

DECEMBER 2025

The Encounter

Monthly Newsletter of St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church

A Stephen Ministry Congregation



"Proclaiming Christ Crucified"

Established 1892

Our Mission

As a Lutheran community of faith, we continue our history of proclaiming Christ crucified through Word and Sacrament in joyful service to God and our neighbor.

Our Vision

A welcoming family, encouraging lives of service to Christ.



Midweek Advent Worship - Noon and 7 p.m.

December 3: "O Wisdom" (Isaiah 11:2)

December 10: "O Adonai" (Exodus 3:6)

December 17: "O Root of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:10)

German Christmas Eucharist - December 20, Noon

"Der Heiland...Christus der Herr" (Luke 2:11)

Christmass Eve Eucharist - December 24, 5:00pm, 8:30pm, and 11:00pm

"A Savior...Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:00)



Annual Congregation Meeting

The Annual Congregation Meeting is Sunday, December 7th, at 1:00pm in McSwain Center, following lunch which starts at 12:30pm. The business to be conducted is to vote on the 2026 operating budget, elect officers, new council members, and new Endowment Team members, congregation approval of changes to the Endowment Fund Charter and Operating Procedures, and elect representatives to The American Association of Lutheran Churches General Convention in June 2026. Please be sure to sign up in the narthex so we have a headcount for lunch.

Youth and Family Ministries

Christmas Play - We will be having our Christmas play during the 5:00 pm Christmas Eve service! If you or your child would like to be a part of the play, please contact Ms. Kristine so that you can join for any rehearsals!

Harbor Kids - All 3rd - 5th graders will meet on Saturday, December 13th, from 3-5pm! We will be hanging out in the McSwain gym, have a nerf gun war and some Christmas theme activities!

Youth Christmas Party - We are so excited for our youth Christmas party this year on December 14th, for all 6th - 12th graders. There will be a fun contest and a white elephant exchange.

Family Fun Night - Join us on December 19th from 7-9pm in McSwain Center for a Christmas family night! There will be games, a movie, and snacks!

Youth - Please note that *Breakwater* and *Lighthouse* groups will only be meeting on December 7th this month.



Decorating the Nave and Pizza Supper

Everyone is invited to come out, enjoy some pizza, and help decorate the Nave on Thursday, December 18th at 6:00pm. Please sign up on the board in the narthex, and indicate if you will be having pizza.



Help Us Decorate the Nave!



The next New Member Orientation for confirmed Lutheran transfers is on Sunday, December 7, at 9:45 a.m. in McCombs Fellowship Hall. Confirmed Lutherans interested in membership are invited to attend the Adult Catechism class each Sunday from 9:45-10:45 a.m. in McCombs Fellowship Hall. Please email: dcaipozio@stmatthewsch.org

Greetings from Pastor Sam

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

"Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her" (Luke 1:38 NKJV).

"Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife" (Matthew 1:24 NKJV).

As we begin the new liturgical year, we prepare our hearts and minds to celebrate our Savior's birth. Advent is, like Lent, a penitential season. Our Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters observe a forty-day fast that mirrors their Lenten preparation to celebrate the Lord's victory over sin, death, and the devil. Contrary to the wider culture's boozy spend-fest, Christ's Church waits like Mary and Joseph actively waited in obedience to our Father's good and gracious will. The Lord Jesus took His time.

How did the wider culture get to its Christ-less "criss-mess?" The devil has been working on that since he asked, "Has God indeed said?" (Genesis 3:1 NKJV). Of course, many "sophisticated" members among the baptized don't believe there is a devil (he loves it), thereby reducing evil to those who don't support their latest favorite cause. The father of lies is the author of false advertising which wickedly plays on the vulnerabilities of those who don't know who and Whose they are. "Love wins" and "Keep your laws off my body" are just two of the most banally evil of his slogans.

