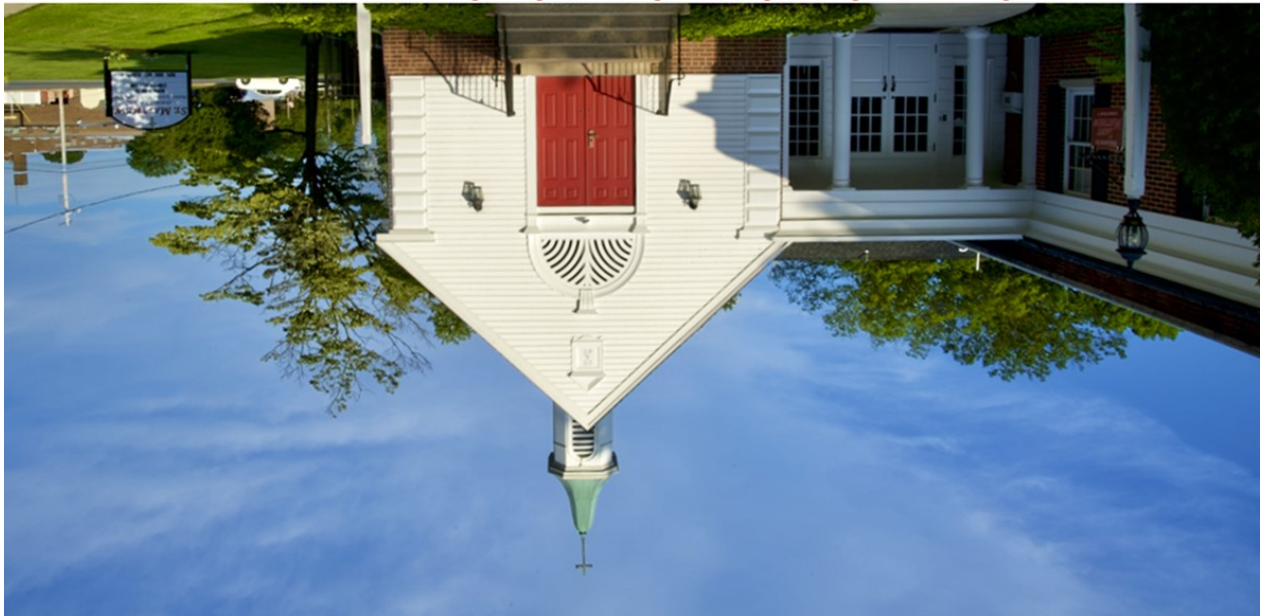
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 10:30am - CPR Class	2 5pm - Worship
3 10am - Worship	4	5 6:30pm - Beekeeping Conversation Around the Corner	6 12:00pm - Bible Study 6:30pm - M.T. Democratic Committee	7	8	9 9:30am - CPR Class 5pm - Worship
10 10am - Worship	11 7:00pm - Church Council	12	13 12:00pm - Bible Study 6:30pm - RIC Committee	14 6:30 pm - Vocal Choir Rehearsal	15 1:30pm - CPR Class	16 2pm - Quilting Workshop 5pm - Worship
17 10am - Worship 11:15am - Evangelism Mtg	18 9am - Community Meal	19 <b>PRIMARY ELECTION</b>	20 12:00pm - Bible Study	21 6:30 pm - Vocal Choir Rehearsal	22	23 5pm - Pentecost Worship
24 10am - Pentecost Worship	25	26	27 12:00pm - Bible Study	28	29 3:00pm - CPR Class	30 5pm - Worship
31 10am - Worship						

# ***ST. MATTHEW***

700 Pleasure Road  
Lancaster, PA 17601

(Return Service Requested)

*The Little Church with the Big Heart*



# Newsletter Addendum—June 2026

## Worship Assistants

Altar Care for June – Kay Gontner & Barb Elsen

### June 6 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Nancy Pokopec
- Reader: Nancy Pokopec

### June 7 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Steve Feldmann
- Reader: Steve Feldmann
- Greeter: Roxanne Koch
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Brad Charles & Sandy Tucker

### June 13 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Matthew Kolb
- Reader: Matthew Kolb

### June 14 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Barb Elsen
- Reader: Roxanne Koch
- Greeter: Kay Gontner
- Usher: OPEN
- Counters: Linda Tice & Carol Rothweiler

### June 20 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Brad Charles
- Reader: Brad Charles

### June 21 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Barb Emmerich
- Reader: Peg Sampson
- Greeter: Nancy Smith
- Usher: Barb Elsen
- Counters: Sandy Tucker & Brenda Stauffer

### June 27 – Saturday 5pm

- Assisting Minister: Sheila Charles
- Reader: Sheila Charles

### June 28 – Sunday 10am

- Assisting Minister: Linda McIntyre
- Reader: Linda McIntyre
- Greeter: OPEN
- Usher: OPEN
- Counters: Pam Frye & Brad Charles



## Closing the Gap Together

At the annual congregation meeting in November, it was shared that if just half of our giving units increased their weekly giving by \$6, we could make significant progress toward closing the current budget gap.

