



**December
2024
Newsletter**

Christmas Services

This year's candlelight Christmas Eve services will be at **3:00 pm** and **11:00 pm** on **Tuesday, December 24**.

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

The **11:00 pm** service will be the traditional service with worship led by Hank Oplinger.

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

The Glory Of Christmas

Join us on **Sunday, December 8 & Monday, December 9 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. Also; this year we are blessed to have guest soloist, Brian Arner join us.

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!



The Great Exchange

In preparation for the upcoming sermon series "The Great Exchange" we invite you all to participate in a congregational gift exchange beginning on Sunday, December 1 (and each Sunday leading up to Christmas)! If you would like to be a part of it, bring in a \$5 (or less) gift, wrapped and place it under the tree in the foyer. Gifts should be anonymous but please mark it as a gift for an adult (A) or child (C). Also, we encourage you to include uplifting messages or prayers to build each other up. If you bring a gift, take a gift! Let's have some Christmas fun together!

Baptism Sunday

Sunday, December 29 is a baptism Sunday. If you are interested in baptism, or have questions, please contact Scott Ferguson at sferguson@stmatthew.church or by calling the church office at 618-397-5994.

If you are like me, you are pinching yourself right now to make sure you are not dreaming. Why? Because somehow, all the days of 2024 have vanished like vapor and here we are in December!

December can be a “magical” time, (especially for the younger ones among us!) There are parties to visit, open houses to attend, and in some settings, there will be gift exchanges. I chuckle at all the different ways we have discovered to exchange gifts. There is the White Elephant; Secret Santa; Grab bag; ornament exchange; book exchange; recipe exchange... the list can go on and on.



One fun game we found years ago was for everyone to bring a gift to exchange, which we held on our lap for the game. We sat in a circle and someone would read The Christmas Story. Every time you heard the word, “and,” you would pass your gift to the right. And every time you heard the word “the,” you would pass the gift to the left.

At the end of the story, one is able to trade their gift with another, if, that person would like to trade. (this is a much better version than the ones where a person can “steal.”) This was a fun way to have a gift exchange.

This Advent, our sermon series is called, “The Great Exchange.” We will be looking at all the things we can trade with God. (Like Busyness for the gift of Quiet Moments, our “Have to” for “Want to,” Anger for Peace and Hope for Sight, to name a few.) Obviously, we get the better end of that exchange!

As the Lord works on our hearts and sets us apart for his use, he can renew our minds and our hearts. When he does, we see that we can exchange some of the emotional baggage for something much, much better.

To bring this to life – we are inviting you to bring a \$5 (or less) gift to the church foyer tree in the first couple of weeks in December. Please mark it A for adult or C for child. When you bring your gift, place it under the tree and make the exchange by taking a gift for yourself. Feel free to make it anonymous and add a note of encouragement if you like.

I hope you will join us for worship every Sunday this December as we celebrate the Greatest Gift of all, Jesus!
that

Bob

Are you registered for Scuba Christmas? Mark those calendars & join us for a free family event on Sunday, December 15 from 4:00 – 5:30 pm for Scuba Christmas. It's the same Scuba Vacation Bible School you loved this summer, but just with the Christmas story, songs & snacks. Everyone is invited to this free Christmas event. If your kids are still singing those Scuba songs and missing their best pals Tad, Finnley, Fisher, Waylon & Octavia, then don't miss Scuba Christmas! Register online at <https://vbspro.events/p/scubachristmas2024>, filing out a registration form in Kids' Town or by scanning the QR code.

Trunk or Treat 2024 is in the books and "Wow, what a night!" We hosted around 2,000 of our closest friends & neighbors as we showered them with love, great conversations, our time, yummy snacks, amazing costumes and a LOT of candy. Thank you to our security team, parking lot attendants, all those who hosted a trunk & donated candy, the Spud Shack Food Truck & the Signal Hill Fire Department. More than ever, our kids need to watch us be a light in the night for Jesus!

Looking for several helpers to volunteer in our Nursery or Cast Kids' Room for Glory of Christmas (December 8 or 9). Please contact Lindsay if you'd be willing to spend time with our church's most precious attenders!

Wednesday Kids Club meets 6:00 – 7:00 pm for all potty-trained preschoolers – 6th graders. Our Nursery is also available for our little ones 3 years and under. December 4 is our last week of club for 2024 and we'll resume again on January 15, 2025 with our Wednesday night classes.

Christmas Eve Services our Nursery 1 (by the Sanctuary) will open at 2:50 pm & 10:50 pm for our little ones 3 years and under.

Celebration Place meets every Friday night and is offered to our kids as a "pre-covery" 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.

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@stmatthew.church. We will continue to provide your kids and families with opportunities to know, grow & go in the name of Jesus!

