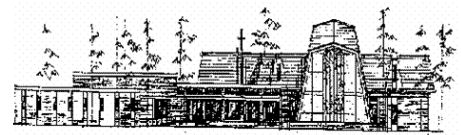


JANUARY 2026

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.

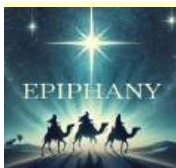
Our Vision

A welcoming family, encouraging lives of service to Christ.



The Pastors and Church Staff would like to thank the congregation for your generous love gifts to each of us.

We also thank you for your kind wishes and your prayers for us as we seek to serve on your behalf and in His name.



Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord

January 6th at 12:00 noon

Father Peter Hoyer is our preacher.

Christmas decorations will be taken down in the nave on Thursday, January 8th starting at 6:00 pm. No need to sign-up ...Just show up and help!



OWL's Luncheon is January 22nd at 11:30 am in McCombs Hall.

Price will be \$10 per person, and the menu is braised beef brisket, mashed potatoes, winter citrus salad, and dessert.

Please sign up on the bulletin board in the Narthex.



Hospice Meals

Thank you to everyone who has signed up so far to supply meals for Lower Cape Fear LifeCare Hospice! Dates are still open from July through December.



Hospice Meals Basics

- Who and what:** Provide food for the families at the Hospice Center. Please provide a complete meal targeting about 8-12 people, minus drinks, if possible. (They love dessert!)
- Where:** Hospice Pavilion on Physicians Drive in Wilmington NC.
- When:** Friday at 5 pm. We are signed up for the 1st and 4th Friday of each month.
- Why:** It allows families to remain close to their loved ones without having to leave to find food.
- How:** Sign up on the sheet for a Friday! You will get more detailed directions later. You don't even have to cook!

If you are also willing to be an on-call substitute, please contact Sue Mowrey at mowreysu@gmail.com.



Adult Catechism Class for Spring 2026 begins January 11 and continues through March 29.

New members will be welcomed on Easter Sunday, April 5. Members are also welcome to attend the Catechism class but need to provide their own copies of *Luther's Small Catechism 2017 with Explanation*. You may purchase on Amazon or at www.cph.org. Every student is asked to read the assigned pages prior to each class.



Would you be willing to help?

We are in great need of a dedicated team to care for the poinsettias and Easter lilies in the Sanctuary and Narthex every year. This is a task that needs a minimum of 3-4 people (or more). If you would be willing to serve on this team, please email Donna Capozio at dcapozio@stmatthewsch.org.



Greetings from Pastor Sam

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Many of us make New Year's resolutions every year that amount to massive change, and very few can sustain massive change. Oh, yes, all things are possible with God ... but the old Adam or Eve, the old sinner in us, does not fear, love, and trust God above all things. That's why many of us fail at change.

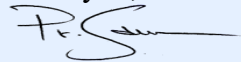
The late Pastor Peter Steinke was largely responsible for helping me to grow up as a man and as a pastor. In my late 20s, I was in his office monthly, and it wasn't pretty. Looking back, if I had been in his shoes, I probably would have given me the proverbial kick in the backside a lot sooner. What one thing stuck with me throughout the years? He said: "Thirty percent change is massive change." It is that expectation of 180% change that is simply unrealistic for most of us. Set small goals. Build on successes.

I learned another important lesson from conversations both with recovering alcoholics and from my own participation in Al-Anon, the support group for family members of alcoholics: "Wherever I go; there I am." Geographic change doesn't work if you are unwilling to seek change inside yourself. When you assume the problem lies outside yourself, that's partly right. But the deeper issue is what is it about you that put you in that relationship, job, or financial position that is causing you such problems? I think of people locating away from high taxes but, then, failing to see that they were the ones who voted for high taxes in the first place. To quote Barack Obama: "Elections have consequences." So, then, when it comes to relationships, my dear wife has often warned young girls and woman: "Marriage is not a mission field. If you go into it thinking you can help or even change someone, you are seriously wrong." If you aren't married, run from that relationship before you stupidly marry the wrong person.