Mary and Joseph listened to the Lord and waited. We can only imagine both the internal and external pressures that bore down on each, tempting each differently, trying to subvert God's will to save and redeem His lost creatures. Because so few of even the most faithful read and study the Bible outside of worship, today, all the other stories get in their ears and worm their way into vulnerable hearts and minds. So, we need these penitential seasons as times of course correction that God's story may build a stronger immunity to the other stories by showing us our sin (the Law) and showing us our Savior Jesus (the Gospel). The Law mortifies (kills) the old sinner in us. The Gospel raises the child of God from the dead so that Christ Jesus now lives in us. By receiving Jesus regularly, He can go with us!

In the post-WWII years, Coca-Cola popularized Santa Claus with colorful cartoon drawings of a jolly old soul far removed from St. Nicholas, the bishop of Myra, Turkey. Clement Moore's poem, "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (1823), was popularized along with any number of Christ-less songs that still get huge play, "White Christmas," "The Christmas Song," "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year." A generic American god was and is more popular than the God who must save us sinners from everlasting death by suffering and dying for us. So that, just as Japan with its less than 1% Christian population loves "criss-mess," so now does an increasingly Christ-less America. The big question, then: "Are you just blending in with the Christ-less holidays of the culture around you?"

Mary and Joseph waited on the Lord. Can you wait also? Will you attend midweek Advent services? Will you forego spending as much to give more generously to the Lord at year's end? Will you actually track your daily spending habits and ask what *they say matters most to you*? Will you forego hosting a Christmas party until the 12 days of Christmas (December 25-January 5)? Will you give thought-full gifts that witness to your faith in the Triune God who saves you? If you don't wait on the Lord, like Mary and Joseph, how will your neighbors ever learn to do so? Change won't just happen.

I love you,



Pastor Samuel David Zumwalt+



"HOLY WORSHIP: Our overarching sermon theme in the new liturgical year is the sixth of Martin Luther's seven marks of the true Church. His actual mark is what happens in holy worship, namely, "public prayer, praise, and thanksgiving." Elsewhere, Luther writes extensively on receiving Baptism and renewing it daily, the regular practice of private confession, the necessity of gladly hearing and learning the Word of God, and the regular celebration of the Lord's Supper."

Throughout this year, we will listen to what Scripture does and does not teach about Holy Worship. The question for the human heart, that old idol maker, is which god people worship. Discerning what makes for the right administration of the Word and Sacraments tells us that not just any god will do.

Chad Bird, a Lutheran theologian, has written that right worship is shaped like a "W." It begins with God, who draws our response, who gives us His gifts, to which we offer our thanks and praise. False worship is shaped like an "M." It begins with us, goes up to god, comes back to us, goes up again, and ends with us. If you think about that, what makes it false and not the true god is it's all about us.

Start the new liturgical year by keeping a holy Advent. The real God is calling you to be His!



Church Council

At the regular Council meeting, the following was approved:

- Aggressive Land Management was approved to pressure wash the entire church buildings and walkways at a cost of \$4,270 to be paid from the Contingency Fund (2-810550).
- Beth Hales, Scott Mough, and Joan Fracalossi were approved as the slate of nominees to be elected by the congregation at its annual meeting in December as three-year term members of the Endowment Team with terms beginning 1 January 2026.
- Debra Pressly was approved to take cash and charges at the Christkindlmarkt on 22 November.
- The proposed Annual Spending Plan for 2026 in the amount of \$756,059.00 be presented to the Congregation for approval subject to any changes resulting from the budget forum on 16 November 2025.
- Dusty Pilcher for congregation President and Melissa Shaver for congregation Secretary as candidates for election at the congregation annual meeting.
- Greg Adams, Dave Sundberg, Karen Ruefle, and Erica Ullring as candidates for council at the congregation annual meeting for election to two-year terms, and Jeff Hollamon and Cooper Ullring (youth representative) for one-year terms.
- The annual congregational meeting for Sunday 7 December 2026 at 1:00 pm in the McSwain Activity Center. The agenda items will be the adoption of the 2026 budget, election of officers and new council members, election of new Endowment Team members, congregation approval of changes to the Endowment Fund Charter and Operating Procedures and election of representatives to The American Association of Lutheran Churches General Convention in June 2026.
- Dusty Pilcher and Deacon Robert as candidates for election at the congregation annual meeting to attend the AALC General Convention in June 2026.
- It was approved to continue offering to employees the Gold plan by Blue Cross Blue Shield health insurance.



