



SAINT
MATTHEW

**December
2022
Newsletter**

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day

This year's candlelight Christmas Eve services will be at **3:00 pm** and **9:00 pm** on **Saturday, December 24**.

The **3:00 pm** service will be a contemporary service with worship led by Matt Vollmar.

The **9:00 pm** service will be the traditional service with worship led by Hank Oplinger.

Which ever service you choose to attend, we look forward to celebrating the birth of our Savior and worshipping Him with you!

Then on Christmas Day (**Sunday, December 25**) we will have **one combined service at 10:00 am** in the Sanctuary, to come together as one church body, to celebrate this special day.

The Glory of Christmas

Join us on **Sunday, December 11 at 7:00 pm** for *The Glory Of Christmas!*

The Glory of Christmas is a musical drama that tells the story of Jesus' birth and God's gift of salvation. An ensemble of: cast, choir and orchestra, amid beautiful costumes and set designs, with live animals; make this a memorable Christmas experience for all ages.

Why not start a new tradition this year? Make *The Glory Of Christmas* the beginning of your annual Christmas celebration with your family. Invite your friends and neighbors too because this is a wonderful opportunity to introduce new people to St. Matthew, and to Jesus!

Discipleship Weekend & Combined New Year's Day Service

We are honored to welcome Jeremiah Bolich for a Discipleship Weekend on **December 30 - January 1**.

Jeremiah experienced a life-changing encounter with Jesus at a Billy Graham crusade in 1995. One evening while reading his bible, Jeremiah read 1 Corinthians 9:16: "*Yet when I preach the Gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!*" That moment was the defining call upon his life and he began making preparations for his ministry training. After graduating from Olivet in 1999 and receiving his ordination from the Church of the Nazarene, he entered into full-time itinerant evangelism. (For more information on Jeremiah please visit his website at <https://www.jeremiahbolich.com/about-us>)

We invite you to meet Jeremiah and hear him speak on **Friday, December 30 at 6:00 pm** (dinner will be served for a free will offering); on **Saturday, December 31 at 9:00 am** (breakfast will be served for a free will offering) and on **Sunday, January 1** at our **combined New Year's Day service at 10:00 am**.



Every Christmas season, we enjoy watching some of our favorite Christmas movies. There are some, however, that we just won't watch. The movies that are off limits for us are the ones where mayhem is the main theme. You know, the ones where it is a "comedy of errors," (though it's just not that funny when my blood pressure sky-rockets, when we find ourselves short of breath, covering our eyes while looking through spread fingers to watch everything that could go wrong, go wrong.) No thanks. Hallmark Christmas movies are just fine, thank you.



Why won't we watch the chaotic movies? Because life is messy enough as it is. To spend two hours watching chaos only seems to add to the messiness for me. So, we tend to watch the happier, funnier ones instead. Having said that, the reality is, Christmas *is* messy.

Perhaps you have experienced it. Rather than feeling it to be "the most wonderful time of the year," maybe you feel as though everything that could go wrong is going wrong. The oven breaks right before family comes in. The heater breaks on the coldest day of the year. You get a speeding ticket just before Christmas. If that is you, I hope you know there is hope.

Think about the first Christmas. Joseph and Mary are told they must travel a great distance while she's nine months pregnant. No vacancies are found anywhere in Bethlehem for the one who probably needs it most. Instead of a sterile delivery room, they get a stable. Talk about messy! A far cry from the Hallmark special where girl meets guy, they overcome the crisis and live happily ever after – all in two hours! Yet, into that non-sterile stable, God silently entered the world!

If you find your season is increasing in chaos, I pray that the God of Peace will surround your life with His presence. The glory of Christmas is that God is with us in the chaos! I pray that you will find the time to just "be" in God's presence during the frenetic pace December can bring. I also pray that as you make time to spend with the Lord, He will give you His peace that passes all understanding, which is found through Jesus.

I also hope you will join us each Sunday for our Advent series called, "Messy Christmas," as we look at the incredible promise of God's presence in the midst of our chaos. Christmas Eve Services will be at 3 and 9 pm. We will also have one special service on Sunday, December 25 that you won't want to miss.

Celebrating the Present of His Presence!

