



THE VOICE

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH, AVON, CT June 2024

"In Christ, we are digging deep, reaching out, changing lives."



224 Lovely Street, Avon, CT 06001-4018
(860) 673-3301 www.stmatthewavon.org

JUNE WORSHIP SCHEDULE

June 2:

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service
10:20 a.m. Adult Forum

June 9: New Member Sunday

10:30 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service
11:30 a.m. Church Picnic & Ministry Fair

June 16: Father's Day

9:00 a.m. Outdoor Communion Service

June 23:

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service

June 30:

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Meg Kraft, President | Greg Boyd |
| Rick Hanson, Vice President | Erica Connors |
| Ellen Ericson, Secretary | Fred Fenn |
| Pastor Brian Rajcok | Perry Hasson |
| | George Reider |
| | Ben Wright |

STAFF:

Brian Rajcok, Pastor
Sarah Schiener-Redenz, Director of Music
Ryan Heckman, Director of Christian Ed.
Paul Martin, Church Administrator
Roy Zurell, Sexton
Steven Smolnik, Publisher



We Are Here For You A reminder that your pastor is here for you whenever you have a pastoral need. The pastor is fully vaccinated and is making in-person visits. He can also talk and pray with you over the phone, in a Zoom meeting, outside, or socially distanced indoors at church. Please call the office if you have a pastoral need.

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR


We are a blessed congregation! In an era where many churches are in decline, St. Matthew is growing and making a positive impact in the lives of our members and in the surrounding community! On Sunday May 5, we officially called Rev. Ryan Heckman to be our second pastor, and quickly celebrated his ordination the following Saturday. On Sunday May 12, eight students celebrated their First Communion. And on Sunday May 19, six youth celebrated Confirmation and affirmed their Baptism, being receiving as adult members in the Body of Christ. We also had events like property cleanup day and the Greenwood Concert Series performance of Hot Cat Jazz Band, both on May 18. And we're looking forward to exciting things in June: such as Dr. Eben Alexander's presentation June 1 and on June 9 our annual Church Picnic, our Ministry Fair and New Member Sunday. We are indeed a blessed and active congregation!

With all the good things that are happening, it is also important to take time to slow down and listen for the voice of God inviting us to be still. The month of May and early June are very busy times in our culture. The school year is ending and there is rush of events and programs. This is a sign of vitality and positive energy, but it can also be exhausting. During the summer months, students on summer vacation are invited into what we might call a "Summer Sabbath"—a time to relax and be refreshed. During these summer months at St. Matthew, a few of our groups go on hiatus and our Sunday School and Confirmation programs take a break, following the school year schedule. I hope all of us—those who go to school, those who work, and those who are retired—may all enter into a Summer Sabbath of our own. A time to practice gratitude for the blessings we've received throughout the year. A time to look back with pride on our hard work and to be refreshed and replenished. A time to be mindful and experience God's presence more deeply. Whether you travel for vacation or simply enjoy downtime at home, I pray you are able to find time to experience some recreation this summer. Sabbath is about rest, "re-creation" and enjoyment. And I pray that your Summer Sabbath may be a time that you are re-created and renewed by God. Explore the outdoors! Be liberated from your normal routine! Discover the freshness of spiritual spontaneity!

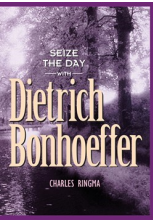
May God bless you this month as the summer begins, and may God continue to bless and guide the life of St. Matthew and our ministry together.


Yours in Christ,
Pastor Brian



 **BIBLE STUDY**
Due to Synod Assembly the first week of June, Bible Study will meet the second and fourth Thursdays of this month. That is, June 13 and June 27. As always, we will gather at 10:00 a.m. in the conference room. We will not meet in the months of July and August, so be sure to join us in June for these final Bible Studies of the program year!


ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC AND MINISTRY FAIR : JUNE 9
Join us for our annual Church Picnic on Sunday, June 9th (rain or shine) immediately following service. Service time for that day will be changed to 10:30 am. There is a sign up sheet in the Gathering Space. Please sign up if you plan to attend so we know how many people to purchase food for. 
If you're not sure you can make it, feel free to just come and join us that day! All are welcome! This year we are also asking for dessert sign ups - bring your favorite dessert to share. Sign ups are on the bulletin board.
Also on Sunday June 9th we will host a **Ministry Fair** as part of our picnic festivities. We invite everyone to take a look around at all the ministry groups we have at St. Matthew!