It's the holidays! Celebrate! Celebrate! Thanksgiving, and New Years! We will all be busy spreading thanks and good cheer to friends and families. Many of us will be getting worn out and besieged by activities, including shopping. Now, also, is the time to take some good time out to breathe freely and relax - and think of someone who especially needs our attention. Think of those who are ill, homebound, or otherwise not sharing in the hustle and bustle of the Season. Remember someone who might otherwise be forgotten. Then, take the time to help out with greetings, a gift, a smile, or even some assistance. Go serve a neighbor at First Fruits or one of the many charities at work in the Wilmington area. Become a Stephen Minister and serve others. Use a Stephen Minister to help you cope with the holidays and be a good servant to those around you. And don't forget to smile and say "Thank you" to someone who needs you to do that.

One last thing: Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year from Stephen Ministry! We hope this season is the best ever! This is especially the time to serve at and beyond St. Matthew's. Consider becoming a Stephen Minister! See Pastor Sam, Ana Marie Jackson, Terry Miller, Jon Lindsay, or any Stephen Minister to get started. Have a wonderful holiday season this year...be a part of it for others!



Reminder that for contributions to be counted for 2025, all donations must be:

- postmarked by Wednesday, December 31
- given online before midnight on December 31
- dropped off at the church by 12:00pm December 31

**Please call before coming to the church to make sure someone is available to take your offering.*

Do not leave your offering in the outside mailbox!

Gifts to Honor and Remember

In Memory of Pr. Marvin Schedler, a gift to Pastor's Discretionary by Carol Comeskey, Kris, Hall, Paul and Bev Miller, Lucy Hieronymus, Dianne Zenz; a gift to the Seminary Scholarship Fund by Fred and Ana Maria Jackson, Carol Roller, Joe and Diane Rumsey, Lynette Farmer, Alan and Beverly Hunsberger, Mark McLamb, Tom Hayakawa, James and Barbara Roseman.

In Memory of Thomas Jarrott, a gift to Pastor's Discretionary by Carol Comeskey.

In Honor of Carol Roller, a gift to Christkindlmarkt by Lucy Hieronymus.

In Honor of Fr. Peter Hoyer, a donation to the General Fund by Faith Circle.



1 Leslie Long	5 Harrison Childs	18 Terry Miller
1 Lauren Gains	7 Lou Painter	19 Joan Fracalossi
1 Tom Russell	7 Adam Thompson	19 Larry Knott
1 Tony Nelson	8 Terry Crouch	19 Adam Pope
2 Pat Manor	8 Jody Burke	21 Jon Lindsay
3 Sheila Leach	9 Jean Hoehler	22 Adelia Nelson
3 Chantay Allen	9 Al Scheidt	24 Helen Knoll
5 Brian Tobin	10 Hannah Schneider	24 Christi Everett
5 Rod Andrew	11 David Forler	24 Tracy Plumley
	12 Cindy Lindsay	27 Gina Martuscelli Vanderwal
	12 Kevin Johnson	28 Sharon Callender
	13 Stephanie Price	30 Rose Weidman
	13 Justin Williamson	31 Jay Glaeser
	15 Abel Caulkins	



2 Brandon & Ashley Caulkins	16 Larry & Suelyn Reisinger
9 Randy & Joy Allen	20 Lou & Jenny Painter
11 Jon & Cindy Lindsay	21 Needham & Sylvia Hall
12 Devon & Frances Donaldson	26 Paul & Bev Miller
14 Larry & Sara Schneider	30 Fred & June Doll

Hospice Meals

We will once again be supplying dinners for the families on the 1st and 4th Fridays of every month. Please provide a complete meal targeting about **12-15 people**, minus drinks. Please see the information details and meal suggestions above the sign-up sheet on the big bulletin board in the Narthex.