Good News Club

We have just a few more weeks of Good News Club, so please keep praying for our students! We are currently studying the Patriarchs and will finish on December 10 with a Christmas Club. That's also the day that our graduating 3rd graders will receive their own Bibles to take home. Thank you to our church family for continued prayers for our G.N.C. kids as they learn more about Jesus, as they accept Him as their Savior, as their faith becomes their own and as they live their lives for Jesus.



Operation Christmas Child Packing Party

Thank you to our church family for an incredible turnout for the O.C.C. Packing Party! Our goal was 500 shoeboxes and we packed over 520 boxes in an hour with 100 of our closest friends. That's 100 more shoeboxes packed at the packing party that will bless kids all over the world. We truly appreciate the items that were donated by our Vacation Bible School kids along with our church family, the monetary donations for items and for shipping cost, for everyone that came out to pack a box, for our youth group that organized the items for the party and to New Life Club for the delicious snacks for the party day. Please pray for the salvation of the children receiving these boxes!

Sunday Night Youth - Dec 8 - Youth starts at 4 pm, we'll have our Christmas Party. Then head up to GLORY OF CHRISTMAS after.

Wednesday Night Youth - Youth Band - 5:30, 6 to 7 pm - Bible Study

Dec 1 - NO YOUTH/Thanksgiving Weekend

Dec 15 - NO YOUTH as we'll be helping with Scuba Christmas (a Christmas take on VBS)

Dec 22 - NO YOUTH/Holidays

Dec 29 - NO YOUTH/Holidays

College Ministry: *Ross Atherton - 508-209-4635 - ratherton@stmatthew.church*

If you are 18 to 25 we would love for you to join us for fellowship and diving deeper into the word.

Our normal meeting times are Wednesdays starting at 7:00 pm and Thursdays starting at 6:00 pm.

LifeGroups: *Gina Swickard - doxa715@gmail.com*

LifeGroups will take a break until January. We will see you all again on **Thursday, January 23, 2025!**

Trunk or Treat 2024



Thank you everyone for your participation and creativity! It was a wonderful night shining the light of Jesus!



Our **ST. MATTHEW SENIOR MINISTRY HAS A NEW FACEBOOK PAGE**. Please "like" us and be in the know regarding St. Matthew Sr. Travels and all of our happenings. It will all be there. Also, please leave us comments. We'd love to hear from you!

New Life Club is Thursday, December 19, 2024 at noon, in the Vine Cafe. Our program will be the New Life Club Choir singing their Christmas musical. Lunch by Jack and friends will be served for a donation of \$7.00. Come and join us for a Christmas afternoon. All seniors are welcome!

Senior Bible Study will be December 12, 2024 which starts with coffee and donuts at 9:30 a.m and Bible study at 10:00. We will only have one session this month. Shelby Walasin leads this study. We also pray and share with each other which is support for the soul.

"Redeemed Again," The Thrift Shop Of St. Matthew - needs kids' clothing, maternity clothing, towels, jewelry and holiday items. We were recently able to assist two families who lost their homes to fire. It's only through your gracious donations that we have this privilege. Thank you.

New Life Club Choir meets at 4:00 p.m. in the Park Room. We have many assisted living, etc. places booked to sing in through December.

St. Matthew Senior Travels

Great new trips coming to our New Life Club meetings for "2025." Be the first to know! Remaining trips for 2024 are in the foyer. Call me for details.

Have a blessed Christmas and New Year. We thank all of our many volunteers that have kept our ministry thriving and reaching others this year and look forward to any even greater year in "2025."



Pictured above are the New Life Club travelers on the bus to Wisconsin for the Fireside Dinner Theatre show of *Miracle on 34th Street*. They enjoyed quality fellowship, good food, good fun and of course, cheese shopping! Reservations are already made for next year as this trip has become an annual event. Please plan to join us next November!



Pictured above: The St. Matthew youth had a great lock-in on Nov. 2 and 3. They began with a trip to the The Edge for go-karts, laser tag and pizza. They spent the night at church. They all worshipped together Sunday morning. Then they prepared everything for the OCC Packing Party, stayed and packed boxes, and then helped clean everything up! Thank you all for your servants hearts, your exceptional behavior and the great conversations!

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 Connection Center. The poinsettias are \$8.00 each and will be on display in the Sanctuary. There will be a special poinsettia recognition page that will be available at the Christmas Eve services on Tuesday, December 24. You may take your plant home after the Christmas Eve service. The deadline to order a poinsettia is **Monday, December 16**. Please include payment with your order form. Thank you!

Fall Classes Ending

Fall classes will end on Wednesday, December 4. We would like to thank all of our teachers for giving their time and talents to teach a class this fall. We would also like to thank those of you who attended these classes and made Wednesday Night Discipleship part of your weekly routine.

Winter classes will begin again on January 15. Please stay tuned to see what classes will be available in 2025.

