

# STRATEGIC PLAN



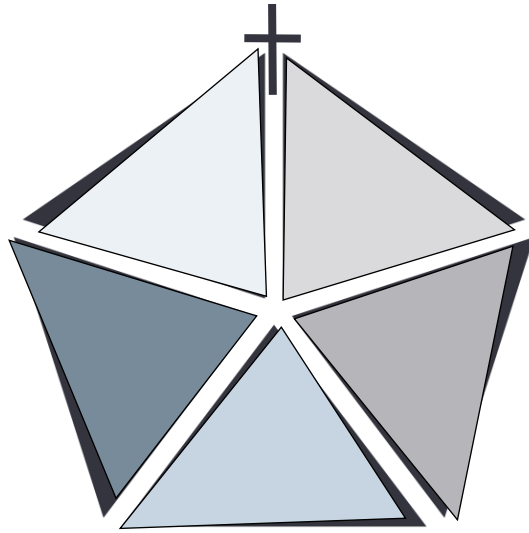
St. Matthew Lutheran Church  
Hanover, PA

**Summary Document**

## PROCESS

This strategic plan for St. Matthew Lutheran Church represents about two years of work from faithful, committed leaders. The process of prayerful discernment and trust that the Holy Spirit is leading is embedded in these pages.

Time Frame	A snapshot of activities
March, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. Matthew Church Council interviewed LEAD to guide the Strategic Planning Process.</li> <li>• The council voted to move forward with LEAD, inviting Deacon Peggy Hahn as the consultant and John Auger as the coach.</li> </ul>
May, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Strategic Planning Team was invited to begin the LEAD process. Peggy and John came in person to initiate the first phase of this process: listening in scripture and prayer, listening in the congregation, listening in the neighborhood. LEAD provided a workbook outlining the process.</li> <li>• A LEAD team was created with Hunter Crabbs, Darlene Klenk, Randy Kline, Tim Peck, Kelli Reed, Pastor Kathy Vitalis Hoffman, Vicki Wildasin, Pastor Taylor, Kayla Steffens, Jen Troup, &amp; Sherry Crouse as team members. Pastor Alex and Barb Rupp joined later in the process.</li> </ul>
June, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregational assessment was customized for St. Matthew and completed by 103 individuals.</li> <li>• St. Matthew experienced major staff changes with the departure of the long-term music leader, Scott and Pastor Taylor.</li> </ul>
July-September, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team led 14 congregational focus listening groups and open forums.</li> <li>• The team was introduced to alternative governance models. LEAD Provided a report on the assessment.</li> </ul>
October-December, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peggy met with Pastor Kathy, Tim and Missy for an in-depth listening on Faith Formation.</li> <li>• John continued to coach Pastor Kathy.</li> <li>• The team met regularly to make meaning out of the congregation assessment and focus group listening. We made a plan for neighborhood listening. LEAD provided a second workbook.</li> </ul>
January-May, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team identified organizations to listen to, held 23 listening sessions, and discussed what was learned. LEAD provided a report on Listening in the Neighborhood.</li> <li>• Peggy and John met with the team in person to identify core values and purpose statement. We begin talking about themes and goals.</li> <li>• The council was presented with the core values.</li> </ul>
Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team took a break. Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt joined the staff and the team.</li> </ul>
August-December, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pastors introduced the Core Values in a preaching series that began in September.</li> <li>• A working group began meeting to identify and draft goals. This group includes Pastor Alex, Pastor Kathy, Darlene, and Kelli. Barb Rupp was added to the team when she became council president. A first draft of the goals was given to the council in December for their reflection.</li> </ul>
January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The working group continued to edit the goals and build the strategic plan. There were several iterations. The council will receive Draft #7 for their affirmation.</li> </ul>
February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The plan will be finalized for presentation the congregational meeting in February.</li> <li>• LEAD will initiate a communication audit.</li> </ul>
March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The plan will be voted on at a congregational meeting in March.</li> <li>• Implementation of the plan will begin. This includes equipping the staff, council, and key leaders.</li> </ul>



## ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH

### Our Purpose

[This is **why** we are here.]