On-call substitutes are also needed in case the person who signed up must cancel at the last minute. Whether you sign up during the year or just want to serve as a substitute, any way you can help is appreciated!

If you have questions, please contact Sue Mowrey at 910-465-2025 via text or voicemail.



OWL's Luncheon is December 11th, at 11:30 am in McCombs Hall.

The meal is \$10.00 per person, and the menu is ham, potato salad, deviled eggs, mashed potatoes, corn, green bean casserole, rolls, and apple cranberry cobbler. There will also be a Christmas sing-along. Feel free to invite friends to join us.

A sign up sheet is posted on the board in the narthex.



Our Christian sympathy is extended to...

Elaine Nelson and family on the death of Roy Nelson.

Danielle Bashaw and children Braelyn, Joseph, and Killian, on the death of their grandfather, Jose Campos.

Fran Perry, Deacon Robert Shivers, and family, on the death of Fran's mother, Helen Adrian

MEMBERS

Donna Siegmund
Kenn and Wanda Slocum
George Schwenzer
Laura and Micki Matthes
Christine Dingfelder
Fran Perry
Terry Miller
Donna Lawhorn
Ken and Jenny Manning
Butch Ruefle
Joe Mayfield
Helen Knoll
Betty LaFave
Bev Miller
Don Butzin
Peggy Davis
Steve Weidman

Frank and Marti Felter
Sally Birnstein
Sarah Schneider
Ron Salow
Michael Strutt
Ed Ludacer
Carolyn Hooker
Sheila Leach
Patty Macino
Dennis Hall
Tina Medlin
Larry Knott
Dwight Crim
Jenny Painter
Rebecca Seip
Lynette Farmer
Bill Glisson

Todd and Tracy Darnell
Jamie Price
Erika Braje
Howard and Lani Beuerman
Killian Campos
Doris Isaacs
Joy Shaver
Gabie Walters
Joe Huppmann
Sondra Tullous
Brigitte Walters
Alex Schwartz
Pr. Carl Voges
Charlotte Thompson
Ron Asmus
Jean Hoehler

FRIENDS/FAMILY OF MEMBERS

Amie Knauer
David Schwartz
Megan McKinney
Rev. Dr. William White
Tom Seip
Fred Peck
Bill Pearson
Lloyd Moore
Krista Boeger
William Fultz
Albert Rossetti
John Jones
Janet Nix
Scott Howl
Vic Weidman
Angie Barlow
Matthew Hall
Chuck Teigland
Erin Thompson
Carol Mueller
J. Dylan Ott

Gretchen Zunich
Natalie Merck
Jeremy McCollum
Jean Brooks
Jean Langrell
Frank Britton
Tim Schedler
Jill Miller
Cat Garcia Miller
Steve Cottle
Gene Przybranowski
Samantha and Ethan Wilhelm
Luke
Elena Andrades
Tanya Moore
Ruth Schucker
Amy Johnston
Mollie Eberle
Mary Pat Jones
Bonnie Gaspari
Vance and Ann Alphin

Natalie Pressley
Krysten Lee and Chris
Robert Zenz
Virginia Mough
Russ Kuhn
Deisy Epley
Lisa Talmage
Paulette Myers
Lorraine Fritz
Bryn Ulisnik
Betty Mowrey
Carol Clarke
Janice Hilliard
Pr. Joe Christina
Jennifer Boandl
Fiona Svastics
David Pearson
Jerry Sundberg
Bill White

REMEMBER OUR HOMEBOUND MEMBERS:

Elsie Cates
Jane and Willard Dove

Ruthann Getsinger
Jean Hoehler

Pat Mahl
Nancy Miller

Those Serving in December 2025

ALTAR GUILD

December 6-7

6:00 Beth Hales
8:30 Cathy Aleksandravicius
11:00 Lynette Farmer

December 13-14 (C)

