

GARY KURTICH

We have lived in Farmington Woods for the past 10 yrs after raising our family in Barkhamsted. I'm thoroughly enjoying my retirement after spending 6 yrs in banking and 41 yrs in the insurance industry and retiring as a Senior Business Systems Analyst. Kathy and I will be married 50 yrs in 2026 and hope to visit our 50th state (Alaska). We have been members of SMLC for 2 yrs and so appreciate our new church family. I'm honored to be nominated to the church council at St Matthew this coming year.



ERICA CONNORS

I live in Avon with my husband, Tommy, and our two children, Delia and Cooper. I have been a stay-at-home mom since my daughter was born, and before that worked as a Human Resource Manager in Boston. I graduated from Tulane University in New Orleans where I studied Religion, Art History and Classics.

Though our family has recently relocated here to Avon, and we are newer members to St Matthew, I was born and raised in Burlington and am happy to be back to my CT roots. I was raised Lutheran and currently teach Sunday School to our 1st-3rd graders. I am serving my first term on Council and am excited to contribute however I can to this special community.



GEORGE REIDER

I reside in Farmington with my wife, Carol. We were first members in 1975, upon moving to Connecticut with our four sons. We had several Aetna assignments out of CT between 1980 and our return in 1985.

I have served on council a number of times, including as vice president. I chaired the Land Sale Committee, which allowed for the establishment of our Endowment Fund. Most recently, I have helped develop our growing relationship with Grace Lutheran in Hartford, including meals for their Friday night community dinners.



ELLEN ERICSON, SECRETARY

I am a life-long Lutheran. Upon moving to Connecticut from Long Island with my husband, Richard Gregory and our four children, we joined St. Matthew. I taught Sunday School for 10 years, published The Voice for 15 years, served as a Communion Assistant, prepared meals for Grace Lutheran, and started a Grief Support group pre-Covid. In addition to being a long-time member of the Altar Guild, I am also currently serving on the Reopening Task Force and the Communications Committee.

Outside of church, I served as president of the West Hartford Music & Art Club, an organization that provided a scholarship to music and art students furthering their education in their art. Unfortunately, covid forced us to dissolve the club which had been in existence since the 1950s.

I was widowed in 2006. I married Charles Ericson, also a widower, at St. Matthew in 2014.



MEG KRAFT, PRESIDENT

I joined St. Matthew with my husband David in 1999 after relocating from the west coast with our two young daughters. I have participated in many activities here at the church including as Sunday School teacher and superintendent, worship leader, member on many committees and council member. I recently retired after 25 years as a public school teacher, including 18 in Simsbury, and David and I downsized from our house in Avon

to a condo in Farmington. After taking a few years off from leadership positions, I am now ready to join the Council again as we see what God has planned for our congregation.



RICK HANSON, VICE PRESIDENT

Rick is a long-time Simsbury resident. He and his wife Jane have been members at SMLC for over 30 years and are active in many of its ministries.

Rick earned his Bachelor of Science from Charter Oak State College in 2017. His work life spanned leadership positions across service industries including hospitality, conference & event planning, and educational technology. He retired in July of 2022 after finishing a 12-year run as Director of Customer Success for Human eSources. He became a Certified Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) Practitioner in 2010 and has

enjoyed using those skills in his daily life as he interacts with other people. He recently completed certification from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing in adult mental health first aid.

Rick has three grown children and three wonderful granddaughters. He enjoys playing pickleball, camping and gardening. He earned his Gardener Certification from UCONN's College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources College and looks forward to providing public education following graduation.



GREG BOYD

I've invested the last 25 years working as a management and technology consultant, working with notable firms like KPMG, IBM, and Travelers. Throughout that time I've had several startups with varying degrees of success. Yet, my focus goes beyond the professional realm. *My true purpose is in fostering an environment that empowers people to unlock their ultimate potential.*

Through my company, Techmango Global Services, our team is working with organizations to build and integrate technology solutions that enable businesses and consumers to interact seamlessly. We are particularly focused in the Artificial Intelligence domain. I am co-founder of a startup social media marketing company called RAVER.ai aimed at helping the 34 million small businesses owners across America to be able to use social media platforms to help their business grow.

Through our work in the tech industry, we had a need for Computer Science talent which led to the creation of Mango Mentors. We are building a network of Computer Science students and graduates, many of whom overcome significant barriers to pursue their education. By connecting them with IT professionals we will cultivate an ecosystem that promotes their success.

Mango Mentors transcends traditional mentorship. We are working to leverage conversational AI and personal community platforms to forge lasting relationships and create job opportunities. The Mango Mentors Foundation (a non-profit arm) will provide scholarships, internships, and technology for students to grow their skills.

Throughout my entrepreneurial journey, I've learned that hardships, whether personal or professional, can foster profound connections and deep learning. Leaning on my faith has been a solid foundation in getting through some very difficult times. And it is through this faith that I have been open to being vulnerable and sharing with so many people to (hopefully) positively impact their lives with whatever meaningful words and actions God gives me to share. I follow the servant leader philosophy and hope that I am able to provide some positive impact to the St. Matthew community.