Welcoming all as we share God's love.

### Our Core Values

[This is the **identity** we are shaping.]

Embracing one another as God created us

Celebrating together in worship

Deepening our faith in Jesus

Engaging children and youth

Walking with our neighbors

### Our Five Goals

[This is **what** our priorities will be as we share God's love.]

- ♥ Enliven faith through worship and learning
- ♥ Cultivate shared leadership as disciples of Jesus
- ♥ Connect with children, youth, and families
- ♥ Bridge the gaps with home-insecure neighbors
- ♥ Build authentic relationships across differences

“Where the Welcome is Wide and the Love is Real”

## The next FIVE YEARS – loving others as God loves us

We are living through a time of epic change, making it hard to forecast the future. Yet we know with full confidence that regardless of the changes around us, God is always with us. The promises of our baptism remind us that the purpose of the church is rooted in a conviction that we are loved— even beloved! It is our prayer that all will know they are part of this love story. We exist as a community to make this love known.

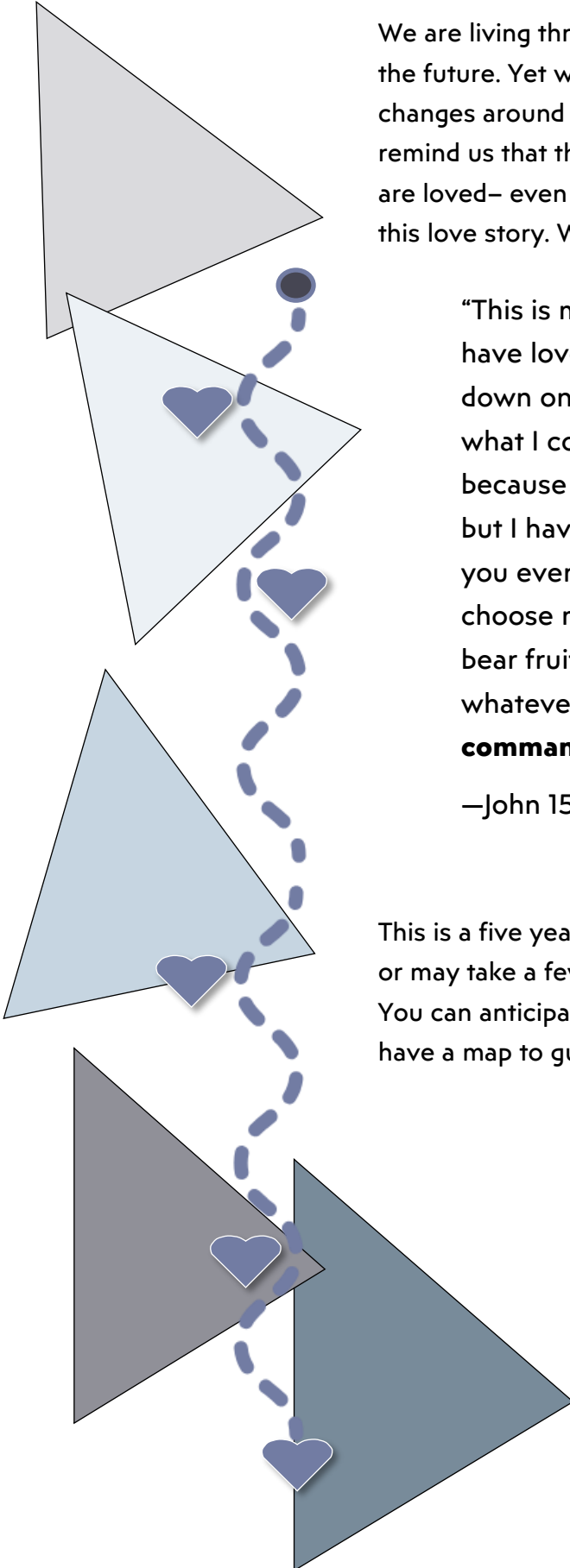
“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. **I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.**

—John 15:12-17 [NRSV]