A Christian Classic Book Club - Upcoming Meeting

Our December meeting will be **Wednesday, December 4 at 6:00 pm** in the Library. The book is *A Case for Christmas* by Lee Strobel. Liz has free copies of the book for those who want to join in. Just contact her to borrow a copy. Please be sure to read the book before coming to the class.

January's meeting will be Wednesday, **January 15**. The book will be *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis. For questions, contact Scott or Liz Archibald.

SCUBA Christmas

Yes, you read that right! If your kids are still singing those Scuba VBS songs from June and missing their best pals Tad, Finnley, Fisher, Waylon & Octavia, then don't miss Scuba Christmas! We are going to put the *SEA* into this Christmas *SEASON*. By using our favorite Bible Memory Buddies and music from Scuba VBS, Scuba Christmas will reignite the energy and delight of VBS at Christmastime, too. We hope your kids can join us on December 15 from 4:00 – 5:30 pm for this SCUBA Christmas celebration! For more information, or to register, see the Children's Ministry section on page 3.

Saturday Night Of Worship

Mark your calendars for a Saturday Night of Worship on December 21 at 6:30 pm in the Chapel. More details to come!

Stewardship Corner

“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matt: 6:3-4).

To the fullest extent possible, when we give, we are to do so in secret.

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

Please make a reservation for your meal by: calling the church office, signing up in the foyer, or on line here: stnatt.co/wed-meal. We want to be sure we always have enough food for everyone and a reservation is the best way we can be properly prepared to serve you!

Dec 4

Taco Wednesday

Tacos

Enchiladas

Salad

Empanadas (Cherry, Peach, Apple)

Dec 11

Spaghetti & Salsiccia

Salad Bar

Garlic / Cheese Toast

Spumoni Ice Cream

Cookies

Dec 18

All You Can Eat Soup

Veg. Beef Chili Potato

Lobster Bisque Green Pepper

Salad Bar

Rolls

Dessert

The kitchen is closed December 19 - January 15. Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Celebrate Recovery: *Aaron Oplinger - 618-406-0287 - aoplinger@stmatthew.church*

Please join us every Friday evening starting at 6 with a free dinner.

At 7 we join together for large groups and worship, and at 8 we split into men's and women's open share groups.

We have had a great 2024 with many people coming to find Jesus and healing for their lives here at St. Matthew Celebrate Recovery. This ministry is only possible with support from you and the commitment of our CR Leaders. I would like to thank our TEAM for all their hard work. In Celebrate Recovery each ministry is encouraged to have a T.E.A.M as core leadership with others serving as leaders in less committed roles. The T.E.A.M. is an acrostic.

T=Training Coach - **Tracy Crawford** has been our training coach here for several years now and her job is to provide the training that comes from the National CR TEAM to our leaders on a monthly basis.

E= Encourager Coach - **Kathy Metz** is our encourager coach and she uses creative ideas to facilitate social gatherings and bring ways to inspire the TEAM as well as the participants.

A=Ambassador - **Kathy Morgan** is our Ambassador, it is her responsibility to make sure that all the CR materials are replenished for our Friday night meetings, but the larger role she plays is to be a contact with hospitals, first responders, and counseling services and to make sure they know we are here as a resource for them

M=Ministry Leader - For the past twelve or so years my wife Chrissy and myself have filled this position. The ministry leaders plan all the CR meetings and invite the special guest testimony speakers, plan for CR meals and plan events for the year.

Every TEAM member studies and teaches lessons as well as writes and shares his or her testimony, usually at multiple CR locations. In the coming year we look to have one more person added to each of these positions.

In December, we will look at "7 Reasons We Get Stuck" and hear a Testimony from Nathaniel Rose, one of our past leaders. As we wrap up the year on December 27, we will have our New Year/End of Year Party at the regularly scheduled time as CR. Everyone is invited for food, fun, and games as we look to 2024!

Thank you for your prayers and support!

Aaron

Celebration Place is offered to our kids as a "pre-covey" 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.



Special Events Calendar

Dec 8	The Glory Of Christmas
Dec 9	The Glory Of Christmas
Dec 10	Never Alone
Dec 12	Senior Bible Study
Dec 17	Administrative Board Meeting
Dec 19	New Life Club Luncheon
Dec 21	Saturday Night Worship
Dec 24	Christmas Eve Services
Dec 25 & 26	Offices Closed
Dec 29	Baptism Sunday

Sunday Worship Opportunities

9:00 am & 10:45 am

Kid's Worship: 9:00 am & 10:45 am

Senior Pastor: Robert Swickard
Associate Pastor: Ross Atherton

NEED PRAYER?

Submit a prayer request here:

stmatt.co/prayer

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St. Matthew has a YouTube channel! Click on this link and Subscribe!

youtube.com/@saintmatthew-belleville