

December Newsletter

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church



Experience Advent



EXPERIENCE ADVENT WEDNESDAYS AT 7 PM

This Advent, as we prepare ourselves for the birth of Jesus, let us remember the importance of the Advent wreath.

Each Wednesday in Advent, we invite you to join us at 7 PM. Together we will explore the meaning behind each of the four Advent candles: hope, peace, joy and love.

ADVENT
DEVOTIONAL

PREPARE HIM ROOM

ADVENT REFLECTIONS ON WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN GOD SHOWS UP

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS

Christmas can be about stress and parties and consumption, but it can also be about love and peace. It can be about waiting with longing for all to be well. It can be about waiting with eager expectation for joy.

We invite you to walk through the season of Advent with this devotional "Prepare Him Room" by Award-winning author, Amy Julia Becker.

Copies can be picked up by the front doors of the sanctuary beginning Sunday, Nov. 26th.

WILL YOU MAKE ROOM IN YOUR HEART?

REV. ROB MEROLA, RECTOR

What kind of Christmas do you want to have this year?

It could be the most superficial of holidays, Christmas in name only, a secular celebration of nothing so much as our gross consumption.

It could be a stressful holiday, where we are reminded of family tensions, relational strife, or a lack of satisfying relationships in which we feel terribly alone.

It could be a discouraging holiday, where thoughts and conversations turn to the state of the world and the many challenges before us.

It could be a selfish holiday, in which we think only about our family and enjoying our own luxurious position in life when so many people, even right here in our own community, simply do not have enough.

Or it could be a deeply and profoundly spiritual time that begins with an awareness of God's presence with us, and God's goodness toward us. In this we realize how deeply we are loved, and so rather than using people to get what we don't have, we can give love freely from our fullness.

Will you make room in your heart so that Christmas can be a season filled with joy and laughter, generosity and genuine warmth, and hope and encouragement for all? Our celebrations can enhance our sense of togetherness, uniting beyond our insular family to our larger human family, and letting us feel anew our bonds across time and space with those we love but do not see.

The choice is yours, but it really is a choice. And it is a choice that is being shaped right here, right now.

Our Christmas, whatever it looks like, doesn't just happen. We shape it by what we do or do not do. My point is that it is worth thinking with great intentionality right now about what kind of Christmas we want to have, and then actively working to make it so. We'd love to work with you, and particularly if it is that last choice that you desire, we have a lot to offer. Whether it is our Wednesday night Advent experience, Sunday services designed to help us prepare for Christmas, outreach opportunities, our engaging Christmas services themselves, or one of the many fun activities we have planned. We are working hard to do our part in making sure that we all have a Christmas that is truly merry and bright.

I can't wait to celebrate it with you!

Warmly,
Rob+

THIS ISSUE:

- Christmas Services
- December Events
- Thanksgiving Bag Totals
- Giving Tree

WAYS TO CONNECT

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP Sundays at 8, 9:30 & 11 AM

Faith Factory

Age 4 - Gr. 2 | Classroom 3
Sundays at 9:30 AM

Faith Factory

Gr. 3 - 5 | Classroom 1 & 2
Sundays at 9:30 AM

Faith Factory Unplugged

Gr. 6 - 8 | Classroom 4
Sundays at 9:30 AM

Donuts & Discovery with Ben

Gr. 6 - 12 | Classroom 1
Sundays at 10:30 AM

Young Professionals (YoPros)

1st & 3rd Sundays at 12:30 PM
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

Bread of Life Study Group

Mondays at 7:00 PM
Darrell@stmtts.org

Wednesday Bible Study

Wednesdays at 7:00 PM
office@stmtts.org

Men's Group

Saturdays at 8:00 AM
Contact MensGroup@stmtts.org

SAVE THE DATES

DECEMBER

Sundays - Pageant Rehearsals (Ages 3 - 8th grade) at 9:30 AM
Sundays - Donuts & Discovery with Ben (6th - 12th grade) at 10:30 AM
Mondays - Bread of Life Co-ed Book Group 7 PM
Tuesdays in November - HRTS Backpack Buddies Packing at 12 PM
Wednesdays - Advent Experience 7 PM (No meeting Dec. 27th)
Thursdays - Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM
Sunday, Dec. 3rd - Advent Begins! Advent Wreath Making
Sunday, Dec. 10th - Backpack Buddies Packing during coffee hour
Sunday, Dec. 10th - Christmas Card Making
Sunday, Dec. 17th - Christmas Sweater & Hot Cocoa Bar Sunday!
Sunday, Dec. 24th - Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve Services:

