

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

Holy Communion

9:00 a.m., February 23, 2025



Welcome to worship this morning!

We are glad you're here! Please know that **children** are welcome to remain in worship; they are also welcome to take a break in our "Kid's Korner" in the Gathering Space where the service audio is played through speakers. **Bathrooms** are located down the hall, past the church office. **Hymns** are printed in the red book (ELW) available in the pew rack.

We practice **open communion** at St. Matthew, meaning all who desire the sacrament of Holy Communion are welcome. If you prefer, you may also come forward for a blessing. During the distribution of Holy Communion, ushers will direct the congregation forward to receive communion in a **continuous line**. The pastor will distribute communion wafers, which you may intinct (dip) into red wine, or white grape juice, held by communion assistants. Please do not drink from the chalices. Gluten free wafers are also available. The pastor will deliver the sacrament to anyone unable to come forward. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit, available at the usher's table.

All are welcome!

PRELUDE: *Jesu, meine Freude*

Johann Gottfried Walther

WELCOME

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the fountain of living water,
the rock who gave us birth,
our light and our salvation.

Amen.

The presiding minister addresses the assembly.

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,
we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness.
Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.
Water is poured into the font while the congregation gives thanks.

**We give you thanks, O God,
for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters
and by your Word you created the world,
calling forth life in which you took delight.**

Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family.
Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom.
At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit.
By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons,
making us heirs of your promise and servants of all.

**We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life,
and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ.
Shower us with your Spirit,
and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love.**

To you be given honor and praise
through Jesus Christ our Lord
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.
Amen.

OPENING HYMN: *Great God, Your Love Has Called Us*

ELW 358

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

GLORIA

Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace to God's peo - ple on
earth. Lord God, heav-en-ly King, al-might - y God and
Fa-ther, we wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your
glo-ry. Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther,
Lord God, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world: have
mer - cy on us; you are seat-ed at the right hand of the
Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer. For you a - lone are the
Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord, you a - lone are the
Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir-it, in the
glo-ry of God the Fa - ther. A - - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Many years after being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph reveals himself to them. Now the second-in-command in Egypt, Joseph reassures his brothers that God has used their evil intentions for good to preserve life during a devastating famine, and Joseph forgives them.

A reading from the Book of Genesis:

³ Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me.” And they came closer. He said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷ God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰ You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.’” ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

We will now read responsively from the Book of Psalms:

- ¹ Do not be provoked by evildoers;
do not be jealous of those who do wrong.
- ² **For they shall soon wither like the grass,
and like the green grass fade away.**
- ³ Put your trust in the Lord and do good;
dwell in the land and find safe pasture.
- ⁴ **Take delight in the Lord,
who shall give you your heart's desire.**
- ⁵ Commit your way to the Lord; put your trust in the Lord,
and see what God will do.
- ⁶ **The Lord will make your vindication as clear as the light
and the justice of your case like the noonday sun.**
- ⁷ Be still before the Lord and wait patiently.
Do not be provoked by the one who prospers, the one who succeeds in evil schemes.
- ⁸ **Refrain from anger, leave rage alone;
do not be provoked; it leads only to evil.**
- ⁹ For evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who hope in the Lord shall possess the land.
- ¹⁰ **In a little while the wicked shall be no more;
even if you search out their place, they will not be there.**
- ¹¹ But the lowly shall possess the land;
they will delight in abundance of peace.
- ³⁹ **But the deliverance of the righteous comes from you, O Lord;
you are their stronghold in time of trouble.**
- ⁴⁰ You, O Lord, will help them and rescue them;
you will rescue them from the wicked and deliver them, because in you they seek refuge.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Music: Fintan O'Carroll and Christopher Walker
Music © 1985 Fintan O'Carroll and Christopher Walker, admin. OCP Publications, Inc. 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213.
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HOLY GOSPEL: Luke 6:27-38

Jesus continues to address a crowd of his disciples. He invites his followers to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies and outsiders. Living in harmony with God's intent brings the reward of overflowing blessing.

The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] ²⁷“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON:

Rev. Ryan

HYMN OF THE DAY: *God, When Human Bonds Are Broken*

ELW 603

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

With the Spirit of Christ shining upon us, let us boldly pray for the church, the world, and all of creation. I invite you into a prayerful posture of kneeling, standing, or sitting.

A brief silence.

