



# SAINT MATTHEW

**January  
2025  
Newsletter**

## **CR Sunday - Combined Service**

Please mark your calendars to join us for a special combined service on **Sunday, January 19 at 10:00 am** for Celebrate Recovery Sunday.

During this service: worship will be led by the Celebrate Recovery Praise Band, you will hear testimonies from people who have benefited from Celebrate Recovery here at St. Matthew and you will hear an update from the work done in setting up Celebrate Recovery in Paraguay this past summer.

After the service we invite you to join us in the Vine Cafe for an all church Potato Bar Fundraiser Lunch to benefit this program. There will be potatoes, taco meat, and all kinds of delicious toppings to enjoy. Food and fellowship for a good cause is always a good time.

All proceeds will benefit St. Matthew Celebrate Recovery and go towards things like leader trainings, conferences, materials, meals for Friday night meetings, and more.

It will be a wonderful day to experience the impact this program has on our community and our church. We hope to see you here!



Celebrate Recovery  
ACROSS CHRISTIANITY

## **Annual Congregational Meeting**

St. Matthew Church will hold its Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 26, at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. This is an informational meeting as set forth in the Bylaws.

St. Matthew is entering into a major Capital Campaign in the month of February, the first since 1989. Sunday, January 26, has been designated as Vision Sunday for the Capital Campaign. Pastor Bob Swickard will describe this in both worship services that morning. An opportunity for questions and answers re: the Capital Campaign will be provided at the 6:30 p.m. meeting.

This meeting will also include a review of the 2025 Church Officers List and the 2025 Church Budget.

Everyone is welcome. You do not need to be a member of St. Matthew Church in order to attend.

If you have any questions about the meeting, please check with Scott Ferguson, Executive Director, or Ken Williams, Administrative Board Chair.

## **Bible Study Fellowship**

Bible Study Fellowship will resume again for the winter/spring session on Wednesday, January 8.

**Day classes for women resume Wednesday, January 8, from 9:30 am - 11:00 am** and includes:

A preschool program for kids newborn to 5 yrs old.

A student program for students K - 12.

**Night classes for women and men resume Thursday, January 9 from 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm.**

Classes will meet at St. Matthew Church.

Zoom classes are also available.

Come join us, learn God's word and make new friends.

For more information please call: Jane at 618-520-8357 or Candy at 618-363-3285.

## **Baby Bottles**

We have begun distributing baby bottles to help raise money for the Mosaic Pregnancy & Health Center, which provides free, Christ-centered, medical pregnancy related care and counseling. Drop your loose change in it all month long and return it back to the church on or before **January 31**. If you would like more information about the Mosaic Pregnancy & Health Center you can visit their website at: <https://revealmosaic.com/>. Thank you in advance for supporting this great organization.

When I was in sixth grade, I had the dubious distinction of having perhaps one of the most important offices of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. What was it? I was a “crossing guard.” Hard to believe? I had an orange belt in my locker to prove it! Every day, I donned that belt that went across my chest and around my waist prior to going out to 7<sup>th</sup> and Washington streets. I got to leave class 5 minutes early so I could be ready for the onslaught of kids who needed someone to stop the flow of traffic so they could cross!



What was my training for such a position? They taught me to look both ways before taking my stop sign into the middle of the street. Good advice!

As we enter January, it is a great time to remember what a great month it is! Think about it, in many ways, it represents a “fresh start.” All the challenges, setbacks and trouble of the entire previous year are still, right there; in the past. Yet at the same time, look at what is ahead! The future is filled with potential, opportunities, victories, and a clean slate. In so many ways, January is a great month! (O.K., it can be snowy, but that’s beautiful!)

Many will grab a “self-help” book and try to tackle some of the things that still plague them. But for us who call Jesus Lord, January is a time of renewal. A time of rededication. It can be a time of prayer, committing the year, our work, our leisure, our conversations, our church, our dreams, our possibilities and even our attitude to God. It can be a time of saying, “Lord, I don’t know what this year holds – but I know you hold this year in the palm of your hand. I give you every aspect of my life and pray you would transform every moment to bring glory to you.”

Proverbs 16:3 says, “Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” What a beautiful reminder as we enter the new year. This is the time we should be asking the Lord to use us for the sake of the Kingdom. It’s a time where we invite the Lord into the center of our lives. And when we invite him, he will do it!