Bob

Celebration Place meets every Friday night and is offered to our kids as a “pre-recovery” kid’s group for Celebrate Recovery. Kids begin in the Chapel with their parents at 7:00 pm to be a part of worship time, then head upstairs to Kids Town for their own lesson, small groups, snack, game time & more. We need volunteers to help us teach on Friday nights, so please contact Lindsay at the above number if you can help on a rotating basis.

Celebrate Recovery: *Aaron Oplinger - 618-406-0287 - aoplinger@stmatthewumc.org*

Friday Nights: Dinner at 6 pm. Large group at 7 pm. Open share groups at 8 pm.

December 2 - **Tracy Crawford** will be sharing some valuable insights with us in a lesson on how to avoid going backward in our walk or having a "relapse" in our recovery.

December 9 - As we go through tough times as well as good times, it is very important to not forget the good things God has already done in our lives. **Allison Knapp** will be talking about "Gratitude" focusing on four important areas of our lives, and how to build a gratitude list.

December 16 - Principle 8 in CR says, "Yield myself to God to be used to bring this good news to others, both by my example and by my words." As we get to the end of our year of lessons, we will focus on how we continue to grow in our walk with the Lord by giving back. **Nathaniel Rose** will be teaching a lesson titled "GIVE" and will explain how sharing the victories God has shown you in your life with others benefits them and you.

December 23 - **Tom Partelow** will continue the focus on Principle 8 as he talks about how critical it is for us to say "YES" to the call of God in our lives.

December 30 - We will have a special guest evangelist **Jeremiah Bolich**, who will be sharing his story with us. Jeremiah will be with our church for the weekend as well. He will speak at a breakfast the following Saturday morning here in the Vine Cafe and again at the 10:00 combined service on Sunday, January 1st.

December 31 - We want to focus our attention on our Higher Power Jesus Christ, for the New Year by getting together in the chapel and watching 4 important episodes of "The Chosen" on our big screen. There will be food and drinks and **THE WHOLE CHURCH IS WELCOME**. Come and join us starting at 4. We will look to be done by 8 pm so that everyone can be home for ringing in the New Year and get rested for church the next morning.

Operation Christmas Child Packing Party!



Six generations came together on Saturday, November 12 to pack 480 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child! Yummy snacks, Christmas music, and a sweet spirit were all present along with 65 St. Matthew family members who worked

for 2 hours packing shoeboxes to spread God’s love and the Good News to children all over the globe.



Christmas Sunday, December 25, will be a Family Sunday! Our Nursery will open at 9:50 am for our little ones 3 years and younger. Our Pre-School & Elementary kids are invited to stay with their families for a special Christmas joint service that begins at 10:00 am in the Sanctuary. We'll have a special time for kids during the service with their favorite green haired friend.

Our "Praise & Pajama Sunday" will be held on January 1 during the joint 10:00 am service in the Sanctuary. Our Nursery and Pre-School Kids Worship will open at 9:50 am with our Elementary Kids Worship being dismissed from service. Yes, let your kids wear their pajamas to church as we ring in the new year with praise and worship to our King!

Wednesday Kids' Club meets every week from 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm for preschool – 6th graders! We have spent the semester learning about all 66 books of the Bible, the purpose of each book, more about the people in that book and having a greater appreciation of God's big picture of the Bible. December 7 will be our last club day for the year and we'll celebrate with a Christmas Bash!

Kids Crew is available to all 5th & 6th graders who would like to help out in Kids Worship on Sunday mornings during the 9:00 am and/or the 11:00 am. We are looking for kids who like to be helpful, assist the teachers and help the kids while they are in worship. Contact Lindsay if your child would like to sign-up as a crew member!

Working on that 2023 calendar for the kids? Here are your need to know dates... Vacation Bible School Work Week (June 5-8), "STELLAR" Vacation Bible School (June 12- 16), Beulah Youth Institute for finishing 7th – 12th gr. (June 18 - 24), Beulah Bible Camp for finishing 4th – 6th gr. (June 26 – 29), Beulah Beginner Camp for finishing 1st – 3rd gr. (June 30 – July 1).

We love new friends in Children's Ministry and have plenty of opportunities for you to serve. Let God use you in a mighty way by investing in the spiritual formation of our amazing kids! Not sure where your "sweet spot" would be? Meet with Lindsay and we'll find you a perfect place!

