



THE VOICE

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

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



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

MAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

May 5:

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Communion Service
10:20 a.m. Special Congregational Meeting

May 12: Mother's Day

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

May 19: Confirmation Sunday

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

May 26:

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

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

One of the most fascinating areas of research in my opinion is the study of near-death-experiences (NDEs). NDEs are reported by people who have died and been resuscitated. People in these situations often report having had experiences of consciousness beyond their physical body. Characteristics of the NDE include having an out-of-body experience, feeling tremendous peace, seeing a bright light, traveling through a tunnel, witnessing a life review, encountering deceased loved ones or a divine guide like Jesus. Many books have been written by people who have had such experiences as well as by researchers who scientifically study NDEs. It is a fascinating topic at the heart of the dialogue between science and religion. There are many excellent books, documentaries, and scientific peer-reviewed journal articles on this topic.

One of the foremost experts on the topic of NDEs is author and retired neurosurgeon Dr. Eben Alexander. Dr. Alexander had an NDE himself which completely changed his worldview and inspired his interest in the topic. He describes his own experience in the bestselling book *Proof of Heaven*. He also has written a book containing the experience of others called *The Map of Heaven* and a third book titled *Living in a Mindful Universe*, which explores the mystery of life, consciousness, and the dialogue between science and spirituality.

We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Eben Alexander to St. Matthew the weekend of June 1-2! Dr. Alexander will be leading a lecture at St. Matthew on Saturday, June 1st at 7:00 p.m. and he will be joining us Sunday morning for worship and leading Adult Forum June 2nd at 10:20 a.m. Registration will be required for the Saturday evening lecture. Both presentations will be available virtually on Zoom. I am so excited to welcome him to St. Matthew! We hope you'll join us for this tremendous opportunity to meet this world-renowned speaker at our very own congregation!

God's peace and blessings be with you,

Pastor Brian



PROPERTY CLEANUP DAY

Property Committee is hosting our annual St. Matthew Cleanup Day on Saturday May 18th at 10:00 a.m. Please join us to help with cleaning, weeding, and various landscaping and maintenance projects. Coffee and doughnuts will be provided. Come join us and let's make St. Matthew look amazing together!



CHURCH PICNIC & MINISTRY FAIR



Save the date for our annual church picnic: **Sunday June 9th** after service. Worship service will be at 10:30 a.m. that morning followed by the church picnic at 12:00 p.m. In addition to food and fellowship, games and activities will be outdoors. Part of the festivities that day will include a Ministry Fair in which various ministries of St. Matthew will have tables available sharing what they do and how you might be able to help. Don't miss this special Sunday with our community!

ADULT FORUM

Adult Forum meets 10:20-11:20 a.m. on Sunday mornings after worship. Grab some coffee and refreshments and join us for forum. Here's a look at what's coming up in May and early June:

- ⇒ May 5: No Forum (Associate Pastor Call Vote meeting)
- ⇒ May 12: Women/Mothers of the Bible with Pastor Brian
- ⇒ May 19: What is Confirmation? with Ryan Heckman
- ⇒ May 26: Healing Prayer with Fred Fenn
- ⇒ June 2: Dr. Eben Alexander
- ⇒ June 9: Church Picnic



BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study will meet at 10:00 a.m. in the conference room on the first and third Thursdays of the month: May 2nd and May 16th. Newcomers are always welcome! We hope you'll join us!

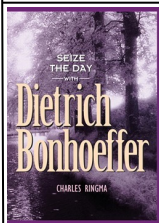
CENTERING PRAYER

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!



MARCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

- * Council reviewed the proposed compensation package for Ryan Heckman should he be called as our half time pastor. The congregation will vote on May 5.
- * Ministry Fair will be held on June 9 in the Hall of the Evangelists during the picnic.



MEN'S GROUP

May's men's breakfast will be the third Saturday of the month, May 18th 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.

RSVP by Thursday May 16th so we know how many to prepare for. Newcomers always welcome! And if you have time after the men's breakfast you're invited to stay for Property Cleanup Day!

ELLEN ERICSON ART SHOWCASE

St. Matthew member, Ellen Gregory Ericson, will be showing her watercolor paintings at the Farmington Library, main branch, from May 2 through May 30 during regular library hours. Her artist reception will be on Saturday, May 11 from 2:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.