As we meet a new year this way, I believe we can not only live intentionally for Jesus’ sake, but we are also inviting the Kingdom of heaven to fill our hearts, minds and actions. Praying for a wonderful new year in each of your lives!

Looking both ways with a grateful heart,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Bob Gustafson".

Bob

**Did you know** that there are over 265 people who served in Children's Ministry in 2024 on a monthly basis? "Thank you" to our incredibly dedicated, talented & loving team of volunteers who so preciously invest their lives and hearts into sharing Jesus with our children. They don't serve in Kids Min for the glamour, the spotlight or the pay, they serve because they love God and want His children to know & love Him too. From the bottom of my heart, I truly say "thank you & I adore you all!"

**Wednesday Kids Club resumes on January 15** from 6:00 – 7:00 pm for all potty-trained preschoolers – 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Our Nursery is also available for our little ones 3 years and under. May 7 is our last week of club for the spring semester.

**Parents, heads up for your calendars:** Joy of Easter practice starts (February 26 at 7:30 pm), Children's Easter Celebration (April 12 at 10:30 am), Joy of Easter (April 17 & 18), True North V.B.S. (June 9 – 13), Beulah Bible Camp (finishing 4<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> gr., June 23 – 26), Beulah Beginning Camp (finishing 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> gr., June 27 – 28).

**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.

**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](mailto:lvollmar@stmatthew.church). We will continue to provide your kids and families with opportunities to know, grow & go in the name of Jesus!

SCUBA Christmas was a great success! Thanks to everyone who made it possible from our staff, to the volunteers and the families who came to participate! There were over 100 people in attendance for this great event. The SEAS were a part of this Christmas SEASon!



**Youth Ministry:** *Matt Vollmar - 618-795-6250 - [mvollmar@stmatthew.church](mailto:mvollmar@stmatthew.church)*

**Sunday Night Youth** - Each Sunday at 5:00 pm in the Youth Room. **EXCEPT Jan 19 - NO YOUTH**

**Wednesday Night Youth** - Jan 8th - Youth Band and Bible Study starts back. Youth Band - 5:30, 6 to 7 pm - Bible Study

**Jan 18** - Winter Jam - meet at the church at 4 pm, concert starts at 6. Cost is \$10. See Matt to sign up as space is limited.

**College Ministry:** *Ross Atherton - 508-209-4635 - [ratherton@stmatthew.church](mailto: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 provide a large group setting with which to gather and grow in your faith together. LifeGroups' meet the fourth Thursday of each month. October's meeting date is **Thursday, Jan 23**  
The schedule is as follows:

**5:00 pm - 6:00 pm**

**LifeGroup 70 +**, led by Bob & Gina Swickard, will meet for Bible study in the Side Vine Cafe.

**6:15 pm - 7:00 pm**

Dinner will be served in the Vine Cafe for **Both LifeGroups**

**7:00 pm - 8:00 pm**

**LifeGroup 40/60**, led by Bob & Gina Swickard, will meet for Bible study in the Side Vine Cafe.

**Senior Ministry:** *Jeanie Lively - 618-979-7434 - [jlively@stmatthew.church](mailto:jlively@stmatthew.church)*

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, January 16, 2025**. Our program will be presented by Aaron Oplinger about his recent visit to Paraguay, which our church supports. Our lunch will be prepared and served by "Dad" Hank Oplinger and friends. Drop in and enjoy the lunch for a donation of \$7.00 and all the happenings and fellowship of the meeting for free. Reservations are not required. Come and start the new year with us!

**Senior Bible Study** will be January 9 and 23 which starts with coffee and donuts at 9:30 a.m and Bible study at 10:00. Shelby Walasin is our Bible teacher. We are a "prayer and share" group as well. Let us pray with you.

**"Redeemed Again," The Thrift Shop Of St. Matthew** - is needing kids' clothing, coats, pots and pans, towels and jewelry. We look forward to another blessed year of great donations from you and we thank you in advance.

**New Life Club Choir** meets at 4:00 p.m. in the Park Room starting again January 15, 2025.. It's a great time to join in.

**St. Matthew Senior Travels**

New St. Matthew Sr. Travels are being rolled out for signup at the monthly meetings. We have single day, several day, 4-5 day and 9-10 day trips that you will love.