Surprising God, you call us to love our enemies and to show kindness in the face of cruelty. Let our daily actions and our participation with this community at St Matthew be a shining witness of your overwhelming grace for all. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for leaders and policymakers. That your Spirit guides them to reduce violence, war, and hatred. Give your wisdom and discernment amid heated arguments and differing viewpoints. We pray that your inbreaking Kingdom is a reminder to our leaders that you center the poor, oppressed and outcast, and concern for them be at the center of policy decisions. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the victims of abuse and violence. Provide safe shelter and new beginnings to those experiencing domestic violence and dangerous situations. Enfold with love all who seek your healing care. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We also pray for the perpetrators of abuse, hatred and violence. You ask us today, through Christ Jesus, to pray for our enemies and so we will. As we hold perpetrators accountable to our human laws, we pray that you, O God, shower them with forgiveness. Enfold them into your Kingdom of love such that they heal from the wounds of their hatred. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Empower our faith communities to be signs of your gracious love. Bless our ministries of caregiving and connection, especially our eucharistic ministers, healing prayer ministers, prayer chain ministers, and the Grace Meals team. We pray that they will be a voice for those in need in our community. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

*For what else should we pray? ...*God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for the enduring witness of those who have died before us who are now saints in your care. May their lives in you provide a witness of your everlasting grace. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We entrust our prayers to you, O God, in the sure and certain hope that your promise is revealed among the people. **Amen.**

PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The congregation may be seated.

OFFERING

At this time, ushers will pass the offering plate if you desire to give a financial gift. Donations may also be given online at stmatthewavon.org/give, using the QR code in this bulletin, or mailed directly to the church. Thank you for your continued generosity and faithfulness!

OFFERTORY: O Day of Peace by C. Hubert H. Parry, text by Carl P. Daw, Jr.

O day of peace that dimly shines
through all our hopes and prayers and dreams,
guide us to justice, truth, and love,
delivered from our selfish schemes.
May swords of hate fall from our hands,
our hearts from envy find release,
till by God's grace our warring world
shall see Christ's promised reign of peace.

Then shall the wolf dwell with the lamb,
nor shall the fierce devour the small;
as beasts and cattle calmly graze,
a little child shall lead them all.
Then enemies shall learn to love,
all creatures find their true accord;
the hope of peace shall be fulfilled,
for all the earth shall know the Lord.

O Day of Peace, Carl P. Daw, Jr. © 1982, Hope Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

PRESENTATION HYMN

All rise as the gifts are brought forward.



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bles-sing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that



we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of



all; u-nite them with the prayers we of-fer. Grace our ta-ble



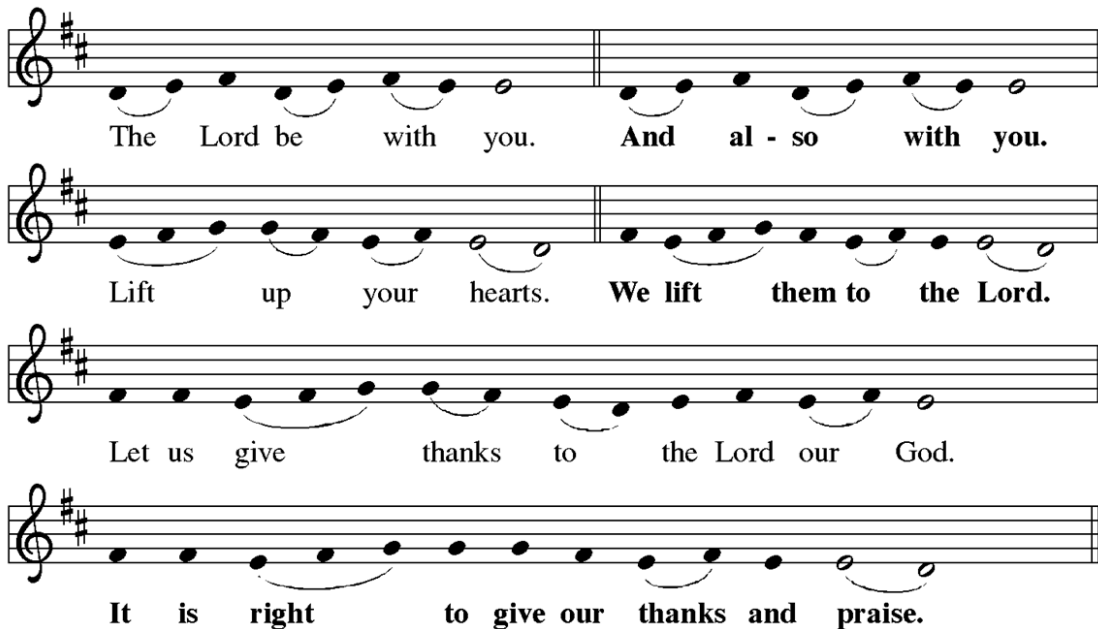
with your pres-ence, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.

Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980
Music: Ronald A. Nelson, b. 1927
Text and music © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

OFFERING PRAYER

God of heaven and earth,
from the beginning, you have called forth life,
in which you take delight.
The trees, the fields, and the seas sing for joy.
Bless now these gifts, received from your bounty,
that we may join the chorus of creation
to tell of your salvation from day to day.
Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

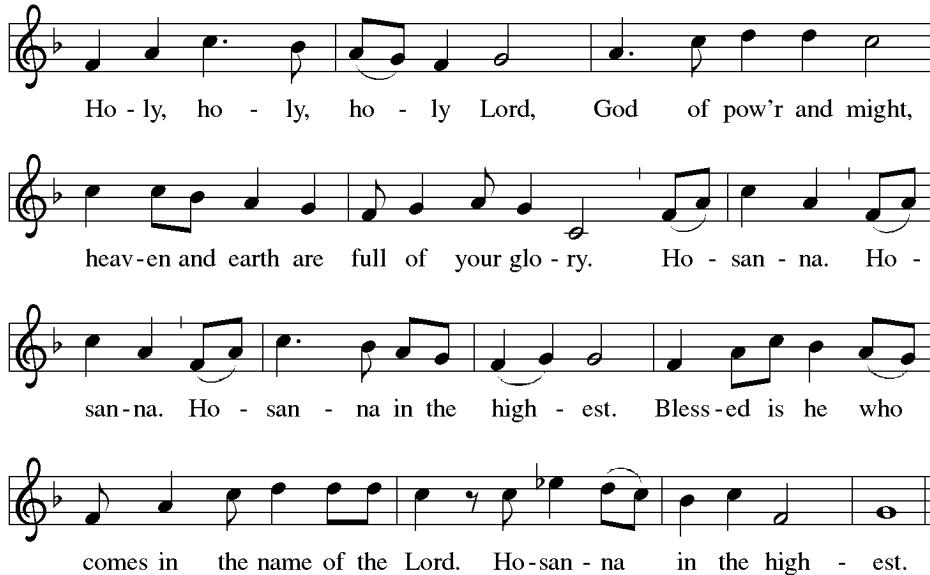
It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations;
in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son;
and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS

ELW Setting 3



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
 san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:
 Blessed are you for the birth of creation.
 Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.
 Blessed are you for your promise to your people.
 Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.
 Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.
 Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
 our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
 Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
 and gave it for all to drink, saying:
 This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
 shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup
we remember your Word dwelling among us,
full of grace and truth.

We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.

We look with hope for his coming.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.

Come among us.

Bless this meal.

May your Word take flesh in us.

Awaken your people.

Fill us with your light.

Bring the gift of peace on earth.

Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours,

Holy One of Israel,

Word of God incarnate,

Power of the Most High,

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

At this time, ushers will direct the congregation to form two lines. You will receive a communion wafer from a pastor, which you are invited to intinct (dip) into the red wine or white grape juice held by the communion assistants. Please do not drink from the chalices. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit in your seat or indicate to an usher to have a pastor deliver the sacrament to your seat.

Come to the banquet, for all is now ready.

THE DISTRIBUTION

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

AGNUS DEI

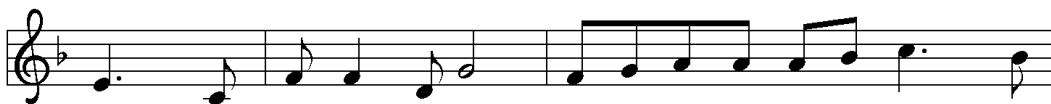
ELW Setting 3



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the



world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the



sin of the world; grant us peace.

COMMUNION HYMN: *Bless Be the Tie That Binds*

ELW 656

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

May the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

NUNC DIMITTIS



Now, Lord, you let your ser-vant go in peace: your word has been ful -



filled. My own eyes have seen the sal - va - tion which you have pre-pared in the



sight of ev - 'ry peo - ple: a light to re-veal you to the na - tions



and the glo - ry of your peo - ple Is - ra - el.



Now, Lord, you let your ser - vant go in peace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourishing God,
at this table you have refreshed us
with holy gifts of food and drink.
Strengthen us for service,
and send us out to embody your good news
of liberation and healing for the sake of the world.
In the name of Christ we pray, **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor †
And give you peace. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Live in hope.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

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Today's Altar Flowers are provided by Deb Brodeur for the glory of God!

