

# January Newsletter

## St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

### CULTIVATING HOPE

REV. ROB MEROLA

Dear Friends,

Hope comes in many forms and many places. We expect to find hope in Scripture. But in a seed catalog? Perhaps not.

And yet that is precisely what is found there. A seed catalog is nothing so much as a collection of occasions to hope. It invites us to see the future and to do so in such vivid detail that it is replete with color, scent, and taste. We envision exactly what we will be doing at specific times and in specific places and already begin to relish the results of doing them.

I am thinking now of a tomato, although it could just as easily be a flower, a squash, or a pepper. It is round and smooth, so red it verges on crimson, so shiny I can almost see myself in it. And the taste... is this part of what it means for heaven to come to earth? I see myself planting it in the spring, caring for it throughout the summer, and then eating fresh tomatoes well into the fall, maybe even to Thanksgiving if we are fortunate. (This year we have a ripe tomato at Christmas!)

Hope does not come automatically or unbidden. It takes time and effort and focused intention to cultivate. Many are the hours spent pouring over seed catalogs, visualizing the profound impact of their contents, and laying plans to make that vision a reality. Those can be some of the most delicious moments of a day; no matter how dark and cold and dreary a winter day may be, the promise of that summer tomato never fails to make it bright.

What are your hopes for 2023? What are you imagining for yourself, your loved ones, and our world? How are you cultivating these hopes, building plans to make them be?

At St. Matthew's, we hope to be an essential part of your hopes in 2023. We believe we have so much to offer, so many reasons to be encouraged, so much power both to make hopes real and to protect hopes from the assaults which cause so many to lose their hope and so to lose their dreams as well.

I look forward to 2023 with great hope. I hope you do too. In fact, I hope we'll hope together—and then be amazed and delighted together as God exceeds them. Like a ripe tomato right off the vine, it is not something you want to miss.

With much love and affection,  
Rob+



*"Hope does not come automatically or unbidden. It takes time and effort and focused intention to cultivate."*



### THIS ISSUE:

- Sermon Series
- Chili Cook Off
- Student Connections
- Send off for Rev. Mary Margaret

# Ways to Connect

**Faith Factory for Kids**  
Sundays at 9:30 AM

**Donuts & Discovery - Middle & High School Students**  
Sundays at 10:30 AM

**Young Professionals (YoPros)**  
2nd/4th Sundays at 12:30 PM  
Email: Caitlin.Dronfield@stmtts.org

**Compline**  
Monday - Friday at 8:00 PM  
Facebook Live: [stmtts.org/live](https://www.stmtts.org/live)

**Social Time with Candace**  
Mondays at 12 PM  
Zoom Meeting ID: 681-861-620

**Social Time with Kevin**  
Mondays at 8:30 PM on Zoom  
Email Kevin Fletcher: [Kevin@stmtts.org](mailto:Kevin@stmtts.org)

**WatCh (Wednesdays at Church)**  
Wednesdays at 7 PM

**Men's Group**  
Saturdays at 8:00 AM  
Email Linden: [Linden@stmtts.org](mailto:Linden@stmtts.org)

JOIN US FOR **WORSHIP** **SUNDAYS AT 8, 9:30 & 11 AM**  
In-person and Online  
[stmtts.org/services](https://www.stmtts.org/services)

**New Year**

JOIN US FOR  
NEW YEAR'S DAY SERVICES

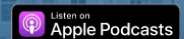
**SUNDAY, JANUARY 1ST**  
**8, 9:30 & 11 AM**



St. Matthew's Episcopal Church  
**MESSAGE ON THE GO**

CHECK OUT OUR  
**WEEKLY PODCAST**

Listen at  
[stmtts.org/podcast](https://www.stmtts.org/podcast)



The weekly audio podcast for St. Matthew's Episcopal Church. Our hope is that this podcast will help you To Know and Share God's Love... and then some.