Life is difficult. So, you went through pre-marriage preparation with a pastor or counselor. You married in the church. If you discover you have married an addict, what can you do about it? Well, first of all you must look at yourself. That's how I ended up in Al-Anon. No one put a gun to my head and made me choose wrongly. All the signs were there. I ignored them. Then, I began to enable the person in her addiction. So, first I had to take responsibility for my own life. Next, I stopped enabling, which actually made things worse, because my changing forced the other person to become responsible for her life. Ultimately, she chose to leave the marriage and mothering. Those were miserable years in some ways, but they were years of learning through more pain that I was responsible for my choices. Finally, I let go and let God be God. Only, then, was I ready to begin again. This year, Laura and I are in our 24th year of marriage. Our baby graduates high school with an Associate degree in May. These have been the best years of our lives, not without difficulty, not often easy, because we remain sinners. But a good life.

Because we were both married previously to alcoholics who didn't want to quit drinking (and you could substitute a number of addictions here), we decided to raise our daughter without any alcohol other than the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Love for our child drove that choice. If your spouse is willing to change with the help of God, will you love her or him enough to change with the help of God? Yes, someday, we will all be raised bodily in imperishable bodies as the Lord God originally intended before the rebellion in the Garden. Until then, we are in these old bodies that need to be disciplined by the Word of God. Which means, change begins with God's Word and our prayer to be conformed to it.

I love you,



Pastor Sam Zumwalt+



Church Council

At the regular Council meeting, the following was approved:

- By acceptance of Pastor Sam's monthly report, the following were approved for membership: Brenna Kelly, AJ & Patty Hemphill, Charlie Macaluso, and Danielle Bashaw.
- Receipt of the December 2025 distribution from the ELCA Foundation was apportioned as follows: Seminary Scholarship Fund, 10%; Endowment Salaries Subsidy Fund, 50%; SMELC Endowment Fund, 40%.
- By December 29, 2025, if cash flow is predicted to be positive for 2025, \$200 will be contributed to The American Association of Lutheran Churches along with any balance in the AALC Benevolence Fund (2-819572).
- The existing ACS On Demand accounting software will be replaced with the Realm software suite, a web-based platform from ACS Technologies, that offers a single solution for church management, financials and several other church-associated disciplines. Initial cost is \$499 with an approximate monthly expense of \$258.
- It was approved that \$33,000 be designated as housing allowance from Pr. Zumwalt's total 2026 defined compensation.

<u>Operating Fund: November 2025 Final</u>		
	Month	YTD
Revenues:	67,649.21	529,087.79
Expenses:	<u>46,627.35</u>	<u>545,755.69</u>
Income/ (Loss)	21,021.86	(16,667.90)



In a Stephen Ministry relationship, there are two people involved: the care receiver and the Stephen Minister, with God at the center.

The care receiver is the person who is facing a difficult situation, and who is open to the support of a Stephen Minister, with the assurance that whatever is shared will be treated with great respect and confidentiality.

The Stephen Minister has gone through 50 hours of training, and is committed to accompanying the care receiver through a difficult journey. The Stephen Minister listens without judging, honors confidentiality and keeps the care receiver in daily prayer. Many care receivers express deep gratitude for the prayers in their behalf.

If you, or someone you know, could benefit from the support of a Stephen Minister. Or, if you feel called to be trained to serve as a Stephen Minister, please call:

Ana María Jackson (910) 599-5622, Jon Lindsay (770)356-5093, Terry Miller (910)619-3742, Pastor Sam Zumwalt (910)791-4582 Ext 101.

Gifts to Honor and Remember

In Memory of Pr. Marvin Schedler, a gift to the Seminary Scholarship Fund by Matthew and Julie Schedler, Michael and Deborah Pressley, Bob Benoit, Charles and Darlene Schucker.

In Memory of Don Westmoreland, a gift to the General Fund by Nancy Westmoreland.