6:00 Peggy Davis
8:30 Cathy Aleksandravicius
11:00 Karin Cook

December 20-21

6:00 Peggy Davis
8:30 Karen Ruefle
11:00 Lynette Farmer

December 24 Christmas Eve

5:00 Lynette Farmer
8:30 Beth Hales
11:00

December 27-28

6:00
8:30 Karen Ruefle
11:00 Lynette Farmer

LECTORS

December 6-7

6:00 Brigitte Walters
8:30 Sheila Whitmeyer
11:00 Bev Miller

December 13-14 (C)

6:00 Alan Richey
8:30
11:00 Marti Felter

December 20-21

6:00 Mart Felter
8:30 Eric Beuerman
11:00 Lynette Farmer

December 24 Christmas Eve

5:00
8:30 Bev Miller
11:00

December 27-28

6:00
8:30
11:00 Bev Hunsberger

USHERS

December 6-7

6:00
8:30 Craig Hales
11:00

December 13-14 (C)

6:00
8:30 Al Glaeser
11:00 Dave Davis

December 20-21

6:00
8:30
11:00

December 24 Christmas Eve

5:00
8:30
11:00

December 27-28

6:00
8:30
11:00

GREETERS

December 6-7

6:00
8:30 Janet Hall
11:00 Greg and Donna Adams

December 13-14 (C)

6:00
8:30 Ron and Suzanne Asmus
11:00

December 20-21

6:00
8:30
11:00 Ashley and Christie Cribb

December 24 Christmas Eve

5:00
8:30
11:00

December 27-28

6:00
8:30
11:00 Ana Maria Jackson

ACOLYTES and CRUCIFERS

December 6-7

6:00
8:30
11:00 Joey Campos, Tom Ullring

December 13-14 (C)

6:00
8:30
11:00 Joey Campos
Danielle Bashaw

December 20-21

6:00
8:30
11:00 Joey Campos
Danielle Bashaw

December 24 Christmas Eve

5:00 Joey Campos
Danielle Bashaw
8:30 Joey Campos, Tom Ullring
11:00 Joey Campos, David Medlin

December 27-28

6:00
8:30
11:00

ALTAR FLOWERS

December 7

Rebecca Seip
The Crouch family

December 14

Francis and Devon Donaldson
Patty Macino

December 21

The Schmoke family
Janet and Denis Hall

December 28

Sharon Callender
Joe and Diane Rumsey

HOSPICE MEAL

December 5 - Darin and Karen Pope

December 26 - Gina Martuscelli
Vanderwal



Brigitte Walters is looking to start an informal and fun Christian Fellowship in her home beginning in the new year. This will be a get together similar to what was done in the very early church.

No formal set-up...just coffee, tea, and an occasional snack, with prayer, devotion, and conversation of your choosing. Age is no problem, and you may invite friends if you like.

Brigitte would be available Mondays and Fridays for mornings or afternoons, and Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays for afternoons only.

If you are interested, please call or email Brigitte (910-523-3167 or brigittewalters70@gmail.com).