# Events & Save the Dates

## JANUARY

Tuesdays - Backpack Buddies Packing at noon

Wednesdays - WatCh at 7 PM - Bible Discovery

Sundays at 10:30 Donuts and Discovery

Sun., Jan. 1st - Services at 8, 9:30 & 11 AM

Sun., Jan. 1st - Kids New Years Games at 10:30 AM

Sun. Jan. 8th - Three Kings Day Games at 10:30 AM

Sun., Jan. 8th - Farewell Luncheon to Rev. Mary Margaret

Fri., Jan. 13th - Student Connections Movie Night

Sun., Jan 15th - Kids Movie at 10:30 AM

Sun., Jan. 22nd - Chili Cook-off!

Sun. Jan, 29th - Kids Lego Party at 10:30 AM

Sun., Jan. 29th - Newcomers Reception at 3 PM

## FEBRUARY

Tuesdays - Backpack Buddies Packing at noon

Wednesdays - Wednesdays at Church



FOR INDIVIDUAL EVENT DETAILS, VISIT [STMTTS.ORG/EVENTS](http://STMTTS.ORG/EVENTS)

# January at St. Matt's

January

**WATCH  
WEDNESDAYS  
AT CHURCH**

Have you ever had questions about the Bible? Is it really any different than any other book? How much of it can we believe? Isn't it full of contradictions? What's the best way to actually read the Bible?

For the New Year, we thought we'd start with questions like these as we consider what the Bible has to offer 21st century human beings living in a very different world than the one in which it was written.

**Jan 4: What is the Bible?**

**Jan 11: What is the Bible's**

**authority? Is the Bible ever wrong?**

**Jan 18: How do I read the Bible?**

**Jan 25: Practical principles to better understand the Bible**

*Send Off Celebration*  
for

**REV. MARY MARGARET**

**Sunday, January 8th at 12 PM**

**Join us as we wish a fond farewell to our beloved, Rev. Mary Margaret**

Please join us on Sunday, January 8th, at 12 noon, as we celebrate her ministry. Additional ways to share in wishing her a fond farewell include the following:

- Email a photo of you and/or your family, along with a kind message to Heidi Lathrop (HLathrop@me.com) by January 1, 2023. Submissions will be made into a photo book given to her when she departs.
- Contact Heidi Lathrop at HLathrop@me.com if you'd like to assist with the luncheon on January 8, 2023.
- Bring a card to the luncheon, or mail a card to the church office, expressing your thankfulness for her ministry. It is also customary to include a financial gift as a tangible expression of our appreciation. If you'd like to include a check, please make it payable directly to Mary Margaret.

**MAKE  
SOMEDAY  
TODAY**

## SERMON SERIES

It's been said that "Someday" sentences lead people to live small lives through unfulfilled wishes and dreams. It rationalizes the kind of delay and inaction that leads people to wait until it's too late. In this series on Jan. 15, 22, & 29 we'll be looking for those insights and next steps that help us avoid the number one source of regret in people's lives.

**CHILI &  
CORNBREAD  
COOK OFF**

## CHILI COOK OFF

**SUNDAY, JAN. 22ND  
BETWEEN THE 9:30 & 11 AM  
SERVICES**

Bring your favorite chili & cornbread and come vote to see whose chili reigns supreme!

[stmtts.org/chili](http://stmtts.org/chili)

NEWCOMER'S

**RECEPTION**

## NEWCOMERS RECEPTION

**SUNDAY, JAN. 29 TH at 3 PM**

New to St. Matt's or want to learn more? Join us at the home of Justin & Sara Warnick for conversation and treats. Please email the church office for directions:

[office@stmtts.org](mailto:office@stmtts.org)

# January Kids Events



a.k.a. Sunday School...  
Sometimes messy, always fun  
lessons on Faith!



Faith Factory returns  
starting January 8th!

## COFFEE HOUR KIDS

Sundays between the 9:30 and 11 am services. Games and events for kids while parents enjoy fellowship and a cup of coffee or two!