Check our Facebook Page for specifics. **ST. MATTHEW SENIOR TRAVELS**

Have a wonderful and blessed New Year!

Pictured right are the toy soldiers from the Glory of Christmas 2024. There were over 1,500 people in attendance for the Glory of Christmas over 2 nights. Thanks to everyone who participated this year to present the Gospel. We appreciate how much of your time and talent you give to this community and our church. We cannot do it without you!



Quantitative evidence does not define the heartbeat of a church. You cannot quantify the spirit a church has by the total number in attendance on a Sunday morning. You cannot measure the momentum a church has by how many people came to a Wednesday night class. You cannot understand the impact our giving has on the church and the ministries and missions we support by looking at total amounts raised. Crunching numbers will never reveal the transformation of a soul for God's kingdom. Only time, prayer, love, the acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior and the work of the Holy Spirit can accomplish that most precious thing.

However, we do have to use numbers in order to try and measure our successes here on Earth. With that being said, St. Matthew has much to celebrate as we look back at 2024. Here are just *some* of our praises from the past year:

We took in 38 new members.

We baptized 27 believers.

Our small group attendance was raised in every category.

We raised almost \$2,000 for the Mosaic Pregnancy Center through their baby bottle campaign.

Taste Of Elegance sold out in less than 2 weeks and made \$8,400.

The Joy Of Easter brought over 2,000 people to St. Matthew in person and more than 750 watched online.

Our children's ministry kiddos raised over \$350 for the Rice Bowls Mission Project to feed 44 kids from Christian orphanages for an entire month.

The College Ministry had a successful "pop-up" carnival fundraiser that grossed over \$3,000.

We had to create a new space for our youth program because they were bursting at the seams in their former space.

Approximately 260 kids and volunteers participated in SCUBA VBS and explored the book of John while also raising almost \$4,500 for Operation Christmas Child shoebox supplies.

Youth (Chicago), College (Spring Hill Christian camp in Indiana ), CR (Paraguay) and medical (Guatemala) mission trips were accomplished with love and success.

Our Summer Sack Lunch Program packed close to 4,000 lunches for needy children in our community.

Beulah Camps were spirit filled and moving.

The New Life Club traveled 1,000's of miles this year with trips to St. Louis Cardinals Spring Training in Florida, Amish Country, multiple trips to Branson, Wisconsin's Fireside Dinner Theatre, an I-75 Michigan road trip, Kansas City, The Ark Encounter in Kentucky and multiple local day trips for shows (Fox Theatre, Omnimax), lunches and more!

On Mission Outreach Sunday we packed 300 backpacks, filled 750 food bags which will feed 4,500 people, and wrote 74 letters for the military.

BSF has expanded to 2 nights and now includes groups for men.

Youth Trivia Night raised over \$3,500 for our new youth rooms.

We had another successful block party with 500 in attendance.

Keyboard Praise brought 625 people to St. Matthew.

Trunk or Treat brought more than 2,000 people to St. Matthew.

We raised over \$6,000 for Baskets of Love.

We packed 865 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. One New Life Club member single handedly crocheted 300 hats to be packed.

The Glory of Christmas brought over 1,500 people to St. Matthew.

None of this is accomplished without the love, support and dedication of the pastors, staff and; most of all, congregation. Thank you all for your servants hearts and we pray for similar success in the coming year!

**Wednesday Night Programming**



**Classes resume on Wednesday, January 15!**

**Wednesday Night Meal:** 3:30 pm - 6:30 pm in the Vine Cafe.

**New Life Club Choir:** 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm in the Park Room with Jeanie Lively.

**Youth Band:** 5:30 pm - 6:00 pm in the Youth Room with Matt Vollmar. (Already in progress)

**Kids Club:** 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm in Kids Town with Lindsay Vollmar.

**Youth:** 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm in the Youth Room with Matt Vollmar. (Already in progress)

**Tangents:** 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm in the Disciple Room with Brian Caringer. (Already in progress)

**Biblical History:** 6:00 pm - 7:00 in the Park Room with Jim Schuetz.

**Applying God's Word:** 6:00 pm - 7:00 in the Library with Bob Swickard.

**Spiritual Disciplines:** 6:00 pm - 7:00 in the Soffranko Room with Ross Atherton.

**A Classical Christian Book Study:** 6:00 pm - 7:00 in the Bride's Room with Scott & Liz Archibald.

**Wesley Ringers:** 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm in Room 2 (downstairs under the Sanctuary) with Carrie Crago.