PERRY HASSON

I am a bachelor living in Avon, CT for 23 years. I have been attending services at Saint Matthew's Church for over 4 years. I currently work at DXC Technology as a mainframe developer on the Electric Boat account.

My interests include listening to classical music, attending the theater, exercising at the gym, and going on an occasional trip.



BEN WRIGHT

I have been an active member at St. Matthew since 1990 when I began attending with my future wife, Karen Oehrle. A New Englander in heritage, I grew up attending the 1st Congregational Church in Madison, CT where my ancestral namesake (Benjamin Wright) arrived in 1639.

A resident of Avon since 1992 (Ben) and 1985 (Karen), we live a little over a mile from St. Matthew on Anvil Drive which is off Chevas Rd. Karen and I have 2 children, Travis, 30 and Emily, 27 who have grown up attending St. Matthew and participating in the youth group including attending the National Lutheran Youth Gathering in New Orleans (Travis & Dad) and several missionary trips (Emily) including Mississippi and Chicago. Travis is a graduate of UConn and Emily is a Villanova University graduate. Karen and I were married by Pastor Carter on Dec. 6, 1992.

I have found St. Matthew to be the most nourishing of spiritual homes and a solid foundation to my faith and my life. Both in worship and in fellowship I have been nourished here and fulfilled. I believe that St. Matthew should continue to nourish members of all ages by continuing to be firmly rooted in the faith AND in the community by fostering growth, contemplation and remaining relevant in this ever more diverse, astonishing, and sometimes appalling world, that God has made and entrusted to us.

I have previously served 2 terms (12 yrs) on the St. Matthew council, the Property Committee, the Stewardship Committee, on Mutual Ministry, and the Vision for Growth Committee that initiated the expansion of the church in 2006/7, as well as on the Pastoral Transition Team, the cell tower lease sale and on Uplift the Parsonage. I am an occasional lector at Sunday service and part of the live stream team.

Professionally, I had a long career at Aetna (37 years) in Information Technology and later in Advanced Data Analytics and healthcare fraud detection. After retiring from Aetna in 2011, I explored Booz Allen Hamilton for a couple of years, Cigna for a couple of years and finally, as Senior Solutions Architect at SAS Institute, Inc. for 7 years where I helped Government and Commercial clients (domestic and global) implement advanced analytics in Enterprise Payment Integrity, and other healthcare-related disciplines. I retired (for good, it seems) in Jan of 2022.



WILL ABBOTT

Hi, my name is William Abbott. I am a sophomore at Avon High School. I have been attending St Matthew since the age of 5, so that makes it 11 years. I think I would be a great choice to serve as a Council Member because I have been an assistant minister for the last 3 years, which has allowed me to learn and spread the word of the Lord, and also improve my public speaking skills. Additionally, for the past year, I have helped with Sunday school and the little kids, which has been a great way for me to connect with the youth of our church. I also believe that having a high school aged Council Member will give a voice to the next generation of members, who may become the future of our church. Finally, in June of 2024, I was selected to attend the New England Synod Assembly to help vote for the bishop. It was a great experience for me, and I was proud to be part of the small group that represented St Matthew Church at that prestigious event. Even though I was one of the youngest people in attendance, I stood up and asked a question of the prospective bishops. "How do you plan to use social media to engage the next generation of believers?". That is a brief background of me and my service at the church.



PAULA GARZA

St. Matthew has been my church home since moving to the area more than forty years ago. While my son was young I worked as the Business Manager at Folly Farm, but when Dave left for college I made a career change. After completing a Masters Program, I spent twenty (wonderful!) years as a School Counselor at Simsbury High School, and have just retired.

My husband Dan and I live in Collinsville. Dan is a restaurateur; we owned and operated Margarita's Restaurant in Canton for more than twenty-five years. Dan now works part time as a manager at Saybrook Fish House.

My involvement with St. Matthew has been mostly musical; I sang with the choir for many, many years, served on the Finance Committee, and have just begun to assist with offering counting. On a personal note, I am inspired by the sense of excitement I feel in church on Sunday mornings, and am happy to see so many children here!



JACK PIETRICK

Jack has been a member of St. Matthew for 47 years. He served as the co-chairperson of the 1987 Organ Committee which selected the Casavant Organ in our sanctuary. Recently, Jack co-chaired the Playground Committee and served as the Project Manager for the Uplift the Parsonage Project. He served on the Church Council for six years beginning in 2018, three of which he held the position of president.

Jack and his wife Robin have two daughter who were baptized, confirmed, and married at St. Matthew. Jack spent 39 years in the field of education. Nineteen were in the field of music education and the last twenty as an elementary principal. His educational background includes a Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut. Jack is currently a member of the Property Committee and the Sanctuary Choir. Jack and Robin reside in Avon.