MANY THANKS FOR TODAY'S VOLUNTEER WORSHIP LEADERS

Altar Guild: Ellen Ericson & Anita Mielert

Assisting Minister: Rick Hanson

Lector: Ben Wright

Ushers: Kevin Reichler

Live Stream: John Pearson

Coffee Hour: Karen Wright & Jane Hanson

STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Brian R. Rajcok – pastorbrian@stmatthewavon.org

Associate Pastor: The Rev. Ryan Heckman – revryan@stmatthewavon.org

Director of Music: Sarah Schiener-Redenz – music@stmatthewavon.org

Office Administrator: Paul Martin – office@stmatthewavon.org or (860) 673-3301

Sexton: Roy Zurell – contact the office

VISIT US ONLINE

Website: www.stmatthewavon.org

YouTube: @StMatthewAvon

Facebook.com/SaintMatthewLutheranChurch Instagram: @stmatthewlutheranavon

THE WEEK AHEAD

Sunday	9am: Sanctuary Worship w/ Holy Communion	10:20am: Sunday School & Adult Forum	10:30am: Confirmation Class
Tuesday	10am: A.A. (Open to All)		2pm: Choir Rehearsal
Wednesday	9:30am & 5:15pm: W.W		
Thursday	2pm: Centering Prayer		
Sunday	9am: Sanctuary Worship w/ Holy Communion	10:20am: Sunday School & Adult Forum	10:30am: Confirmation Class

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LENTEN MIDWEEK BOOK DISCUSSION SIGN-UP

Thursday evenings beginning March 13

Throughout the 2025 Lenten season, Pastor Brian and Rev Ryan will lead a study of Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited*, a short treatise on Jesus's ministry to the poor and oppressed. The book cover describes the book like this: "Thurman lifts Jesus up as a partner in the pain of the oppressed, and the gospel as a manual of resistance for the poor and disenfranchised. In this view, the example of [Jesus's] life shows us that hatred does not empower—it decays. Only by recognizing fear, deception, contempt, and love of one another can God's justice prevail."

We will meet Thursday evenings after our 6:00pm Lenten midweek Taize prayer service on 3/13, 3/20, 3/27, 4/3, and 4/10. **Books will be made available with a Thrivent Action Grant. Sign up to receive a book on the Gathering Space bulletin board.** We hope to see many of you there!

MUSIC AT GREENWOOD: SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, March 22nd, 4:00 p.m.

We are excited to commence our 2025 concert season with a Bach Birthday Bash! In celebration of J.S. Bach's 340th birthday, various instruments and small ensembles, both traditional and unconventional, will play a selection of the great composer's music. After the program, the celebration will continue with a reception of birthday cake and light appetizers. An offering will be received at the door (suggested donation: \$10). We hope to see you there!

THRIVENT ACTION TEAM SIGNUP

Thrivent Financial provides two action team cards of \$250 to members for charitable activities every year. If you are a Thrivent member you have access to this member benefit! We invite Thrivent members to check out the events list on the church bulletin board, and to sign your name next to an event you would like sponsor with a \$250 action team. We will help you with applying for the action team card if you do not know how. Thank you for your support of St. Matthew's ministry activities!

GLOBAL REFUSE SEEKS ASSISTANCE

On Friday, January 24, Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) received a stop-work order from the government calling for them to immediately stop serving the nearly 6,000 newly arrived refugees in their care. **This stop-work order means that government funding that provides food, housing, education, job placement, healthcare, and basic needs – has come to an immediate halt.** These children and families fled war, violence, or persecution and came to the United States **lawfully** through the official U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. They arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs and now the support they rely on - the support they'd been promised - is being pulled out from under them. With this abrupt and unprecedented cutoff of federal funding, we must now rely solely on the generosity of private donors and supporters to fill in the gaps. Join us in standing with these families to let them know that when promised protections for them fail, communities like ours rise.

Support Refugees with a gift – If you or communities you're connected with are willing to support refugees financially, please use/share this link.

Write your Representative – Ask representatives to pull back on this ban on supporting refugees.

Learn more and Advocate - Explore resources with more information about executive orders and accompanying actions.

Know Your Rights - Our partners at AMMPARO have a great resource for communities to read about their rights and those of immigrants in their care

ONLINE GIVING

Make a one-time gift, or set-up recurring donations, via Vanco! You may use the QR code below to access the website, or visit: stmatthewavon.org/online-giving

We ask those that wish to set-up recurring donations, please select the "GENERAL OPERATING FUND" and choose withdrawals to take place on either the 1st or 15th of the month. Thank you! If you have any difficulty, please contact the church office or see one of the Pastors after service!



St. Matthew Mission Statement:

St. Matthew Lutheran Church is a worshipping community called to proclaim God's love for all and to grow spiritually together. Challenged by Jesus' example, we strive to connect people of all ages, abilities, and needs, and to nurture them to be disciples of Christ. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we reach out to the wider community and welcome our neighbors to a life of worship, preaching, teaching, Christian care, service, and spiritual growth.

In Christ, We Are Digging Deep, Reaching Out, Changing Lives.