**College Group:** 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm in the College Ministry Center with Ross Atherton. (Already in progress)

**Sanctuary Choir:** 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm in the Sanctuary with Hank Oplinger.

... Continued in next column ...

**Other discipleship opportunities this winter ...**

**Life Groups:** See page 4

**Senior Bible Study:** See page 5

**Career & Couples:** Contact Ross Atherton

**Thursday Night College Group:** Contact Ross Atherton

**Bible Study Fellowship:** See page 1

**Weekend Meals Ministry**

One More Child is now the Weekend Meals Ministry!

Same ministry, just a new name! We are still helping vulnerable children in our community throughout the entire school year and you can help!

For only \$5.00, you can cover the cost of food for one child for one weekend. You can make a one time contribution, or you can sponsor a child for several weeks, or you can sponsor a child each weekend of the rest of the school year.

If you would like to be a part of this program, or if you have any questions you can stop by the Connection Center or call Diane Patton for more information.

There are 3 ways to contribute: You can place cash or checks in an envelope (designated "Weekend Meals") in the offering plate on Sunday. You can deliver your contribution to the church office from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm on Monday - Thursday. You can also mail your contribution to St. Matthew Church at 1200 Moreland Drive - Belleville, IL 62223.

Please make checks payable to St. Matthew Church with the memo designated "Weekend Meals". Your care and prayers for these students are dearly appreciated!

WEEKEND MEALS = MINISTRY



**Stewardship Corner**

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).

We should give to God in a spirit of joyfulness.

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: [stmatt.co/wed-meal](http://stmatt.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!

Jan 15

Pork Loin & Dressing  
Green Beans  
Salad Bar  
Rolls  
Dessert

Jan 22

Beef & Noodles  
Malibu Vegetable Medley  
Salad Bar  
Rolls  
Dessert

Jan 29

Chicken Fried Steak  
Au Gratin Potatoes  
Green Beans  
Salad Bar  
Rolls  
Dessert

## Celebrate Recovery: *Aaron Oplinger - 618-406-0287 - [aoplinger@stmatthew.church](mailto: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.

January will be a big month for us here at St. Matthew Celebrate Recovery. We will start off the month with the "Denial Lesson" and mid way through we will have our CR Sunday on the 19. We will have a combined worship service at 10 am that will include the CR Band with the Choir. We hope to see you there and join us for a fundraising lunch after!

On January 17 we will hear from our newest leader, Austin Ernst, as he shares a lesson titled "Powerless".

On January 24 Kathy Metz will share her testimony with us.

Tracy Crawford will finish the month out on the 31 with the "Hope" lesson.

We hope you can join us and we are thankful for the support of St Matthew in this ministry.

**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.



Happy New Year, St. Matthew!



### **Special Events Calendar**

Jan 1	Church Office Closed
Jan 2	Church Office Closed
Jan 8	BSF Resumes
Jan 9	Senior Bible Study
Jan 14	Never Alone
Jan 15	Wednesday Night Classes Resume
Jan 15	Kitchen Re-Opens
Jan 16	New Life Club Luncheon
Jan 19	CR Sunday - Combined Service
Jan 20	Church Office Closed
Jan 23	Senior Bible Study
Jan 26	Annual Congregational Meeting

### **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](http://stmatt.co/prayer)

### **In This Issue:**

**Page 1:** CR Sunday - Combined Service, Baby Bottle Campaign, Annual Congregational Meeting & Bible Study Fellowship

**Page 2:** The Pastor's Pen

**Page 3:** Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry & College Ministry

**Page 4:** LifeGroups & Senior Ministry

**Page 5:** 2024 In Review

**Page 6:** Wednesday Night Programming, The Weekend Meals Ministry & The Stewardship Corner

**Page 7:** The Wednesday Meal & Celebrate Recovery

**Page 8:** Special Events Calendar

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

[youtube.com/@saintmatthew-belleville](https://youtube.com/@saintmatthew-belleville)