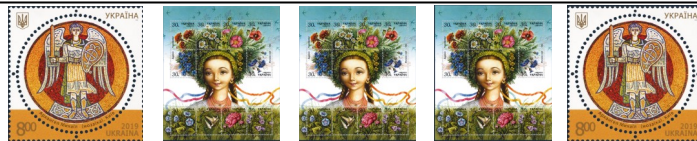
 **MEN'S GROUP**
Our June men's breakfast will be held Saturday, June 15th at 8:30 a.m. We'll continue our discussion of [Seize the Day with Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#), a 365 daily devotional with excerpts from Bonhoeffer's writings.
Men's breakfast will be on hiatus for the months of July and August so this will be our final breakfast of the program year and we will resume meeting in September. Newcomers always welcome!

CENTERING PRAYER
Centering Prayer group meets on Zoom, Thursdays at 2:00 p.m. Join us for a time of silent contemplative prayer followed by a time of *lectio divina* and conversation. All are welcome! 

MAY 2024 COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

- * St. Matthew is sending 8 voting delegates to Synod Assembly from June 6-8.
- * Time & Talent surveys will be sent to the congregation. These will be available physically, or online via Google Forms.
- * Forming a Vision Team and a "Think Tank." More information to come.
- * A Technology Committee is in the initial stages of formation and is currently looking for any interested members to join.

RED ENVELOPE FUNDRAISER FOR YOUTH GATHERING
We are well on our way to funding the trip to the Youth Gathering for our young people this summer! To help close the final gap of about \$3,000 there are 100 red envelopes hanging on the wall in the Gathering Space all numbered 1 to 100, and the way it works is people can take an envelope off the wall and you give the amount that corresponds to the number on the front! For example, if you take red envelope #22, you will put \$22 into the envelope to donate to the youth gathering trip! 
You can take an envelope and ask other people to help support the Youth Gathering trip too - so if you have a friend, family member or neighbor who can donate, ask them to help out! If all 100 envelopes are returned, St. Matthew Youth will raise \$5,050!!
Please return any envelope you take with your donation inside by Sunday, June 9! Return envelopes to the wooden ballot box in the Gathering Space. Thanks for your continued generosity!



GREATER HARTFORD CONFERENCE CELEBRATES EARTH DAY

On the afternoon of Sunday April 21, 70 participants from the congregations of the Greater Hartford Conference came together at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Hartford for an Earth Day Gathering. The program, led by Nancy and Rev. Darrell Urban took us through the painful journey of being confronted with the reality of what we have done to God's creation; the devastation of the earth and all creatures, the social injustice amongst the people and for many a lack of meaning in their lives. We were led through a process of understanding what kinds of false beliefs have brought us to this crisis and then moved forward as we encountered the many ways that God is acting through God's people to bring about new life and healing for our broken world. What wonderful opportunities await each of us as individuals and as congregations as we support one another, being committed in action to help bring about an environmentally sustainable, socially just, spiritually fulfilling human presence on this planet.

Rev. Nancy Wright from the New England Synod Green Team and Sarah Thornton, solar consultant, were available for conversation as the evening concluded with a "cool" (foods that have the least impact on the earth) pot luck.



MUSIC AT GREENWOOD: SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY JULY 13, 4:00 p.m.

In the afternoon of Saturday July 13, Local singer, songwriter, and storyteller Michael Kelly Blanchard will provide the third concert in our 2024 season. He will lead the audience on a textured path of memories and emotions evoked through both word and song, ending with a hope drawn from the firm trust in the loving heart of God. After the one-hour program, please stay for a reception of light appetizers. An offering will be received at the door (suggested donation: \$10 per person). We hope you will join us for this special performance!

ST. MATTHEW CHOIR

After a busy year, the St. Matthew Choir is nearing its summer break. Sunday, June 9th, will be the last service of the season for the choir. Thanks once again to everyone who has contributed to our choral program throughout the past year!



FIRST COMMUNION & AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM CELEBRATED AT ST. MATTHEW

Last month we celebrated First Communion and the Affirmation of Baptism (Confirmation) at St. Matthew! We had eight Communicants and six Confirmands who took part in the ceremonies. For First Communion, each young person attended a workshop prior to the Sacrament that taught them more about its importance and biblical connections. For Confirmation, each student was celebrating two years of work, service, and study. We congratulate all of those who took these major steps on their faith journeys. We can't wait to keep learning about God's grace and love in the years to come!