MUSIC AT GREENWOOD: SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY MAY 18 at 4:00 p.m.

Hot Cat Jazz Band

The second concert in our 2024 season will feature a six-piece jazz band. **Hot Cat** will play in a range of styles, and this concert is sure to be entertaining for everyone! Following the one-hour program, stay for a reception of light appetizers. An offering will be received at the door (suggested donation: \$10 per person). Please plan to join us for this fun afternoon, and tell your friends! All are welcome.



STEWARDSHIP: THRIVENT ACTION TEAMS!

The Stewardship Committee would like to remind you about \$250 Thrivent action team cards. Every member of Thrivent is eligible for two separate action team cards worth \$250 each year. During an Adult Forum in March, our Thrivent speaker encouraged us to use these action teams for everything we can. He said anytime there's food at an event, use a Thrivent card. Anytime you're making donations of food or clothing or store-bought items, use a Thrivent card. Anytime you're doing an educational activity or a service project, use a Thrivent card. Many Thrivent members aren't even aware of this untapped resource that can help churches and other non-profit organizations. **If you are a Thrivent member please [email the church office](#)** and we will teach you how to apply for action teams in ways that can help St. Matthew (or any other non-profit that you love).

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Last month, a group of St. Matthew's confirmation students traveled to the shores of Lake Ossipee in New Hampshire to go to Confirmation Camp at Camp Calumet.

The purpose of the annual confirmation retreat to Camp Calumet is to build relationships with each other through shared experiences and to dig deeply into our faith in Christ Jesus. And boy oh boy was the weekend filled with these things!




From a four hour drive where we hotly debated Starbucks vs. Dunkin, to a "truth or dare" competition that lasted the whole weekend and produced a champion "chocolate-filled-dinner-roll-eater" (Andrew) and a champion hot sauce drinker (Elizabeth) and even a mouthful of dirt (Elizabeth again, and Wyatt). The kids had a blast organizing a camp-wide game of "manhunt" a game played after dark in the woods - yes, we chaperones were scattered throughout the camp to ensure everyone was safe and back in their cabins by quiet hours!

It's these kinds of adventures that create stories and bonds that last a lifetime.

This year during our curriculum time, we engaged in Luther's Small Catechism. We explored the core tenets of our Lutheran faith and tradition including the 10 Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Communion, and confession and forgiveness. Throughout our discussions we touched on topics such as marriage and commitment to loved ones, God's Law versus our secular laws, creation and God's real presence among us, and we tried discerning what 2,000 years of thought on the Holy Trinity really means by trying to answer 'why do we believe in ONE God who is described as being THREE persons?' We'll get back to you on that one.

It was a full weekend of new friendships and lots of learning. The car ride home was notably quieter than the one going to camp. That means we had a great weekend and, I hope, look forward to going back to Camp Calumet sometime soon!



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat
May 2024						
			1 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	2 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	3	4 9:30 First Communion Class
5 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:20 Special Congregational Meeting 5:00 Confirmation Class 	6 OFFICE CLOSED	7 10:00 A.A. 7:00 Finance Committee Mtg.	8 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	9 VOICE Deadline 2:00 Centering Prayer	10	11 10:00 Altar Guild
12 Mother's Day 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:20 Sunday School & Adult Forum 5:00 Confirmation Class	13	14 10:00 A.A. 7:00 Avon Land Trust Meeting	15 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	16 10:00 Bible Study 2:00 Centering Prayer	17	18 8:30 Men's Breakfast 10:00 Property Cleanup 4:00 Music at Greenwood Hot Cat Jazz
19 9:00 Confirmation Sunday: Sanctuary Communion Service 10:20 Adult Forum	20	21 10:00 A.A. 7:00 Church Council	22 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	23 2:00 Centering Prayer	24	25
26 9:00 Sanctuary Communion Service 10:20 Adult Forum	27 Memorial Day OFFICE CLOSED	28 10:00 A.A.	29 9:30 WW Meeting 5:15 WW Meeting 7:00 Overeater's Anonymous 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	30 2:00 Centering Prayer	31	

May 2024

Non-Profit Organization

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

