

ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH



**A Holiday Worship Service for those who are
Stressed, Hurting, Grieving or Lonely
in this Holiday Season.**

**Monday, December 4, 2023
6:30 p.m.**

WELCOME! We gather as a community for worship around *word, wine, and water*. Put another way, in worship we meet Christ in scripture proclaimed in speech & song, in the sacraments of Holy Communion & Baptism celebrated or remembered, and in community gathered together. Whether you are a long-time member of St. Matthew, a first-time visitor, or somewhere in between, we are thankful you are here today. If you have questions or need visual, audio, or mobility accommodations, please let a name tagged **usher** know. To learn more about the ministries of St. Matthew, please check out our website at www.stmattlutheran.org. All are invited to join us any Sunday at 9:30 a.m. for Faith Connections, when there are opportunities for all ages to connect with God, our faith, and one another through learning and relationship.

Please tear off and put in the offering basket as you leave:

Names of everyone attending Monday, December 4, 2023,
at 6:30 p.m.:

Would you like to be added to our email list? Please list your
name and email address:

PRELUDE

In the Bleak Midwinter

Martin

WELCOME

Pastor: Today we welcome you to our Blue Christmas service, a service that has been put together especially for those of us who are not feeling particularly merry and bright right now.

Despite all the decorations, cards, music playing in the stores, the concerts and parties and TV commercials who want us to believe that when we buy their products, we will feel better and our troubles and worries will somehow disappear, we still feel empty.

We hope that you'll find this a safe place to be transparent with yourself and with God, a safe place to admit that maybe you're not ok at the moment, that maybe what you're really feeling is sad, discouraged, or even angry. A place for you to be real with your struggles and your questions.

Those of us feeling a little blue at this time of year can feel edged out and forgotten as everyone else seems caught up in the mad frenzy of their own preparations and celebrations. We hope that as you look around this afternoon, and as you think about the Christmas message, you'll find comfort and hope in knowing that you are not alone.

PRAYER

Pastor: God of mercy and love, we gather here today as hurting people, bringing our pain, our sorrow and our confusion to this safe space. Loving God, meet us in our darkness, and give us freedom to struggle together as we seek your presence. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace from the past.

All: Amen.

LIGHT THE CHRIST CANDLE

SCRIPTURE *John 1:1-5* In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

THE EMPTY CHAIR

Pastor: This empty chair represents those who won't be home for Christmas.

Perhaps a relationship has ended, perhaps the people we love will be far away, perhaps family relationships are strained, perhaps sickness or death and the threat of Covid has changed how things used to be...

LIGHT THE FIRST CANDLE

Pastor: We light this first candle to remember those we have loved and lost and those who are not able to be with us.

We pause to remember their names, their faces, their voices and the memories of them that we hold in our hearts.

[Silent reflection]

Pastor: We thank God for them and ask for God's comfort, and when we are feeling overcome with sadness, we ask for the peace that is greater than we can ever understand.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

LIGHT THE SECOND CANDLE

Pastor: The empty chair also represents the pain and sadness that can come from other events that enter our lives, uninvited and unwanted – leaving us reeling in pain and shock, unable to shake the feeling that it wasn't supposed to be like this.

So we light this candle to represent other losses that we find ourselves faced with.

The loss of health,
employment,
independence,
freedom,
the loss of confidence or security,
plans that did not work out,
hopes that ended in despair.

We pause now for you to tell the God who longs to bind up those who are broken-hearted, about some of the losses that you are feeling at this time.

[Silent reflection]

All: Lord hear our prayer.

LIGHT THE THIRD CANDLE

Pastor: This candle represents our courage: the courage to face our sadness, to share our feelings with others, our doubts and fears, our anger, frustration or depression, and to dare to hope in the depths of our pain.

We pause now for you to tell the God who longs to take you by the hand and say to you, “Do not fear, I will help you find hope and courage for another day.”

[Silent reflection]

All: Lord hear our prayer.

LIGHT THE FOURTH CANDLE

Pastor: We light this fourth candle to remember those who have supported us in our pain.

We pause to remember the prayers, the words of comfort and support, the acts of kindness from family and friends and those who stood with us in our time of need.

[Silent reflection]

Pastor: We thank you God for sending your Son Jesus so that we are never alone. And we thank you for sending others who are your hands and heart.

All: Amen.

Pastor: The carol before us expresses the longing the Israelites felt as they waited for God to send the deliverer He had promised. As we sing together, you may remain seated and rest in God's healing presence.

