



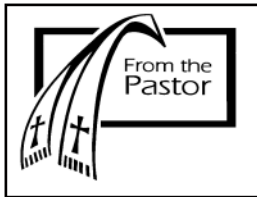
The GOOD NEWSLETTER

of
Saint Matthew Lutheran Church
Springfield, Pennsylvania

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From Our Pastor

Connect

Care

eQuip

Cultivate

“Remember you are dust...”
“Be Mine”
“Love Always”

Ash Wednesday comes early this year, and coincidentally, it falls on Valentine’s Day. This may seem incongruous. How do we celebrate with hearts and flowers, and at the same time be marked with ashes on our foreheads? Many of us likely will transpose one or the other of these days: either celebrating Valentine’s on another day that week, or ignoring Ash Wednesday, because we like dinner and chocolates more than we like fasting.

On the ever-reliable source of Facebook I saw a picture that reminds us of the love of God for us, even as we remember our mortality and brokenness before God. Or perhaps more accurately, we are reminded of the love of God for us precisely because we are mortal and broken, and God loves us anyway. In this picture ashes were being placed on the forehead of a penitent, but rather than in the shape of the cross, they were imposed in the shape of a heart.

I will not be following this in our worship; I will still mark the sign of the cross on your forehead. But the heart of Jesus is indeed for us. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, the season where we reflect on our need for redemption, and on God’s grace offered in Jesus’ going to the cross to vanquish the sin of the world. When Jesus says, repeatedly, “come to me,” “follow me,” “learn from me,” is it really much different, apart from the romantic overtones, than our declarations of love to each other? Is it not Jesus saying to us, “Be Mine”? Is it not Jesus saying to us, “Love Always”? By poet’s words we profess undying love for our beloved. By his life, the Beloved professes love through dying, and then rising, to new life for us.

May you be filled with love this season – the kind of love that is known when we hear Jesus say, “Be Mine; Love Always.”

Pastor Karl M. Richard

The Start of Lent

Lent begins on Wednesday, February 14th, with Ash Wednesday. We will hold two services with the imposition of ashes - one at noon and the other at 7:00 p.m.

Also watch your mail box for the Lenten devotion booklets which will provide daily devotions for the Lenten season.

Pat McHugh

Christian Education Update

The Sunday School Families are excited to announce that we collected enough money for Good Gifts to give six pigs and four goats to a family in need. We have already started talking about who we are going to help next, stay tuned!

Please save the date—along with Fellowship and Christian Education, we are going to have a nighttime Egg Hunt. It will be on Friday, March 22, at 6 p.m. We will be spreading the eggs on the front lawn. We need small individual-wrapped candy. Please no nuts. Thank you for helping. If you have any questions, please reach out to Julie.

Also save the date for Vacation Bible School, July 8-July 12 from 9-11:30 a.m. All are welcome!! Please see Julie with any questions at manoa1stgrade@hotmail.com.

Julie Cirillo

News from Your Property Committee

We finished the year with the annual fire alarm system check; all 100 plus smoke and alarm detectors were serviced and found in good working order. Our Landscaper did a cleanup of all our outside areas. Just want to say thank you to all that stayed or came back on Sunday, December 17th, for Hanging of the Greens. Your help was greatly appreciated. And the Church looked beautiful as usual.

The year started out with ice on Saturday the 6th, we had the lot salted in case the weather forecasters were wrong. This year also started out with a problem with one of the two main circulating pumps. This is a bad problem, and the pump is in the process of being repaired.

Joe Regan

Welcome Church

The Welcome Church for the homeless continues to need coffee, gloves for winter (especially large sizes for men) and toiletries.

Joan Krauter

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Fellowship Committee News

The Fellowship Committee would like to invite you to a Football Tailgate Luncheon on Sunday, February 4th, at noon. Wear your favorite team attire and enjoy a lunch of meatball and roast beef sandwiches and tailgate snacks. Please sign up to attend and bring a dessert or drink by January 28th.

There will be an Easter Egg Hunt for the children on Friday, March 22nd, at 6 p.m. We are asking for nut free candy donations to fill the eggs.

Thank you to the Nursery Board for hosting the Coffee Hour in January. The Boy Scouts will host after the 10:15 service in February.

Barb McClintock

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Food Collection

Thank you to everyone who helped fill the back of our car with food on January 7th which we delivered to the Media Food Bank. While the volunteers helped Joe unload the car I was able to talk with Kathleen, who was in charge. We spoke about the specific needs that are present there. She shared a list that they develop that includes the current items that are in great demand. Here is the list of items: Jasmine rice, cream of wheat (not instant pks.), canned corned beef, canned salmon, canned ham and spam, condensed milk, evaporated milk, dry pinto beans, pasta sauce especially meat or alfredo, brown sugar, white sugar, mayonnaise, cooking oil, powdered milk, black or green olives, juice boxes, bulgur wheat, ground coffee, hot chocolate pks., protein bars with nuts, dried fruit or beef jerky.