8 AM - Advent IV Service
11 AM - Christmas Pageant
8 PM - Festival Service with Band
11 PM - Candlelight Service with Choir

Christmas Day Service:

10 AM - Communion Service

JANUARY

Sundays - Faith Factory (Age 4 - 5th grade) at 9:30 AM
Sundays - Faith Factory Unplugged (6 - 8th grade) at 9:30 AM
Sundays - Donuts & Discovery with Ben (6th - 12th grade) at 10:30 AM
Mondays - Bread of Life Co-ed Book Group 7 PM
Tuesdays - HRTS Backpack Buddies Packing at 12 PM
Wednesdays - Bible Study 7 PM
Thursdays - Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM
Sunday, Jan. 7th - Backpack Buddies Packing during coffee hour

For individual event details, visit [stmtts.org/events](https://www.stmtts.org/events)



TREE OF LIGHTS & OUTDOOR NATIVITY

Add St. Matthew's to your annual Holiday Light sight-seeing list. Beginning December 1st, drive-by to see the beautiful tree of lights and Nativity lovingly displayed by our Men's Group.

Outreach



SPONSOR A CHILD THIS CHRISTMAS

Hunger shouldn't have a seat at the holiday table.

Help HRTS reach their goal of sponsoring 100 Backpack Buddies children this Christmas.

How can you help?

1. Sponsor a child! Your recurring donation of \$40 a month, guarantees a child six meals every weekend.
2. Follow HRTS on Facebook and Instagram @hungerresponse
3. Spread the word! Share information about HRTS with a friend or family member

SCAN HERE TO SPONSOR A CHILD



or visit: sterlinghelp.org/give

SPONSORING A CHILD IN HONOR OF A TEACHER OR LOVED ONE MAKES A GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFT!

Download a card to share your generous donation.

Printed cards are available in the church office, contact office@stmtts.org to pick one up.



GIVING TREE 2023

Our annual Giving Tree will be up beginning Sunday, November 19th for those interested in adopting a family or picking up single items.

THE TREE WILL BE UP BEGINNING NOV. 19TH, DROP OFF GIFTS ON OR BEFORE DEC. 10TH

stmtts.org/GivingTree

THANK YOU FOR MAKING ROOM

This fall, St. Matthew's was contacted by our friends at Loudoun Cares seeking emergency assistance for a young single mother with two children, and her young niece.



The four of them were just able to move into an affordable dwelling unit through a county program, but lacked the funds for basic necessities.

Because you were able to MAKE ROOM, your generosity provided new sheets for each of the three children, plus laundry detergent, toothbrushes, deodorant, and more. They are happily getting settled in their new home.

Events



ADVENT SERMON SERIES

SUNDAY, DEC. 3, 10 & 17

Join us every Sunday in Advent for a sermon series titled: Make Room. Making Room in our hearts for Jesus this Christmas.



ADVENT WREATH MAKING

SUNDAY, DEC. 3RD

Join us in the Parish Hall between the 9:30 & 11 AM services to create a beautiful Advent wreath to take home and celebrate the Advent season.



CHRISTMAS CARD MAKING

SUNDAY, DEC. 10TH

Join us in the Parish Hall between the 9:30 & 11 AM services and create some hand-made cards. Supplies provided.



PARISH WORK DAY

PARISH WORK DAY

SATURDAY, DEC. 16TH 9AM - 12 PM

Help prepare the church for Christmas! We have inside jobs and outside jobs - options for all ability levels. Please join us for any amount of time you can! Donuts and coffee will be served!



CHRISTMAS SWEATER & HOT COCOA BAR SUNDAY

SUNDAY, DEC. 17TH

Wear your favorite Christmas Sweater and join us for coffee hour between the 9:30 & 11 AM services for photo ops and a hot cocoa bar!



SCAVENGER HUNT

SATURDAY, DEC. 16TH 3 - 5:30 PM

Grab your family, or a team of friends and hop in the car! Together you will race to find Christmas sights and sounds in the Sterling area and meet back at St. Matt's at 5 PM for holiday treats and see who the winning team is!

