

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

KARA LAUGHLIN, SEMINARIAN

Grace and Peace to you, people of St. Matthew's!

It seems to me that the season of Lent is a little bit like the Hokey Pokey. We choose a discipline, whether it's giving something up or starting something new, we get all shook up, and then we turn ourselves around. That's what the word repent means: *to turn around or return*.

If you have a negative reaction to the word repentance, I invite you to play *Repent!* with a group of children. Two adults stand on opposite sides of the room. The kids' goal is to tag an adult. The adults' goal is to stand still and not get tagged. They do this by yelling "Repent" when a kid gets too close. The kids' goal is to tag an adult. But every time—EVERY time—a kid hears the word repent, they have to turn and run toward the other adult. There is a LOT of turning around and a lot of laughter. This is the point: turning our lives back toward God takes energy, but it's also a source of great joy.

For a time, when our kids were small my family didn't have a church where we felt at home. We wanted to be going to church, but trying to get three small kids up and out the door was an effort that felt insurmountable. We had a church we went to sometimes, but we didn't feel like we belonged.

But we used Advent and Lent to try to become regular church-goers again. And then, after Christmas or Easter had come, something would come up, and we'd skip a Sunday. One would turn into two, and before we knew it, we had spent a month-and-a-half of Sundays reading the paper in our pajamas, and we were too embarrassed to go back.

Twice a year, our family took the opportunity to try again. Then one year later, I realized we'd made it from Advent to Lent without a break, and for me, it felt like an accomplishment. Then we made it back to Advent—a whole year of regular church attendance!

What was it about that year that made it different? Part of it was showing up. Showing up one Sunday made it easier to show up again and again. The other part was the internal turn-around that we experienced sitting in those pews every week.



We stopped thinking of what we wanted to get out of church and started to put ourselves INTO church, just like the hokey pokey:

- We started giving regularly.
- We stayed for coffee hour after the service.
- We came to events outside of Sunday mornings.

As we put ourselves in, we allowed our lives to get a little shaken up, and then we turned around. The thing about turning yourself around is, you see things from a different point of view. We thought we should wait until we felt invested to get involved, but it was the other way around: **getting involved made us feel invested.**

February 13th is a big day in the life of St. Matthew's. We will invest our time and attention in our annual meeting. We'll invest in our neighbors and our church family at the pancake supper. And then, on Ash Wednesday/Valentine's Day, we have a Lenten opportunity to change direction, change perspective, and invest in God's vision in ways we might not have tried before.

There are many ways to get invested in the community at St. Matthews. Praying regularly for this community is one way. Showing up to new events is another. We can give money or time in a new area of ministry.

Because the most fun part of the hokey pokey comes at the end when we throw our whole selves in. And isn't that what it's all about?

Yours in peace and joy,
Kara

THIS ISSUE:

- Annual Meeting Details
- Lent Resources
- Easter Bags & more



FEBRUARY AT ST. MATT'S

MARCH

SAVE THE DATES

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|--|--|--|---------------------------------|--|---|
| <p>SUNDAYS Services at 8, 9:30 & 11 AM Faith Factory (Age 4 - Gr. 5) & FF Unplugged (Gr. 6-8) at 9:30 AM Donuts & Discovery (Gr. 6-12) at 10:30 AM</p> <p>WEEKDAY EVENINGS Compline at 8 PM online: stmtts.org/live</p> | | | | 1 Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM | 2 | 3 Men's Group 8 AM |
| 4 BACKPACK BUDDIES PACKING DURING COFFEE HOUR | 5 Zoom Social Time with Candace at 12 PM Mtg ID: 681-861-620 Bread of Life Book Group 7 PM | 6 HRTS Backpack Buddies Packing 12 PM Sandwich Generation 7:30 PM | 7 Wednesday Bible Study 7 PM | 8 Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM | 9 | 10 Men's Group 8 AM Women's Brunch & Small Groups 9 AM |
| 11 JERSEY DAY GET READY FOR THE "BIG GAME" AND COME TO CHURCH IN YOUR FAVORITE SPORTS GEAR! | 12 Zoom Social Time with Candace at 12 PM Mtg ID: 681-861-620 Bread of Life Book Group 7 PM | 13 HRTS Backpack Buddies Packing 12 PM Pancake Supper & Annual Mtg. 5:30 - 8 PM | 14 Ash Wednesday Services at 6AM, 12PM & 7PM Lent Begins | 15 Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM | 16 | 17 Men's Group 8 AM |
| 18 LENT RECIPE SWAP & SURVIVAL KITS AT COFFEE HOUR | 19 Zoom Social Time with Candace at 12 PM Mtg ID: 681-861-620 Bread of Life Book Group 7 PM | 20 HRTS Backpack Buddies Packing 12 PM Sandwich Generation 7:30 PM | 21 Lent Bible Study 7 PM | 22 Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM | 23 Game Night 6:00 PM | 24 Men's Group 8 AM |
| 25 EASTER FOOD DRIVE BEGINS - PICK UP YOUR REUSABLE BAG & SHOPPING LIST! | 26 Zoom Social Time with Candace at 12 PM Mtg ID: 681-861-620 Bread of Life Book Group 7 PM | 27 HRTS Backpack Buddies Packing 12 PM | 28 Lent Bible Study 7 PM | 29 Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM | <p><i>This is not a full list of all events or uses of the St. Matthew's buildings, check out the link below for the most up-to-date calendar:</i></p> <p>stmtts.org/calendar</p> | |