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
	1 9:00 Counting Team 12:00 Conversations 4:00 CFA Basketball 6:00 Evening Prayer 7:00 Midtown AA 7:00 Harbour Towne Band rehearsal	2 10:00 Prayer Group 5:00 Club W Volleyball 5:30 Joyful Noise 6:00 Girl Scouts 1327 6:30 Stephen Ministry	3 8:30 Men's Breakfast Bible Study 12:00 Advent Euch. 6:00 Crossways 6:00 Handbells 7:00 Advent Evening Prayer 7:30 Adult Choir 7:30 Confirmation	4 10:00 Quilt Ministry 10:00 Crossways 4:00 CFA Basketball 6:00 Club W Volleyball 7:00 Midtown AA	5 Hospice Meal - Darin and Karen Pope 6:30 Young Adults Christmas Party	6 4:00 Pastoral Support Team 6:00 Eucharist
7 2nd Sunday in Advent 8:30 Eucharist 9:45 Sunday School 11:00 Eucharist; New Members Rec'd 12:30 Annual Meeting and Luncheon 4:00 MS Youth 6:00 HS Youth	8 9:00 Counting Team 12:00 Conversations 3:45 WCA Basketball 6:00 Evening Prayer 7:00 Midtown AA 7:00 Harbour Towne Band rehearsal	9 10:00 Staff Meeting 10:00 Prayer Group 12:30 Faith Circle 5:00 Club W Volleyball 5:30 Girl Scouts 354	10 8:30 Men's Breakfast Bible Study 11:00 Finance Team 12:00 Advent Euch. 6:00 Crossways 6:00 Handbells 7:00 Advent Evening Prayer 7:30 Adult Choir 7:30 Confirmation	11 10:00 Quilt Ministry 10:00 Crossways 11:30 OWL's Luncheon 4:00 CFA Basketball 6:00 Club W Volleyball 6:30 Council 7:00 Midtown AA	12 3:45 WCA Basketball	13 3:00 3rd-5th grade Youth 6:00 Eucharist
14 3rd Sunday in Advent 8:30 Eucharist (C) 9:45 Sunday School 11:00 Eucharist 12:30 Grief Support 6:00 MS/HS Youth Christmas Party	15 9:00 Counting Team 12:00 Conversations 3:45 WCA Basketball 6:00 Evening Prayer 7:00 Midtown AA 7:00 Harbour Towne Band rehearsal	16 10:00 Staff Meeting 10:00 Prayer Group 5:00 Club W Volleyball 5:30 Joyful Noise 6:00 Girl Scouts 1327 6:30 Stephen Ministry	17 8:30 Men's Breakfast Bible Study 12:00 Advent Euch. 6:00 Crossways 7:00 Advent Evening Prayer 7:00 Adult Choir 7:30 Confirmation	18 10:00 Quilt Ministry 10:00 Crossways 3:00 Library Team 5:00 Club W Volleyball 6:00 Nave decorating 7:00 Midtown AA	19 7:00 Family Fun Night	20 12:00 German Svc. 6:00 Eucharist
21 4th Sunday in Advent 8:30 Eucharist 9:45 Sunday School 11:00 Eucharist	22 9:00 Counting Team 12:00 Conversations 6:00 Evening Prayer 7:00 Midtown AA 7:00 Harbour Towne Band rehearsal	23 10:00 Prayer Group 5:30 Girl Scouts 354	24 Christmas Eve Church Office closed 5:00 Eucharist 8:30 Eucharist 11:00 Eucharist	25 Christmas Day Church Office closed 7:00 Midtown AA	26 Hospice Meal - Gina Martuscelli Vanderwal	27 6:00 Eucharist
28 Holy Innocents 8:30 Eucharist 11:00 Eucharist	29 9:00 Counting Team 12:00 Conversations 6:00 Evening Prayer 7:00 Midtown AA 7:00 Harbour Towne Band Rehearsal	30 10:00 Prayer Group	31 New Year's Eve 12:00 Eucharist			

Upcoming Worship and Events

January 1 - New Year's Day; Church Office closed.

January 3-4 - Second Sunday of Christmas, Eucharists 6:00 pm, 8:30 am and 11:00 am

January 5 - Evening Prayer, 6:00 pm

January 6 - The Feast of Epiphany, Eucharist 12:00 pm

January 7 - Midweek Healing Eucharist, 12:00 pm

January 10-11 - Baptism of Our Lord, Eucharists 6:00 pm, 8:30 am (Contemporary) and 11:00 am

January 12 - Evening Prayer, 6:00 pm

January 14 - Midweek Healing Eucharist, 12:00 pm

January 17-18 - Second Sunday after Epiphany, Eucharists 6:00 pm, 8:30 am and 11:00 am

January 19 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; Church Office closed; Evening Prayer, 6:00 pm

January 21 - Midweek Healing Eucharist, 12:00 pm

January 24-25 - Third Sunday after Epiphany, Eucharists 6:00 pm, 8:30 am (Contemporary) and 11:00 am

January 26 - Evening Prayer, 6:00 pm

January 28 - Midweek Healing Eucharist, 12:00 pm

January 31-February 1 - Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, Eucharists 6:00 pm, 8:30 am and 11:00 am