### TIMING IS FLEXIBLE...!

This is a five year plan that may go faster than anticipated in some areas or may take a few detours in other areas as we navigate the unexpected. You can anticipate ongoing adjustments to this plan in real time—but we have a map to guide our way. In general, we imagine this plan:

YEAR	EXPECT
2025	Build hubs and relationships. Imagine possibilities!
2026	Learn together as new ministries are implemented.
2027	Practice new ways of being the church.
2028	Learn, expand, deepen!
2029	Innovate with new partners.
2030	Evaluate, tweak, expand!
...and beyond	



# FIVE GOALS— to welcome all as we share God's love

## INTRODUCTION TO GOALS

Our five goals create an intentional culture of welcome beyond anything we have known at St. Matthew—this is good news!

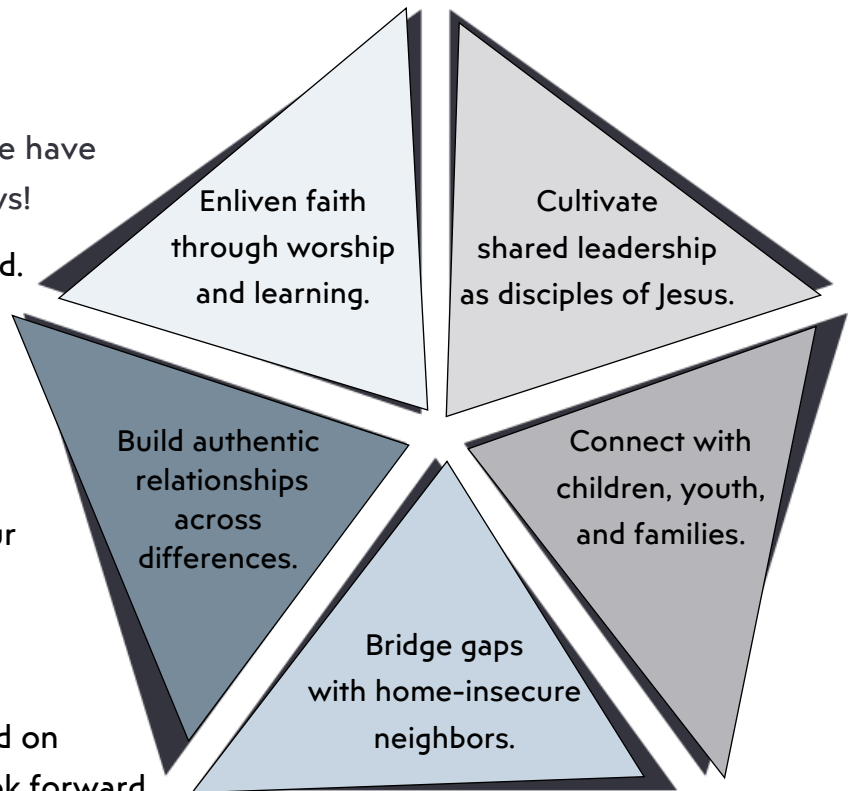
We are excited about the learning ahead.

We are curious about the questions and priorities children, youth, and their caregivers have about following Jesus and being part of the church.

We know this will call us to lean into our faith, and explore new decision-making systems that encourage greater involvement to participate in ministry.

We imagine building relationships based on trust, as we respect differences. We look forward

to partnering with our neighbors to address issues that make people vulnerable to homelessness by striving to keep people in their homes.



As Lutheran Christians, we will continue to center in worshiping God, studying scripture, celebrating the sacraments, and navigating faith in daily life. We understand we will not be perfect at any of this. We have a lot to learn as we experiment with new ministries. We are excited about the future as St. Matthew builds on its past strengths to thrive in a changing world. We are hopeful that by focusing on these five goals, new people will grow in faith and leadership.

Each goal will be managed by a hub of people with knowledge, skills, curiosity, and commitment. The hubs are **how** we live out our purpose, our values, and our goals. We will discover what it means to be a church rooted in historic Christian traditions and a passion for welcoming all people in Hanover and surrounding areas so that all may know the love of God.