In Memory of Helen Adrian, a gift to the Seminary Scholarship Fund by Carol Comeskey, Charles and Darlene Schucker.



Welcome to all our new members who were received in December:

Brenna Kelley
Charlie Macaluso
AJ and Patty Hemphill



Congratulations to Michael and Tammy Strutt on the birth of Lilliana Theresa Strutt, born on November 9th. Proud grandparents are Darin and Karen Pope.



1	Isis Baldwin
1	Calvin Worrell
2	Steve Manor
2	Charles Schucker
3	Bev Miller
5	Bob Haack
6	Diane Rumsey
6	Ed Ludacer
6	Bryan Vanderwal
7	Barbara Teigland-Duff
7	Hannah Figgs
9	Bonnie Berg
9	Mike Harrington
10	Alan Hunsberger
11	Bill Baldwin
12	Donna Adams
13	Dorian Farmer

14	Lynette Hill
14	Alex Woodrum
14	Pastor Sam Zumwalt
15	Sandy Crenshaw
16	Teresa Hall
16	Lucy Hieronymus
17	Kandy Jones
19	Ana Maria Jackson
19	Ken Manning
20	Margaret Salow
20	Rick Fritz
22	Fred Jackson
23	Sheila Whitmeyer
25	Jack Kuske
26	Phyllis Weybrecht
27	Brigitte Walters
27	Aleah Eason
28	Michelle Kelley
29	Sally Burns
30	Zachary Bishton
30	Riley Crouch
31	Loretta Brehm



1	Craig and Beth Hales
4	Ken and Irene Shea
8	Charles and Darlene Schucker
9	Joe and Mary Huppmann
20	Ken and Jenny Manning
28	Keith and Lynette Farmer



Our Christian sympathy is extended to...

The family of Jean Hoehler

Jane Dove on the death of Willard Dove

Pr. Carl and Joan Voges on the death of Pr. Carl's brother, David Voges

The family of Tanya Moore

Dave and Peggy Davis on the death of Dave's brother-in-law, William Fultz

Norma Troutman and family on the death of Larry Troutman

Sondra Tullous and family on the death of her grandson, Alec Chambers

The family of Susanna Amato

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
Betty LaFave
Bev Miller
Don Butzin
Peggy Davis
Steve Weidman
Frank and Marti Felter

Sally Birnstein
Ron Salow
Michael Strutt
Ed Ludacer
Carolyn Hooker
Sheila Leach
Dennis Hall
Dwight Crim
Jenny Painter
Rebecca Seip
Lynette Farmer
Bill Glisson
Todd and Tracy Darnell
Erika Braje
Howard and Lani Beuerman
Killian Campos
Doris Isaacs

Joy Shaver
Pr. Carl Voges
Joe Huppmann
Brigitte Walters
Alex Schwartz
Charlotte Thompson
Patty Macino
Gabie Walters
Laurie Tobin
Nancy Westmoreland
Sondra Tullous
Tina Medlin
Bev and Alan Hunsberger
Helen Knoll
Beth Jarrott
Ron Asmus

FRIENDS/FAMILY OF MEMBERS

Amie Knauer
David Schwartz
Megan McKinney
Rev. Dr. William White
Tom Seip
Fred Peck
Bill Pearson
Lloyd Moore
Krista Boeger
Albert Rossetti
John Jones
Janet Nix
Scott Howl
Vic Weidman
Angie Barlow
Matthew Hall
Chuck Teigland
Gretchen Zunich
Natalie Merck
Jeremy McCollum

Jean Brooks
Frank Britton
Tim Schedler
Jill Miller
Cat Garcia Miller
Gene Przybranowski
Luke
Elena Andrades
Ruth Schucker
Amy Johnston
Mary Pat Jones
Bonnie Gaspari
Vance and Ann Alphin
Natalie Pressley
Robert Zenz
Virginia Mough
Russ Kuhn
Deisy Epley
Lisa Talmage
Paulette Myers