EVERY WEEK

Sundays

- Faith Factory (Age 4 - 5th grade) & Unplugged (6th - 8th grade) at 9:30 AM
- Donuts & Discovery (6th - 12th grade) at 10:30 AM

Mondays

- Social Time on Zoom 12 PM
- Bread of Life Book Group 7 PM

Tuesdays

- HRTS Backpack Buddies Packing at 12 PM

Wednesdays

- Lent Bible Study at 7 PM

Thursdays

- Lent Bible Study at 12 PM
- Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM

Saturdays

- Men's Group 8 AM

Weekday Evenings

- Compline at 8 PM stmtts.org/live

SPECIAL EVENTS & SERVICES

Sunday, March 3rd

Backpack Buddies Pack at 10:30 AM

Sunday, March 10th

Daylight Saving

Sunday, March 17th

St. Patrick's Day

Sunday, March 24th

Palm Sunday

Thursday, March 28th

Maundy Thursday Service 7 PM

Friday, March 29th

Good Friday Service 12 PM & 7 PM

Saturday, March 30

Holy Saturday Service 10 AM

Sunday, March 31

Easter Services at 6:30, 9:30 & 11:15 AM

ANNUAL MEETING & PANCAKE SUPPER

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13 AT 5:30 PM



SUPPER BEGINS AT 5:30 PM
MEETING BEGINS AT 6:30 PM



Take the night off cooking at home, and join us for our Annual Pancake Supper. Catch up on all God has done through you and St. Matthew's in 2023 during our Annual Meeting.

- Pancakes
- Breakfast meats
- Fruit & Juice
- Pancake art provided by St. Matt's Youth

Grab your dinner, and together we will enjoy a light-hearted reflection on 2023, and vote for the 2024 budget and Vestry.

PLUS! Kids Aged 3 - 5th grade are invited to watch the new movie ***Trolls Band Together*** and test some "Princess Poppy or Blue Branch" pancakes! **MOVIE START TIME: 6:30 PM IN CLASSROOM 3, see page 6 more more details!**

MEET OUR 2024 VESTRY CANDIDATES



JULIE KANE

In 2021, Julie and her family found St. Matthew's while seeking a new church home. Driven by a desire to raise her family in a welcoming and accepting Christian community, St. Matthew's offered that as well as an abundance of community outreach opportunities. Julie, a George Mason University graduate in Communications and holder of an MBA from George Washington University, manages business development, planning, marketing, and human resources for their family business. Julie lives in Sterling with her husband, Josh, and their four children: Summer, Austin, Mia, and Noelle. In her spare time, Julie enjoys tennis, spending time outdoors with her family, and knitting.



CRAIG DUBISHAR

Craig, known for his photography and drone skills, along with his daughter Natalie, found a welcoming community at St. Matthew's in 2020. Embracing the online services during the pandemic, they appreciated the community's warmth and the inspiring sermons. Raised Methodist, Craig discovered the Episcopal Church in 1983 and has since been actively involved. A leader in various church roles, Craig extends his passion beyond church walls, contributing to missions in Haiti, environmental causes, and scouting. A legal professional, geodesy master's holder, and committed father, Craig brings a wealth of experience and dedication to St. Matthew's.