The list is just suggestions of currently needed items to help us know their current need. I was also given a very inclusive list of all the items they will accept. The copies will be available on the hallway table. Our next collection date will be February 4 until noon. Thank you for your support.

Nancy Regan

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Children's Corner

Dear Children,
"And now, these three things remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is LOVE".
1 Corinthians 13:13

When I was teaching the lower grades, February was one of my favorite months because of the abundance of holidays—Groundhog Day, Presidents' Day, Valentine's Day, Dental Health Week, National Dark Chocolate Day, Women in Sports Day, etc. My favorite day is Valentine's Day as I love to receive cards and send them too. AND—of course, we think of LOVE. So many songs, poems, stories, and movies use LOVE as the central theme that we tend to think of romantic love, but what does the Bible teach us about LOVE? Reading the entire

chapter (it is short) of Corinthians 13 may give us some insight to God's design for us—love is patient, kind, rejoices in truth, does not do evil, does not boast. Jesus taught his followers to accept God's love and return it to others. Loving most people is easy, but what about loving those whose behavior is rude and unkind? How do we carry out God's plan for that? We need to remember that God loves us unconditionally. He loves the prisoner, those who spew hatred, and those who in our minds are undeserving, as well as a kind person. A MIGHTY BIG TASK!! Remember that the Bible teaches us differently than our worldly experiences. The Bible wants us to love those who are unlovable.

I did a bit of asking around and found these helpful suggestions:

- think about God's love for you (even when, at times, you may be unkind)
- ask "Why might this person be so difficult?"
- pray for this person
- think before you speak
- be especially kind to them
- be sympathetic

Some Bible verses to keep you on track with God's love: John 3: 11-24. Luke 6:27-31.

A wise man once said that God puts difficult people in our lives so we can polish off the rough edges.

Dear Parents,

This topic always seems to be a challenging one for adults and children, but our Christian background gives us the tools to overcome these difficulties—prayer, the Bible, our friendships, and the Word of God through sermons. Pray for patience and you will find opportunities to put it in practice.

Sylvia Yost

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Nursery School

We are so excited for the month of February at our Nursery School! We are looking forward to Groundhog Day and celebrating Valentine's Day. We will be having our Parent-Teacher Conferences this month as well and hosting our Registration Night for the 2024 - 2025 School Year on February 15th, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. We continue to offer programs for 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds. Classes are filling up fast! Please fill out a Pre-Registration Form at <https://www.stmattscns.org/pre-registrationform> or contact the office at 610-543-5589 if you are interested in registering your child for the fall. Also, please remember to "like" us on Facebook and see the hard work of the staff and students! Let's hope that Punxsutawney Phil does not see his shadow so we can have an early spring!

Warmly,

Ana Fischer, Executive Director

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Women of the ELCA

Thanks to everyone who helped to set up and provide food for the congregational luncheon. It is a simple way for us to thank our Council and members for all their hard work.

Important dates for February:

Feb. 6

LWR Quilts

1:00 p.m.

Feb. 13	LWR Quilts	1:00 p.m.
Feb. 20	LWR Quilts	1:00 p.m.
Feb. 27	Board Meeting	6:15 p.m.
	Sarah Circle	7:00 p.m.

All events take place in the Parlor.

Come and join us.

Blessings,
Carol Penjoke

Newsletter Deadline

Articles for the March newsletter are due in the church office by **noon on Thursday, February 15.**

Vital Statistics

Birth: **Faye Evangeline Hewitt**
Daughter of Thomas and Susanne
Hewitt
Born December 7, 2023



Monthly Mailbag

Dear Family of Saint Matthew,

Thank you for your very generous Christmas gift. Once again you overwhelm me with your generosity, not just to the ministry, but to me personally, and to our staff as well. It seems each year you bless us more abundantly, with this monetary offering, and with your prayers and support as we live and work and worship together. For all you do, and for all you are, my family in Christ, I thank you.

Pastor Karl

To my Saint Matthew Friends and Family,

It continues to be an honor and blessing to be able to serve you in ministry as well as worship beside you, and never more so than in the Advent/Christmas season. Thank you so much for remembering me with gifts of baked goods, chocolates and other treats, as well as a very generous cash gift. I wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year filled with the wonder and joy from being a child of God.