Email Updates & Activities. If you have a child or grandchild in the Children's Ministry and do not receive our emails, please send your email address to lvollmar@stmatthewumc.org. We will continue to provide your kids and families with opportunities to know, grow & go in the name of Jesus!

GOOD NEWS CLUB

Please continue to pray for our kids and their families as we continue to plant the seeds of faith in their lives! We have some incredible kids this year that are working hard on learning about Jesus and discovering more about their faith. Good News Club is a fun time packed full of Bible stories, music, games, memory verses, skits, snacks and planting the seeds of Jesus in the lives of our kids in the community. Your support and prayers are greatly appreciated!

Trunk Or Treat!



Thanks to all who participated in Trunk or Treat! We were blessed with great weather & had a great turn out!

Sunday Night Youth - 5:00 pm in the Youth Room. (No Youth December 18th or 25th)

Youth Band - Wednesday Nights from 5:30 pm - 6:00 pm in the Youth Room.

Youth Bible Study - Wednesday Nights from 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm in the Youth Room.

Dec 11 - Youth Christmas Party - 4:30 pm til people have to head up for *Glory of Christmas*. The rest of us stay down and watch a Christmas movie with snacks!



Youth Movie Night - *Wakanda Forever*



Sunday Night Youth!

News & Events

Poinsettia Orders

If you would like to order a poinsettia in honor of someone, in memory of someone, or as a love gift to someone; the order forms are available at the Welcome Center. The poinsettias are \$10.00 each and will be on display in the Sanctuary and Chapel. There will be a special poinsettia recognition page that will be available at the Christmas Eve services on Saturday, December 24. You may take your plant home after the Christmas Eve service. The deadline to order a poinsettia is Monday, Dec. 19. Please include payment with your order form. Thank you!



Disaffiliation Update

Progress is being made in terms of disaffiliation from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and the United Methodist Church. The end is in sight. In the meantime, please do three things:

First, continue to pray for the process as we negotiate with the Conference.

Second, make sure your name is on the membership roll. If in doubt, please check with Casey Skelton in the office no later than December 31, 2022. Only church members will be allowed to vote on disaffiliation.

Third, we had a special informational congregational meeting on this subject in July 2021. Because so much time has passed, because there are many new people who have joined St. Matthew, and because there have been some significant changes to the process, we're having a second special informational congregational meeting on Sunday, January 15, at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Please plan to attend. This will be for information only; a vote will not be taken at this meeting.

The District Superintendent will then be asked to call a Church Conference which she will conduct when the vote to disaffiliate will be held. The date for this meeting will be announced in early 2023.

Our December New Life Club meeting will be held on the 15th at Noon in the Vine Cafe. Our lunch will be prepared and serve by "Jack." The New Life Club Choir will present their Christmas Musical for our program. Please join us and bring a friend. No reservations are needed. You will love the warm fellowship with God's people.

New Life Club Bible Study with Larry Patton - will be held on Dec. 1 and Dec. 29 at 9:30 a.m. with coffee and donuts, then Bible Study at 10:00 a.m. Dec. 29 will be "Bring Your Own Lunch" day.

"Redeemed Again", The Thrift Shop of St. Matthew - Due to the great response to our recent special sales we are OUT of women and men's clothing and shoes. PRAISE GOD! Your donations have helped so many...we need to restock. We also are in great need of pots and pans. Believe it our not we are depleting our supply of Christmas items as well. When you take down your decorations and decide to retire some, we are more than happy to receive them. Also we are in need of a few more folks to help us one day a week for 4 hours. Please see me or Connie Bergmann or Pat Cook if you are in the least interested in checking it out. WE NEED YOU! Thank you for your wonderful donations this whole year. You serve our community well and help keep the ministry thriving.

New Life Club Choir is singing in three assisted living centers in the area. We are excited to be able to do this again. After we sing for the New Life Club Club in December, we will adjourn until sometime in January, 2023. We have had a wonderful time with our group! Think about joining us in the new year.

St. Matthew Senior Travels

St. Louis Cardinals Spring Training next year - March 19-27, 2023.

Reservations are being made now.

Watch for new and great outings for "2023." Coming Soon!