STEPHANIE ZEBROWSKI

Stephanie joined St. Matthew's in 2015, introduced by a coworker, and immediately felt a sense of belonging. The warm welcome, community-centric approach, and "and then some" spirit appealed to her. During summers, she manages the VBS kitchen, and year-round, dedicates herself to aiding those facing food insecurity in the community. Joining the vestry, Stephanie looks forward to deepening her faith and making ongoing contributions to the community. Stephanie lives in Sterling with her husband Greg and sons Brandt and Jack and brings with her 25 years of financial services expertise. In her spare time, you'll find her cheering on her boys on the lacrosse and baseball fields.

EVENTS & OUTREACH



EASTER FOOD DRIVE FEB 25 - MAR. 12

EASTER FOOD DRIVE SUN. FEB. 25 - TUES. MAR. 12

Share God's love this Easter through the act of packing a reusable grocery bag with essential food items. We encourage you to prepare one or more bags containing the suggested items below, which will be shared with students and their families in local schools. We also encourage you to include a personal touch by adding a notecard or drawing with a heartfelt message.

Join us in achieving our goal of donating 225 bags to those in need this Easter!

Please include all of the following foods in your bags:

Non-perishable foods

- Dried beans
- White rice
- Canned meats (tuna or chicken)
- Canned vegetables
- Pasta sauce
- Pasta
- Vegetable oil
- Corn flour (like Maseca)
- Mac & Cheese
- Easter Holiday Treat
- \$25 WALMART gift card (OPTIONAL)
- Diapers/wipes/feminine pads (OPTIONAL)

**PICK UP A BAG FEB. 25th &
DROP OFF ALL DONATIONS
BEFORE MARCH 12, 2024**

SIGN UP TO HELP SORT FOOD,
DELIVER BAGS AND MORE:
stmmts.org/EasterBags

WOMEN'S brunch & SMALL GROUP

WOMEN'S BRUNCH SAT., FEB. 10 | 9 AM - 11 AM

Join us for a delightful Women's Potluck Brunch and Small Group Event.

Connect with fellow women in our community for a time of fellowship, discuss the plans for the 2024 Women's Ministry, and enjoy delicious food. Childcare is available, please let us know if you are planning on using childcare, email: office@stmmts.org

RSVP:
stmmts.org/WomensBrunch



LINK FOOD PANTRY FEBRUARY DELIVERIES

February is St. Matthew's month to support LINK food pantry food deliveries. Sign up today to join this meaningful initiative. Delivering food is a fantastic family or scout group activity, providing an opportunity to give back to the community while fostering a sense of togetherness.

Help make a difference by delivering food to families in need!

LEARN MORE & SIGN UP:
stmmts.org/LINK



BACKPACK BUDDIES PACKING

Help pack food for 250+ Sterling area students in need. **Packing times:**

- Sunday, February 4th at 10:30 AM during Coffee Hour in the Parish Hall
- Tuesdays at noon (in the Trailer on the hill)

LEARN MORE: sterlinghelp.org



SPORTS JERSEY DAY SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH

Get ready for the 'Big Game', wear your favorite sports gear to church, and enjoy some refreshments in the Parish Hall during coffee hour between the 9:30 and 11 AM services.



LENT AT-HOME KITS SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH

Recipes, prayers, and inspirational ideas for you and your family to work on your lent 'Journey' together at home. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14th. **Learn more on page 5 or visit stmmts.org/Lent.**

journey

heading towards our hearts' true home

LENT AT ST. MATTHEW'S

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, February 14
Services at 6 AM, 12 PM, & 7 PM
Livestream at 7 PM only

Begin the Lenten season with us for our Ash Wednesday service. We invite you to join us for this Holy Eucharist service, where the imposition of ashes reminds us of our mortality.

LENT BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

WEDNESDAYS AT 7 PM
or
THURSDAYS AT 12 PM

Join us either Wednesday evenings at 7 PM or Thursdays at noon. Our Lenten Bible study groups begin Wednesday, Feb. 21st.

What can we learn from stories of wandering hearts in the Bible? Where do we see ourselves in these stories? We will explore the stories, make connections to stories from our lives, and leave each week with a new practice to help us listen for God's voice.