HYMN

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

**O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer; O Sun of justice, now draw near
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadow put to flight.**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

**O come, O King of nations, come, O Cornerstone that binds in one:
refresh the hearts that long for you; restore the broken, make us new.**

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

FOCUS ON THE CHRIST CANDLE

Pastor: Standing here in the center of the candles that represent some of life's joy and pain, this Christ candle represents Jesus who has come to be Emmanuel, God with us, in the midst of it all.

Jesus who was born as a helpless baby – but who hears our cries and understands how weak and helpless we can feel.

Jesus the good shepherd, who knows our hearts and offers us healing and hope in the midst of our suffering, who came to help us understand just how much God loves us, who lived

and died to restore our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Jesus, who will reign as King over God's new creation, where there will be no more sickness or death or crying or pain for all eternity; who has given us his Holy Spirit to help, comfort and guide us as we seek to follow him here on earth and wait for his glorious return.

PRAYER

Pastor: Let's pray. Oh God, be with us in our darkness. Make your face shine upon us and give us peace.

We pray for your Holy Spirit to be at work within us as we are gathered here today. May your Holy Spirit comfort us, sustain us and remind us of your constant love.

We open our hearts and minds to listen to you. Help us hear what you have to say.

All: Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 40:28-31

²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. ³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; ³¹but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

GOSPEL: Luke 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

HOMILY

Pastor Faye Snyder

SOLO

Breath of Heaven

Grant

LIGHTING OF INDIVIDUAL CANDLES

Pastor: In a moment we are going to play a song which expresses this resolve to reach out and take hold of God's promise to be there with us in the midst of life's storms.

While the music is playing, you're invited to light a candle to represent whatever pain or loss you're experiencing. The Christ candle represents Jesus, as a way of saying thank you to Him for being the light in our darkness. As you light your

candle, ask for God's help in trusting Him to help you in the midst of your pain and loss and to have hope. We will listen to this song by Casting Crowns as a meditation while our candles are lit.

REFLECTIVE MUSIC

***Praise You in the Storm*
(Hall/Herms)**

Casting Crowns

**I was sure by now God,
you would have reached down
And wiped our tears away
Stepped in and saved the day
But once again, I say "Amen," and it's still raining
As the thunder rolls
I barely hear your whisper through the rain
"I'm with you"
And as your mercy falls
I raise my hands and praise the God who gives
And takes away

And I'll praise you in this storm
And I will lift my hands
For you are who you are
No matter where I am

And every tear I've cried
You hold in your hand
You never left my side
And though my heart is torn
I will praise you in this storm**

I remember when
I stumbled in the wind
You heard my cry to you
And raised me up again
My strength is almost gone
How can I carry on
If I can't find you

But as the thunder rolls
I barely hear your whisper through the rain
"I'm with you"
and as your mercy falls
I raise my hands and praise the God who gives
And takes away

And I'll praise you in this storm
And I will lift my hands
For you are who you are
No matter where I am

And every tear I've cried
You hold in your hand
You never left my side
And though my heart is torn
I will praise you in this storm

I lift my eyes unto the hills
Where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord
The maker of Heaven and Earth

And I'll praise you in this storm

**And I will lift my hands
For you are who you are
No matter where I am
And every tear I've cried
You hold in your hand
You never left my side
And though my heart is torn
I will praise you in this storm
Though my heart is torn
(Though my heart is torn)
I will praise you in this storm
(Praise you in this storm)**

WE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

**God did not wait till the world was ready,
till nations were at peace.
God came when the Heavens were unsteady
and prisoners cried out for release.
God did not wait for the perfect time.
God came when the need was deep and great.
God dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.
God did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame,
God came and God's Light would not go out.
God came to a world which did not mesh;
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.**

**In the mystery of the Word made Flesh,
the Maker of the stars was born.**

**We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
For to share our grief, to touch our pain,
God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!**

Adapted from the poem First Coming by Madeleine L'Engle.

PRAYER

Pastor: Comforting God, as we leave this place would you continue to wrap us in your presence. Be with us in our struggles, and when we get lost in the darkness, shine your light and help us find our way back to you.

All: Amen.

HYMN

Silent Night, Holy Night!

**Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child,
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing, alleluia!**

Christ the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

**Silent night, holy night! Son of God,
love's pure light radiant beams from your holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.**

BENEDICTION

Pastor: May the power of God and the mystery of God go before us,
to show us the way, shine above us to lighten our world,
lie beneath us to bear us up, walk with us and give us
companionship, and shine within us to bring us joy.