SUN  
JAN 1

### NEW YEARS GAMES

Minute to Win It Wacky Games!  
Join us for games and New Years fun!

SUN  
JAN 22

### CHILI COOK OFF!

Bring your favorite chili and/or  
cornbread and come vote to see  
whose chili reigns supreme!

SUN  
JAN 8

### THREE KINGS DAY!

Three Kings Day Celebration  
Join us to celebrate Three Kings Day!

SUN  
JAN 29

### LEGO PARTY!

Brick building fun  
Come and create some  
Lego masterpieces!

SUN  
JAN 15

### DISNEY'S STRANGE WORLD

Join us to watch Disney's new  
movie Strange World!

[stmmts.org/events](http://stmmts.org/events)



# January Student Connections



## DINNER & A MOVIE NIGHT

WHO: Middle & High School Students  
WHAT: Games, Dinner a Movie & YOU!  
WHERE: St. Matthew's Parish Hall  
WHEN: Friday, January 13th  
TIME: 6:00 - 10:00 PM

Questions? Contact Ron or Kassidy at  
[journey@stmmts.org](mailto:journey@stmmts.org)

## DONUTS & DISCOVERY



## DONUTS & DISCOVERY SUNDAYS AT 10:30 AM CLASSROOM 4

Middle & High School Discussion Group. Join us  
Sundays at 10:30 AM for donuts and a discussion  
on "THAT'S IN THERE?" A look into some of the  
weirdest and most surprising things you didn't  
know were in the Bible.

Join Genevieve Zetlan in Room 3 for 30 minutes  
of discussion (and donuts!)



## POPCORN & CHOPSTICKS?



To find out more, contact:  
[journey@stmmts.org](mailto:journey@stmmts.org)

# Community Outreach

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



## NEW YEARS RESOLUTION? TRY A BE THE CHANGE BIN

In the twelve schools in Sterling that St. Matthew's serves, there are over 4,800 children who meet the definition of Economically Disadvantaged - a designation that means a student qualifies for the federally subsidized meals program, which means they are at or near poverty levels. Each of these schools has started food pantries on-site to support the needs of these families.

**How can you Be the Change in your area? Here are a few options:**

- Become a Donation Drop off point - Add a bin to your front step and tell your neighbors about supporting school food pantries. Download signs & flyers to hang by your bin and notify your neighbors.
- Pick up a few of the most frequently needed items or something from our What we need Wednesday list and drop them off at the church on Tues/Thurs from 8 am - 4 pm or on Sundays from 8 am - 12 pm.
- Share our WHAT WE NEED WEDNESDAY posts with friends on social media.

**LEARN MORE:**

[stmtts.org/BeTheChange](http://stmtts.org/BeTheChange)

I'd like to thank Jennifer Bellamy, Wilma Sargent and Heidi Lathrop for volunteering their enthusiasm, time and talents to make the Giving Tree event a success. Without these volunteers and our school liaisons (stay tuned for more to come about them!), the Giving Tree operation would not have been the success that it was. With them (and our parishioners), we donated gifts for 34 local families and over 400 items to Mobile Hope. It takes leaders like these to make St. Matt's good work happen.

-Kristin Drummond, Outreach

## BACKPACK BUDDIES

Through our Backpack Buddies program, we currently provide support to dozens of local children in need. Each child receives a bag filled with six meals, snacks and milk each weekend during the school year.

**Ways you can help:**

- Visit [stmtts.org/give](http://stmtts.org/give) to make a financial gift
- Drop off food donations: Tues/Thurs 8-4, Mon/Wed 12-4 or on Sundays.
- Help pack - Group Packing on Tuesdays at noon and the first Sunday of the month during Coffee Hour! (No packing first Sunday in January)

Contact Hilary Hultman-Lee for more details:  
[HHLlearning@gmail.com](mailto:HHLlearning@gmail.com)