With Love,
Pat McHugh

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for the beautiful Christmas cards, baked goods and chocolates, and the very generous cash Christmas gift. They are all very much appreciated. It is truly a blessing to be a member of the congregation and staff of Saint Matthew—you all make it a pleasure to be here. May 2024 be a year filled with God's blessings for each of you.

Love,
Janice Gardner

Dear Members of the Church,

I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year! I would also like to thank everyone for the Christmas gift—also the cakes and cookies and chocolates were great. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Ted Hidell

Dear Saint Matthew Lutheran Church,

Thank you for your generous gift of \$105.00 to ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) through ELCA Good Gifts.

As a church, we believe that God's grace is freely given to us. This brings us peace and hope. It makes a difference in our lives. Through your gifts to the ministries of the ELCA you share this amazing grace with others and help people around the world feel the transformational power of God's love.

Your Good Gift is a very good gift indeed. Through resources such as seedlings and seminary courses, vaccinations and vegetable gardens, Bibles and blankets, you equip God's people—around the world and around the corner—with what they need to live abundant lives.

Thank you for your gracious gifts. The glory of God shines through you.

With gratitude,
Rachel Wind, Executive for Development
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Dear Lutheran Church Women of Saint Matthew,

Amount received: \$25.00 for United Lutheran Seminary Fund

Thank you for your ongoing financial support of United Lutheran Seminary. We are deeply grateful for your generosity and partnership accompanying us as we prepare our ULS students to witness to and participate in the work of God in the world through spiritual leadership, public advocacy, impactful worship and care of neighbor grounded in God's grace and love.

Our ULS community gathers in worship and prayer during this season of Advent as we anticipate and pause to reflect on the birth of the Savior of the world and the impact that birth continues to have on each of our lives and globally. As our students near the end of their semester, they are cognizant each day of the impact the coming of the King of Glory has on their vocational journey.

Your ongoing support for theological education and prayers are a gift to our students providing a firm foundation for the future of agile leaders in our evolving church. Please let us know if our team can support you in any way by reaching out to us at advancement@uls.edu. May you have a blessed Advent and Christmas season. We look forward to connecting with you in the New Year!

Yours faithfully,
Mr. Conor Brooks, CFRE
Vice President for Institutional Advancement
United Lutheran Seminary

Dear Joanne and Lutheran Church Women of Saint Matthew,

Thank you for supporting Lutheran Settlement House and the children, adults, and families we serve. Your gift of \$50 spreads hope and joy, and helps our clients find safety, compassion, and healing. Your Commitment makes a difference in people's lives, people like Devon.

Devon came to Lutheran Settlement House after leaving an abusive relationship. She was new to the city and looking for a community to help her heal from the abuse and chart a new course for her future. "I knew I needed to get my mental health in order to catapult forward." And catapult forward, she did. With support from her counselor and case manager, within a few

months, Devon repaired her credit, created a resume, and found safe housing.

After Devon had a place to call home, she was able to focus on other goals, including her career. "I found that the people who helped me throughout my journey were the people I really wanted to be like. Because who I am today, I'm very, very proud of."

Today, Devon is a children's health case manager and member of Lutheran Settlement House's Survivors' Network where she uses her experience to educate healthcare providers, researchers, and students about domestic violence.

Helping people define their future is at the heart of our work. As a donor, you remind our clients that in the most vulnerable moments of their lives, they are not alone. Thank you for being there for Lutheran Settlement House; we are honored to have you as part of our family.

Sincerely,
David Chiles, Executive Director
Lutheran Settlement House

Dear Amazing Saint Matthew Friends,

Thank you for thinking of the children and families of Gemma Services again this holiday season! We have received and appreciate your wonderful donation of gifts including Legos, toy cars, games, stuffed animals, coloring books, and much more as well as 120 treat bags which were used in the children's stockings

and as game prizes over winter break. We are also immensely grateful for the eight volunteers who joined us on December 14 to wrap gifts for the annual holiday party. The volunteers wrapped more than 275 gifts in less than three hours! The continued friendship and generosity of the Saint Matthew congregation helped create lasting and joyful memories for the youth and their families this year. We are very grateful to all of you.

Your support truly matters! With the help of friends like all of you, Gemma is able to accompany more than 3,000 youth and families each year as they navigate difficult times. We would welcome the opportunity to have you visit with us at one of our three locations to see firsthand the programs you are helping us to provide. Should you have any questions or wish to schedule a visit, please contact me. On behalf of all of us at Gemma, thank you, and we wish you a Happy New Year!

Sincerely,
Amanda Bryant, Senior Development Officer
Gemma Services

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Worship Responsibilities

We will not schedule these responsibilities at this time. We will ask people to serve each week as needed.

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