## What are Ministry Hubs?

Right now St. Matthew gets ministry done through:

- Our Church Council
- Our Staff
- Our Committees

This system works as long as people want to come to church, want to be on committees, and have a lot of extra time to volunteer. In today's world, we know fewer people are signing up for traditional leadership. Yet people want to have meaning in their life, believe in Christian service, and yearn for community. Besides responding to these realities, we know that the Shared Leadership Model with a Hub System also includes:

- New learnings from one part of the ministry being shared with other parts of the ministry
- New people of all ages leading ministry, including inviting our partners to lead with us
- New connections extending the ministry into Hanover and surrounding areas

Imagine if people with shared interests and values across ministry areas met together quarterly to lead us in living out St. Matthew's purpose and values.



**ENLIVEN FAITH HUB:** People with a passion for worship, music, study, discipleship (at church and at home) come together to learn from each other, align ministry for greater impact, and occasionally plan together. What if people worshiped and learned about a God who loved them wherever they are?



**SHARED LEADERSHIP HUB :** Leaders on the church council meet with hub leaders and staff to learn from each other, pray for the ministry, study scripture, worship, and ensure this plan is moving forward. What if people were learning Christian leadership together?



**CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILY HUB:** Everyone who works with children, youth, and families at St. Matthew, including outside organizations and those who share our space, can learn from each other, share resources, and occasionally plan together. What if people came to St. Matthew to learn about supporting families?



**HOUSING INSECURE HUB:** Partnerships with people who are working to keep families in their homes to prevent homelessness. This includes understanding risks for the home insecure, the impact this has on children, youth and elderly, and what it takes to network services that are needed to care for people in our community. What if there were fewer home insecure people because they could stay in their current homes?



**AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIP HUB:** An intentional community of people gathering together to truly listen and learn from each other. This group creates a culture where hospitality is extended and received, encouraging conversations and care across the congregation and the Hanover community. What if we created curiosity across differences to build deeper, meaningful relationships as people share and listen to stories?

## 5 HUBS—A NEW DESIGN

These 5 hubs are strategically designed to increase deep, meaningful ministry while being in alignment with our theological understanding of what it means to be Lutheran Christians in today's world. It is a shift in **how** we do ministry together. The key elements for success include **listening to each other, learning together, and leading collaboratively.**

This may feel messy at first, like new things always do. It will be important to stay with this long enough to experience the gifts of shared learning, shared trust, and ultimately shared leadership.

## Why did we choose these strategic directions?

- Enliven faith through worship and learning  
Our Lutheran heritage centers on worshipping God, sharing the sacraments [Baptism and Holy Communion] and practicing our faith in daily life. We recognize that weekly worship attendance is in decline, yet we commit ourselves to discovering new ways to gather followers of Jesus for music and prayer, the sacraments, and sharing Christian community.
- Cultivate shared leadership as disciples of Jesus  
Our current models of leadership, largely based on for-profit organizations, have not fully embraced the Priesthood of all Believers, a core tenant of the Lutheran tradition. We look to other forms of governance that empower lay leaders and support the ministry of all the baptized so that more people can grow as leaders at St. Matthew.
- Connect with children, youth, and families  
Our Baptismal covenant calls us to practice our faith with children, youth, and families—those in the congregation and in our neighborhood. We celebrate the rich ministry St. Matthew has through music ministry and youth ministry. We believe there is an opportunity to expand these ministries to welcome new people to the faith as they strive to raise their children in this busy world.
- Bridge the gaps with home-insecure neighbors  
Our neighbors include people who struggle to find a safe place to live. While there are many things we can do to care for our neighbors, we have learned that a home is key to fostering a secure lifestyle for children and elderly, the two most vulnerable populations around us. We will build partnerships in our community so that more people can have a place to call home.
- Build authentic relationships across differences  
Our Christian faith is deeply relational and grows through connection. The church is one of the few places where people of different backgrounds, experiences, and generations gather. We want to celebrate this gift by strengthening relationships and deepening our understanding of one another. We look forward to building a community that overcomes loneliness and isolation, creating a place of true belonging for all. We know that being part of a congregation that embraces diversity in all its forms enriches life for everyone.