PREPARING YOUR HEART FOR LENT

Lent is a season of slowing down, to walk with Christ, and truly reflect on the sacrifice He made for us. It is a moving and introspective season of the church year. Worship during this season is remarkably different and the hope that comes from Jesus' resurrection on Easter is experienced even more joyously when we engage in Lenten practice.

FIND THE FULL ARTICLE & MORE SCAN HERE



or VISIT: stmmts.org/Lent

LENT RESOURCES

Pick up a copy of our Lent Devotional: **Wandering Heart: a journey through Lent with Peter**. Physical copies available beginning Sunday, Feb. 10 or download a digital copy at the link below.

stmmts.org/Lent

Plus: Recipes, FAQ's, Podcast, Book & App recommendations.

WHAT IS LENT?

Lent is a Christian liturgical season, and it is a period of reflection, repentance, and spiritual preparation, commemorating the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on Holy Saturday, excluding Sundays.

During Lent, Christians often engage in practices such as fasting, prayer, and almsgiving as a means of self-examination and drawing closer to God. The ashes applied on Ash Wednesday symbolize repentance and mortality. The season culminates in the celebration of Easter, marking the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

CHILDREN & YOUTH



FAITH FACTORY SUNDAYS AT 9:30 AM

Classes for Age 4 - 2nd Grade & Grades 3-5. Join us for Bible stories, games, crafts and more. Building faith, one child at a time.



TROLLS MOVIE PARTY TUES. FEB. 13TH AT 6:30 PM

Join us for our annual pancake supper at 5:30 PM, then kids are invited to see the new Trolls Band Together movie at 6:30 PM and try out some special Trolls pancakes!

SUMMER CAMP VBS AT ST. MATT'S

JULY 22-26, 2024 | 5:30 - 8:30 PM

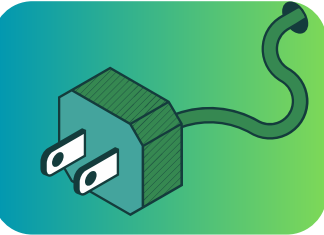
Join us for our favorite Summer Camp Experience, VBS! This summer, kids will dive into an ocean of discovery learning God is a real friend who loves them forever!

- Dinner each night
- Water Games
- Skits and Bible Adventures
- Live Band
- Science Experiments and more!

LEARN MORE: stmmts.org/VBS

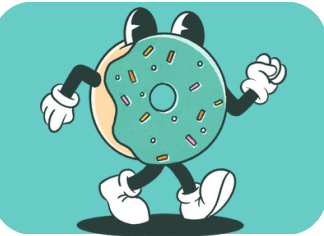


YOUTH GROUP AT ST. MATT'S



FAITH FACTORY UNPLUGGED Sundays at 9:30 AM in Classroom 4

Students in 6-8th Grade are invited to Faith Factory Unplugged on Sundays at 9:30 AM. Join us in Classroom 4 for Bible Study, tangible life lessons just for Middle Schoolers, and more.



DONUTS & DISCOVERY Sundays at 10:30 AM in Classroom 1

Middle and high school youth will enjoy donuts, continue working through the Starting Point Series, and begin work on a Passion re-enactment for Palm Sunday (March 24th). Questions? Contact Ben.Merola@stmmts.org



DECORATE FOR PANCAKE SUPPER + PANCAKE ART LESSONS Sunday, February 11th at 12 PM

Join Ben after coffee hour in the Parish Hall to set up and decorate for the Pancake Supper followed by a pancake art lesson for the Youth Pancake Art Station during the Pancake Supper.



PANCAKE ART STATION AT PANCAKE SUPPER Tuesday, February 13th arrive at 4 PM

Arrive at 4 PM to help set up, serve, and take turns creating pancake art during the Pancake Supper & Annual Meeting. Supper begins at 5:30, Annual Meeting at 6:30 PM.



YOUTH AT SPORTROCK IN STERLING Sunday, February 25th | 1:30 PM

Join Ben on Sunday, Feb. 25th for an afternoon of indoor rock climbing. Spots are limited, RSVP to guarantee a space! Meet at SportRock at 1:15 PM. Carpooling is available, contact Ben.Merola@stmmts.org if you need a ride! **Cost \$10 per person.**

More details and RSVP on the Band App or stmmts.org/YouthEvents