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| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|
|  June 2024 | | | | | | 1 7:00 pm: Dr. Eben Alexander: Speaking Event |
| 2 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:20 Adult Forum | 3 | 4 10:00 A.A. | 5 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal | 6 2:00 Centering Prayer | 7 | 8 |
| 9 New Member Sunday 10:30 Sanctuary Communion Service 11:30 Church Picnic & Ministry Fair | 10 | 11 10:00 A.A. 7:00 Avon Land Trust Meeting 7:00 Finance Committee | 12 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous | 13 VOICE Deadline 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer | 14 Flag Day | 15 8:30 Men's Breakfast |
| 16 Father's Day 9:00 Outdoor Communion Service 10:30 Summer Series: Re-Viewing Dr. Eben Alexander | 17 | 18 10:00 A.A. | 19 Juneteenth 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous | 20 2:00 Centering Prayer | 21 6:30 Divorce Support Group | 22 |
| 23 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service Honoring High School Graduates 10:30 Summer Series: Re-Viewing Dr. Eben Alexander | 24 | 25 10:00 A.A. 7:00 Church Council | 26 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous | 27 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer | 28  | 29 |
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June 2024

Non-Profit Organization

SAINT MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH
224 Lovely Street, Avon, Connecticut 06001-4018



From Pastor Ryan

“Set Apart”

I was so grateful for the many members of St. Matthew who came to celebrate my ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament last month! It was a joyful service made so much more joyful because of the presence of so many of you. Thank you for joining me at that service!

Ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. That is a lot of “churchy” words with which you may have varying degrees of familiarity. I want to use this month’s article to examine what these words mean a bit closer.

Ordination is an ancient word that arises from an early form of Latin. *Ordo* was used in Roman antiquity to designate an established civil body. The word *ordinatio* means “one who has become a part of the *ordo*.” Today, the word *ordination* is used to describe a rite conducted by The Church (the *ordo*) which bestows the gift of the Holy Spirit through Christ’s Church onto one who has been ‘set apart’ to faithfully interpret God’s Word and to steward and administer the Holy Sacraments of The Church (Holy Baptism and Holy Communion) to all people.

This all sounds pretty high and mighty. And it is. But it’s also very mundane. This tension is the perfect recipe for making ordination a mystery! Let’s look closer!

In the act of ordination, the one being ordained, receives the gift of the Holy Spirit and the bestowal of Christ’s command to the Apostles to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). Tradition says that at “the laying on of hands” the one being ordained is touched by Christ himself through a centuries long succession of ordained ministers who have received this touch going all the way back to Christ.

Ordination is also very mundane because in our Baptism all Christians have already received this commandment from Christ. Theologically, there is no major change in the life of the Christian being ordained. However, there is a new orientation toward Christ and his Church that takes place. It is this more mundane change that I find so much more powerful because it happens because of all of you who are reading this article.

Being ‘set apart’ in ordination is a beautiful act of the whole people of God calling the presence of the Holy Spirit to fully inhabit the one being ordained. It is also a rite of the whole people of God “maintaining the good order of The Church” as Martin Luther says. In other words, in my ordination, I am called by you, the people of St. Matthew Lutheran Church, to be ‘set apart’ to pay particularly close attention to the ways each member of our church is responding to Christ’s call to do ministry in, with, and for the world. You, the people of St. Matthew, have called me to be ‘set apart’ to help you tend to the sacramental gifts of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, which we have all been called to administer to the world through Christ’s Church. It is you, the congregation of St. Matthew, who prays to God to bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ onto me, the one you have called to tend these sacramental tasks with good order and reverence. You have called me to do this because it takes a lot of work to tend these sacramental gifts and most of you have been called to tend to other mammoth tasks in your life.

You have entrusted Pastor Brian and me with tending to the Sacraments on behalf of the gathered Body of Christ who meets here at St. Matthew. You then called on the Triune God to bestow us with the gift of the Holy Spirit to do this work - you asked God to ordain us. Though there is not much change in the fact that Pastor Brian and I are children of God, we have been forever changed by the grace of God and the call of the people of St Matthew who have set us apart to, paradoxically, work together in your ministries here at St. Matthew.

I pray for the Holy Spirit to give me strength to do the task which you have called me at St. Matthew. And I pray for the Holy Spirit to lift you up as you tend to the tasks and details of your daily vocation. Amen.

-Pastor Ryan