Lorraine Fritz
Jennifer Boandl
David Pearson
Betty Mowrey
Carol Clarke
Janice Hilliard
Fiona Svastics
Pr. Joe Christina
Jerry Sundberg
Bill White
David Searle
Luke Corbin
Judy Constantino
Emily Smith
Carol Roberts
Jean Langrell
Franklin Alvarez
Penelope Wamboldt

REMEMBER OUR HOMEBOUND MEMBERS:

Elsie Cates
Jane Dove

Ruthann Getsinger
Pat Mahl

Nancy Miller

Those Serving in January 2026

ALTAR GUILD

January 3-4

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

January 6 Epiphany

12:00

January 10-11

6:00
8:30 Cathy Aleksandravicius
11:00

January 17-18

6:00 Beth Hales
8:30 Karen Ruefle
11:00

January 24-25

6:00 Beth Hales
8:30 Karen Ruefle
11:00

GREETERS

January 3-4

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

January 6 Epiphany

12:00

January 10-11

6:00
8:30 Cathy Aleksandravicius
11:00

January 17-18

6:00
8:30
11:00

January 24-25

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

USHERS

January 3-4

6:00
8:30
11:00

January 6 Epiphany

12:00

January 10-11

6:00
8:30
11:00

January 17-18

6:00
8:30
11:00

January 24-25

6:00
8:30
11:00

LECTORS

January 3-4

6:00 Sandy O'Donnell
8:30 Sue Mowrey
11:00 Bev Miller

January 6 Epiphany

12:00

January 10-11

6:00 Alan Richey
8:30 Sheila Whitmeyer
11:00 Bev Miller

January 17-18

6:00
8:30 Eric Beuerman
11:00 Patty Hemphill

January 24-25

6:00
8:30 Steve Manor
11:00 Lynette Farmer

ACOLYTES and CRUCIFERS

January 3-4

6:00
8:30
11:00

January 6 Epiphany

12:00

January 10-11

6:00
8:30
11:00

January 17-18

6:00
8:30
11:00 Irene Glaeser

January 24-25

6:00
8:30
11:00

ALTAR FLOWERS

January 4

Janet and Denis Hall
Ken and Irene Shea

January 11

Bev and Alan Hunsberger
Joe and Diane Rumsey

January 18

Scott and Rhonda Mough
Karen Roberts and Becky Howard

January 25

Sheila Whitmeyer
Butch and Karen Ruefle

HOSPICE MEAL

January 2 - Judi Funke

January 23 - Ashley & Christie Cribb

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
				1 New Year's Day Church Office closed 7:00 Midtown AA	2 Hospice Meal - Judi Funke	3 6:00 Eucharist
4 2nd Sunday of Christmas 8:30 Eucharist 11:00 Eucharist 12:30 Executive Team 4:00 MS Youth 6:00 HS Youth	5 9:00 Counting Team 12:00 Conversations 4:00 CFA Basketball 6:00 Evening Prayer 6:00 Club W Volleyball 7:00 Midtown AA 7:00 Harbour Towne Band rehearsal	6 Epiphany 10:00 Prayer Group 12:00 Eucharist 3:45 WCA Basketball 5:30 Joyful Noise 6:00 Girl Scouts 1327 6:30 Stephen Ministry	7 8:30 Men's Bible Study 12:00 Healing Euch. 6:00 Crossways 6:00 Handbells 7:00 Confirmation 7:00 Adult Choir	8 10:00 Crossways 10:00 Quilt Ministry 4:00 CFA Basketball 6:00 Take Down Nave Decorations 6:00 Club W Volleyball 7:00 Midtown AA	9 3:45 WCA Basketball	10 1:00 Girl Scout Cookie Rally 6:00 Eucharist