If you are able, please consider whether this small increase might be possible. Together, these gifts support the ongoing ministry and mission of our congregation.

Thank you for your continued generosity and faithfulness.

-Barb Eshbach, Treasurer

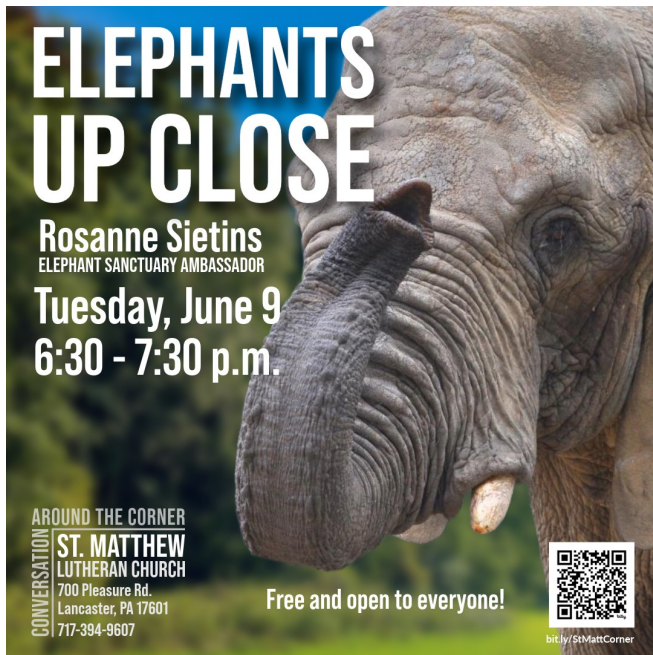


## Conversation Around the Corner—Elephants

On Tuesday, June 9, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., St. Matthew Lutheran Church (700 Pleasure Road, Lancaster) will host “Elephants Up Close,” a presentation by Elephant Sanctuary Ambassador Rosanne Sietins.

Rosanne brings more than two decades of passion and experience to her work with an elephant sanctuary. Her journey began in the late 1990s after discovering an article about the sanctuary’s founding elephant. Curious to learn more, she reached out with a simple offer to help. What began as an interest quickly grew into a deep commitment to the sanctuary’s mission of providing lifelong care for elephants retired from captivity.

Over the years, Rosanne has served as a dedicated volunteer and ambassador, helping to share the story of the sanctuary and the elephants who call it home. From working on-site in Tennessee to organizing informational booths and speaking engagements, she has spent years educating others about elephant care, conservation, and the importance of sanctuary environments. Her outreach has taken her across multiple states, connecting with a wide range of audiences and communities.



Now based in Pennsylvania, Rosanne continues her work as an advocate and educator, bringing her experiences and insights to local groups. Her presentations offer a unique opportunity to learn more about elephants—both in human care and in the wild—as well as the meaningful work being done to protect and care for them. Her story is a powerful reminder of how one person’s curiosity can grow into a lifelong commitment to making a difference.

-Barb Eshbach, Evangelism Committee

## Celebrating Pride

Why We’re Showing Up: St. Matthew at Pride This June  
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-Erin Conahan



St. Matthew

June 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 6:30pm - M.T. Democratic Committee	4	5 1:30pm - CPR Class	6 <b>LITITZ PRIDE FESTIVAL</b> 5pm -Worship
7 10am -Worship	8 5:30pm - CPR Class	9 6:30pm - Conversation Around the Corner - Elephants	10 6:30pm - RIC Committee Mtg	11	12 1:30pm - CPR Class	13 5pm - Worship
14 10am - Worship	15 9am - Community Meal	16 7:00pm - Church Council	17 12:00pm - Lunch at the Shack	18	19 10:30am - CPR Class	20 <b>LANCASTER PRIDE</b> 2:00pm - Quilting Workshop 5pm - Worship
21 10am - Worship 11:15am - Evangelism Mtg	22 5:30pm - CPR Class	23	24	25	26 6:00pm - Chili Cookoff	27 9:30am - CPR Class 5pm - Worship
28 10am - Worship	29	30				

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