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year.
God has been faithful and will continue to be! Praise His name!



Pictured above is the New Life Club's "trunk" (and it's wonderful hosts) at Trunk Or Treat!



Pictured left and right are New Life Club travelers on their trip to the Fireside Dinner Theatre in Wisconsin!



Kitchen Closed For Cleaning

The kitchen will be closed on December 21 & December 28 for cleaning. We will re-open for the Wednesday night meal on Wednesday, January 4. Thanks for your faithfulness all year long!

Remember to sign-up for the meal each week in the new year so that we can ensure we have enough food to feed everyone. Each week Jack and his crew have around 50 people show up who didn't sign up and that makes it difficult for him to plan!

Tax Efficient Ways To Donate To St. Matthew

There are multiple ways to donate to St. Matthew that may save you on your taxes and actually allow you to donate more money to St. Matthew or other charities you are involved with. These strategies at times are complex but we will attempt to highlight a couple:

Donate appreciated stock directly to St. Matthew. If you have a stock with substantial unrealized gains it may be advantageous from a tax standpoint to donate it directly to St. Matthew. Most of the time these donations are deductible and you don't have to pay tax on the gain.

IRA Minimum Required Distributions (RMDs). If you have to take an RMD and are also donating to St. Matthew, it may be advantageous to donate the RMD directly to St. Matthew rather than taking the RMD in cash and then donating to St. Matthew. The portion sent directly to St. Matthew can be excluded from your taxable income.

As stated earlier, sometimes these topics can be complicated. We recommend you discuss these topics with your financial advisor. For further information regarding the above and to discuss other options for donating to St. Matthew, please don't hesitate to reach out Dan Harry, Financial Administrator at St. Matthew; Ron Buerges, Finance Committee Chair; or Ken Williams, Administrative Board Chair.

Safety Team Recruitment

The St. Matthew Safety Team is looking for more volunteers. If you are interested in being a part of this team, or you would like more information, please contact Rocky Cole at 618-558-2288 or you can email him at 4831rc@charter.net.

The Wednesday Night Meal Preview

Meal service is from 3:30 pm - 6:30 pm. Dine in or carry out!

You can order a meal by: calling the church office at 618-397-5994, signing up in the foyer on Sunday mornings, through the St. Matthew App or through an order form on our website at: <http://stmatthewumc.org/wed-meal>.

December 7

Chicken & Dumplings
Orange Glazed Carrots
Salad Bar
Rolls
Dessert

December 14

Baked Ham
AuGratin Potatoes
Baked Beans
Salad Bar
Rolls
Dessert

December 21

*Kitchen closed for cleaning.
We will reopen on Wednesday,
January 4. Thank you for your
faithfulness all year long.
Remember to sign up each week!*

Stewardship Corner

“Now unto him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is at work in us” (Eph. 3:20).

“Responsible giving or stewardship is not man's way of raising money, but God's way of raising people. . . The church's budget is not a list of its expenses, but a record of its vision” (Gordon Moyes).

We are so excited about a new opportunity that is coming in January with LifeGroup 70+.

Once we begin this LifeGroup, we will have a LifeGroup opportunity for every age group in the church, so that people in their 20's to people in their 90's can have a large group with which to gather and grow in their faith together. Be watching for more information in the January Newsletter.

****RESUMING IN JANUARY** LifeGroup 20/40**, led by Brian Caringer, will meet will meet for dinner at 6:15 pm then meet for Bible study from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm in a room TBD.

****RESUMING IN JANUARY** LifeGroup 50/60**, led by Bob & Gina Swickard, will meet for dinner at 6:15 pm then meet for Bible study from 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm in the Side Chapel Room (Side Vine Cafe).

****COMING IN JANUARY** LifeGroup 70 +**, led by Bob & Gina Swickard, will meet for Bible study from 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm in the Side Chapel Room (Side Vine Cafe) then meet for dinner at 6:15 pm.

College Ministry: *Andy Black - 217-725-5079 - ablack@stmatthewumc.org*

College Ministry: Meets every Wednesday Night at 6:00 pm in the College Ministry Center (door 7).

College Ministry went on the road to Phoenix, Arizona last month!