All: Amen.

POSTLUDE Toccata on Veni Emmanuel Andrew Carter

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Our warm thanks to all those assisting in this worship service:

Musician.....Ben Boellner, Pianist and Organist
Soloist..... Michael Ritt
Ushers Ardis Kunde, Debbie Riddle, Linda Wheeler

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Scott G. Fredericks, Emeritus Minister of Music

OUR COMMUNITY MEAL with a **Christmas Story Time and Craft** for children, is a new event to St. Matthew that we hope will become an annual tradition. This event will be held on Sunday, December 10, 3-6 p.m. Volunteers are making turkeys, hams and all the fixins for a wonderful meal. Entertainment is listed below. Santa will be visiting the children. There will be flyers placed on all neighborhood doors and distributed to various businesses for display.

How can you help? To begin, help with advertising – invite neighbors and friends, find the St. Matthew Facebook event and share with your Facebook friends, take some flyers from the Hospitality Desk and distribute to any businesses that you frequent. Then, contact Amy Beck if you would like to volunteer! Abeck1976@comcast.net or call the church office, 717-637-7101. If that is not possible, come for dinner and the entertainment! No need to sign up for the meal, but if you are bringing children, please let us know how many – we do not want to run out of crafts!

3:30 p.m. Christmas Carol Bingo

4:00 Songs with Brody Rummel, Madison Maloney,
Carys Lunn

4:30 Mini Ministers Puppet show

5:00 Story time and Craft

4-5:00 p.m. A visit from Santa Claus



December

10 9:30-10:20 a.m. Christmas Pageant Dress rehearsal – Fellowship Hall

9:45-10:15 a.m. Splash Class

3:00-6:00 p.m. Community Meal – Fellowship Hall

5:00 p.m. Story Time and Craft – Upper Room

13 5:30-6:00 p.m. Advent Dinner – Fellowship Hall

6:00-6:30 p.m. Advent Worship Service – Fellowship Hall

15 10:30 a.m. Discovery Place Preschool Christmas Program - Nave

17 9:30 a.m. Christmas Pageant – Fellowship Hall

1:45-4:00 p.m. Christmas Caroling to our Homebound



22 10:00 a.m. Packing and delivering Gift Bags – Fellowship Hall

12:00 p.m. Church Office Closes

23 5:00 p.m. Saturday Worship Service

24 9:30 a.m. Worship Service

24 Christmas Eve Services:

CHRISTMAS EVE



4:30 p.m. **Family Service**

7:00 p.m. **Candlelight & Carol Service**

9:30 p.m. **Candlelight & Carol Service**

25 & 26 Church Office Closed

29 12:00 p.m. Church Office Closes

- 30 5:00 p.m. Worship Service (Fellowship Hall)
- 5:45 p.m. Sandwiches
- 6:30 p.m. Mini-Minister Puppet Show



31 9:30 a.m. Worship Service

January - 2024

- 1 Church Office Closed
- 5-7 Winterfest (Offsite)
- 7 9:45-10:15 a.m. Splash class
- 12 7 p.m. Joseph Martin & Friends Concert
- 13 Choral workshop



Help and encouragement after the death of a loved one.

At our 13-session GriefShare group you'll find understanding, guidance, relief, and a safe place to navigate the challenges of grief. Come join us! Mondays 6:30 – 8 p.m. January 29 through April 22, in the Upper Room.

Call or email the Church Office to register. You may email Pastor Faye at *nicksong@comcast.net* or call her, 717-451-0851.

Name _____ Phone # _____

Address _____

Christmas Gift Bags

**Who in your life has had a difficult year and needs to be cheered up?
Relative? Friend? Fellow Church Member? Co-worker?**



You can help cheer them up by supplying information below.
We will deliver Gift Bags (fruit, candy, cookies, Christmas ornament, and more) to folks in grief, lost their job, sick, injured, lonely, sad or upset for ANY reason. Please help us locate them.

Not limited to St. Matthew members, but MUST be located within 15 miles of Hanover.

Questions? Submitting a recipient? Helping to pack or deliver?
Contact Pastor Faye through the office, or at *nicksong@comcast.net*.
Or drop filled-out form into offering basket by **Deadline December 11.**

Recipient Name _____

Recipient Address _____

Recipient Phone number _____

Your name _____

Your phone number _____

Help pack on December 22? _____ **Help Deliver on December 22?** _____



**Please note: Music for this service is covered under CCLI # 1000682 –
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