11 Baptism of Our Lord 8:30 Eucharist (C) 9:45 Sunday School 11:00 Eucharist 12:30 Grief Support 12:30 Young Adults 4:00 MS Youth 6:00 HS Youth	12 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	13 10:00 Staff Meeting 10:00 Prayer Group 10:00 Faith Circle 3:45 WCA Basketball 5:30 Girl Scouts 354 6:00 Club W Volleyball	14 8:30 Men's Bible Study 12:00 Healing Euch. 6:00 Crossways 6:00 Handbells 7:00 Confirmation 7:00 Adult Choir	15 10:00 Crossways 10:00 Quilt Ministry 4:00 CFA Basketball 6:00 Club W Volleyball 7:00 Midtown AA	16 3:45 WCA Basketball	17 9:00 Council Retreat 6:00 Eucharist; Council Installation
18 2nd Sunday after Epiphany Council Installation 8:30 Eucharist 9:45 Sunday School 11:00 Eucharist 12:30 Young Adults BBQ Fundraiser 4:00 MS Youth 6:00 HS Youth	19 MLK, Jr. Day Church Office closed 12:00 Conversations 6:00 Evening Prayer 7:00 Midtown AA 7:00 Harbour Towne Band rehearsal	20 9:00 Counting Team 10:00 Staff Meeting 10:00 Prayer Group 3:45 WCA Basketball 5:30 Joyful Noise 6:00 Girl Scouts 1327 6:30 Stephen Ministry	21 8:30 Men's Bible Study 12:00 Healing Euch. 6:00 Crossways 6:00 Handbells 7:00 Confirmation 7:00 Adult Choir	22 10:00 Crossways 10:00 Quilt Ministry 11:30 OWL's Luncheon 4:00 CFA Basketball 6:00 Club W Volleyball 7:00 Midtown AA	23 Hospice Meal - Ashley and Christie Cribb 3:45 WCA Basketball	24 6:00 Eucharist
25 3rd Sunday after Epiphany 8:30 Eucharist (C) 9:45 Sunday School 11:00 Eucharist 12:30 Young Adults 4:00 MS Youth 6:00 HS Youth	26 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	27 10:00 Staff Meeting 10:00 Prayer Group 5:00 Club W Volleyball 5:30 Girl Scouts 354	28 8:30 Men's Bible Study 12:00 Healing Euch. 6:00 Crossways 6:00 Handbells 7:00 Confirmation 7:00 Adult Choir	29 10:00 Crossways 10:00 Quilt Ministry 4:00 CFA Basketball 6:00 Club W Volleyball 7:00 Midtown AA	30 3:45 WCA Basketball 7:00 Family Fun Night	31 6:00 Eucharist

Upcoming Worship and Events

January 31-February 1 - Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, Eucharists 6:00 pm, 8:30 am and 11:00 am
February 2 - Evening Prayer, 6:00 pm
February 4 - Midweek Healing Eucharist, 12:00 pm
February 7-8 - Fifth Sunday after Epiphany 6:00 pm, 8:30 am (Contemporary) and 11:00 am
February 9 - Evening Prayer, 6:00 pm
February 11 - Midweek Healing Eucharist, 12:00 pm
February 13 - Family Valentine's Day Dinner, 6:00 pm
February 14 - Parents Night Out, 3:00 pm
February 14-15 - Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, Eucharists 6:00 pm, 8:30 am and 11:00 am
February 16 - Evening Prayer, 6:00 pm
February 17 - Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, 5:00 pm
February 18 - Ash Wednesday Eucharist, 12:00 pm and 7:00 pm
February 21 - Lenten Prayer Retreat with Dr. John Pless, 8:30 am
February 21-22 - First Sunday in Lent, Eucharists 6:00 pm, 8:30 am (Contemporary) and 11:00 am
February 23 - Evening Prayer, 6:00 pm
February 25 - Midweek Lenten Eucharist, 12:00 pm; Lenten Evening Prayer, 7:00 pm
February 28-March 1 - Second Sunday in Lent, Eucharists 6:00 pm, 8:30 am and 11:00 am

*Want to give online to St. Matthew's?
Please open the QR code with your phone's camera.*