Andy, Rebecca, and Amanda travelled over 3,000 miles in the air and on the road to visit four St. Matt's college students attending Grand Canyon University. Their three-day excursion featured stops at the Hoover Dam, on Historic Route 66, and a few memorable meals out with the college students.

Have a look at some photos from our adventures out west!



News & Events Continued

Fall Classes End

The last night for fall classes is Wednesday, December 7. We are grateful to those of you who gave your time and talents to teach this session. We are also grateful to those of you who attended a class to grow in your faith!

Winter classes will resume on January 11. If you are interested in teaching a class please contact Pastor Andy in the church office at 618-397-5994 or via email at ablack@stmatthewumc.org.

Don James Band Concert

All are invited to a free Christmas concert on December 17 at 2:00 pm in the Chapel! Bring your family and friends out to hear all your Christmas favorites.

If you are looking to be a blessing to families in need this Christmas, here are a couple of local, and one global, options for practicing the old adage that “it is better to give than to receive”!

LOCAL

One More Child

Much like our summer sack lunch program, *One More Child* is a program designed to provide much needed food for vulnerable children in our community. In the spirit of the Christmas season, many individuals, families, Sunday school classes, and other groups may want to make a special contribution to a charitable cause. *One More Child* is a great opportunity to do just that.

One More Child provides a weekend’s worth of food for many needy children throughout the entire school year. For only \$6.00, you can cover the cost of food for one child for one of those weekends. You can make a one time contribution or you can commit to sponsoring a child for each weekend of the school year.

A *One More Child* Christmas tree will be set up in the church during the month of December. If you choose to participate you can fill out a form with a tag to place on the tree with your contribution commitment. Please make all checks payable to St. Matthew Church and write *One More Child* on the memo line or you can contribute through Realm (please make sure you designate it as a *One More Child* contribution).

If you have any questions about this program please contact Diane Patton at 618-233-8575. Thank you in advance for your participation in such a wonderful program to help feed the children in our community.

Angel Tree

Angel Tree Ministries equips churches and other organizations to restore and strengthen relationships between incarcerated parents and their children and families. Celebrate Recovery is partnering with Angel Tree Ministries by sponsoring 22 children, who will each receive a gift, the Gospel message, and a personal message of love on behalf of their mom or dad behind bars.

You can help in two ways. One - you can sponsor a child. To do this you can contact Cassy Baca in the church office (618-397-5994) and request a child’s “wish list” and go shopping! Two - you can make a cash donation and we will do the shopping for you! Please make all checks payable to St. Matthew Church and write Angel Tree on the memo line.

Thank you in advance for your contribution to this wonderful ministry’s mission to restore families.

GLOBAL

400 Baskets of Love

Welcome to My Father’s House is an organization that was created to love and serve the poor and indigenous peoples of Guatemala, and to share the love of Jesus Christ with them as their Lord and Savior.

This Christmas season they are attempting to raise funds to create 400 Baskets Of Love. Each basket will contain essential items like cleaning supplies and food staples. You can join the challenge by adopting a family with a \$50 donation. Your donation will provide one Basket Of Love and a Christmas gift for each child in their family. If global missions is close to your heart and you would like to support the people of Guatemala through Baskets of Love you can visit this site to make your donation: <https://www.welcometomyfathershouse.org/donate/>. Just make sure you designate your contribution as “baskets”.



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Special Events Calendar

Dec 1	NLC Bible Study
Dec 7	Last Night For Fall Classes
Dec 11	<i>The Glory Of Christmas</i>
Dec 13	Administrative Board Meeting
Dec 15	New Life Club Luncheon
Dec 17	Don James Band Concert
Dec 24	Christmas Eve Services
Dec 25	Christmas Day - Combined Service at 10:00 am
Dec 26	Office Closed
Dec 29	NLC Bible Study
Dec 30 - Jan 1	Discipleship Weekend
Dec 31	"Movie Night"
Jan 1	New Year's Day - Combined Service at 10:00 am

Weekly Worship Opportunities

Sunday

Morning: 9:00 am & 11:00 am

Kid's Worship: 9:00 am & 11:00 am

Wednesday

6:15 pm in the Park Room

Senior Pastor: Robert Swickard

Associate Pastor: Andy Black

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<https://youtube.com/channel/St.Matthew>