Learn more: stmmts.org/HolidayRace



The Angels of Christmas

HEARING GOD'S VOICE IN ADVENT

BREAD OF LIFE CO-ED BOOK GROUP

MONDAYS AT 7 PM

Our Bread of Life group will be reading a new book during Advent. It is THE ANGELS OF CHRISTMAS, by Susan Robb. The book studies the four visits by angels that are associated with the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. All are welcome.



CHRISTMAS FLOWER DEDICATIONS

FLOWER DEDICATIONS

Dedications for flowers are welcome to remember loved ones, honor birthdays, anniversaries, baptisms, or any special occasion. Due by Dec. 17th.

stmmts.org/Flowers



SEND US YOUR CHRISTMAS CARDS!

We love seeing your holiday cards each year, send us your cards and we'll display them for all to see on the Parish Hall community board.

For more events and details, visit stmmts.org/events



make room This Christmas

with St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

Christmas Eve Services

Sunday, December 24th

8 AM Advent IV Peaceful Worship

Join us for a quiet, contemplative worship service celebrating the fourth Sunday of Advent.

11 AM Christmas Pageant

What better way to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ than through the storytelling of children? This service is a lighthearted telling of the nativity story brought to you by the children and youth of Saint Matthew's. This is a tradition our Sterling community looks forward to every year and is sure to delight all ages. Join us and bring the whole family for this favorite kid-friendly Christmas Eve service that also includes holy communion.

8 PM Festival Christmas Eve Service with Band

Join us at 8 pm on Christmas Eve for a vibrant celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. This service will include holy communion and our lively band promises to lift your spirits as we worship the coming of the King.

11 PM Classic Candlelight Christmas Eve Service with Choir

One of the most popular Christmas traditions is the Christmas Eve Candlelight service, reminding us how Jesus brought light into our broken world and that His light is able to spread through all of us. Join us for this classic holy communion service with beautiful music including choir, strings, and woodwinds.

Christmas Day

Monday, December 25th, 10 AM Communion Service



stmtts.org/Christmas

Children & Youth



THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS NATIVITY PLAY

This Christmas, experience the retelling of the nativity story as only children can do. The Story of Christmas Nativity Play tells the traditional Bible-based nativity story, with music, jokes and all the joy that children bring to the Christmas season.

AGES: Kids ages 3 through Middle School
COST: Free to participate!

REHEARSALS

- Sun. 11/26 at 10:30 AM - Read through with speaking roles only
- Sun. 12/3, 12/10, 12/17 - 9:30 - 10:45 AM - Classrooms 1&2
- Sat. 12/23 - 3:00 PM - Parish Hall Dress Rehearsal

PERFORMANCE:

Sunday, December 24th at 11 AM, arrive at 10 AM for costumes

REGISTER stmmts.org/pageant



YOUTH GROUP DECEMBER EVENTS

DONUTS & DISCOVERY

Sundays at 10:30 AM in Classroom 1

Middle & High School youth are invited for donuts & faith discussions.

Starting Dec. 1st we will begin a new series:

STARTING POINT

Everything has a beginning. Every person, every idea, every journey starts somewhere. Whether it's one small step in a new direction or a major event, from that point forward nothing is ever the same. It's not always comfortable. It's not always easy. But it's a start

YOUTH OUTING AT LAUNCH TRAMPOLINE PARK

Saturday, December 9th | Time 3:30 PM - 6PM

Trampolines, go-karts, games and more. Middle & High School youth are invited to join Ben for an afternoon of fun at Launch Trampoline Park in Herndon. Meeting at the church by 3:30 PM for carpooling.

YOUTH GROUP ESCAPE ROOM + LOCK-IN

Sunday, December 28th | Meeting Time 3:30 PM

Join Ben & Kassidy for an escape room at Escapology followed by a lock-in during winter break. Meeting at the church for carpooling to the escape room.

RSVP at stmmts.org/youth-events

YOUTH GROUP COMMUNICATIONS

SCAN
ME!



Are you in St. Matt's Youth Group or a parent of a Middle or High School student? Join the St. Matt's Youth Group Band App for updates, group chat, event reminders, and more.



or use the web: <https://band.us/home>

1. Download the app
2. Scan the invitation QR code above
3. Watch the video at the QR code below for quick tips and tricks!

BAND APP
QUICK START VIDEO

