

STRATEGIC PLAN



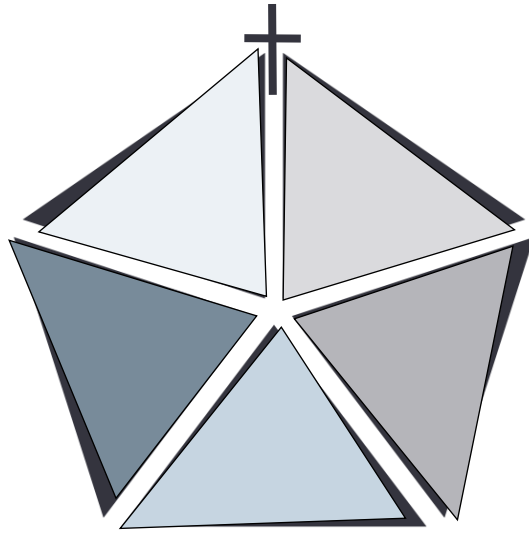
St. Matthew Lutheran Church
Hanover, PA

[Full 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"> • St. Matthew Church Council interviewed LEAD to guide the Strategic Planning Process. • The council voted to move forward with LEAD, inviting Deacon Peggy Hahn as the consultant and John Auger as the coach.
May, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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, & Sherry Crouse as team members. Pastor Alex and Barb Rupp joined later in the process.
June, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregational assessment was customized for St. Matthew and completed by 103 individuals. • St. Matthew experienced major staff changes with the departure of the long-term music leader, Scott and Pastor Taylor.
July-September, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team led 14 congregational focus listening groups and open forums. • The team was introduced to alternative governance models. LEAD Provided a report on the assessment.
October-December, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peggy met with Pastor Kathy, Tim and Missy for an in-depth listening on Faith Formation. • John continued to coach Pastor Kathy. • 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.
January-May, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Peggy and John met with the team in person to identify core values and purpose statement. We begin talking about themes and goals. • The council was presented with the core values.
Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team took a break. Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt joined the staff and the team.
August-December, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pastors introduced the Core Values in a preaching series that began in September. • 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.
January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan will be finalized for presentation the congregational meeting in February. • LEAD will initiate a communication audit.
March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan will be voted on at a congregational meeting in March. • Implementation of the plan will begin. This includes equipping the staff, council, and key leaders.



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.

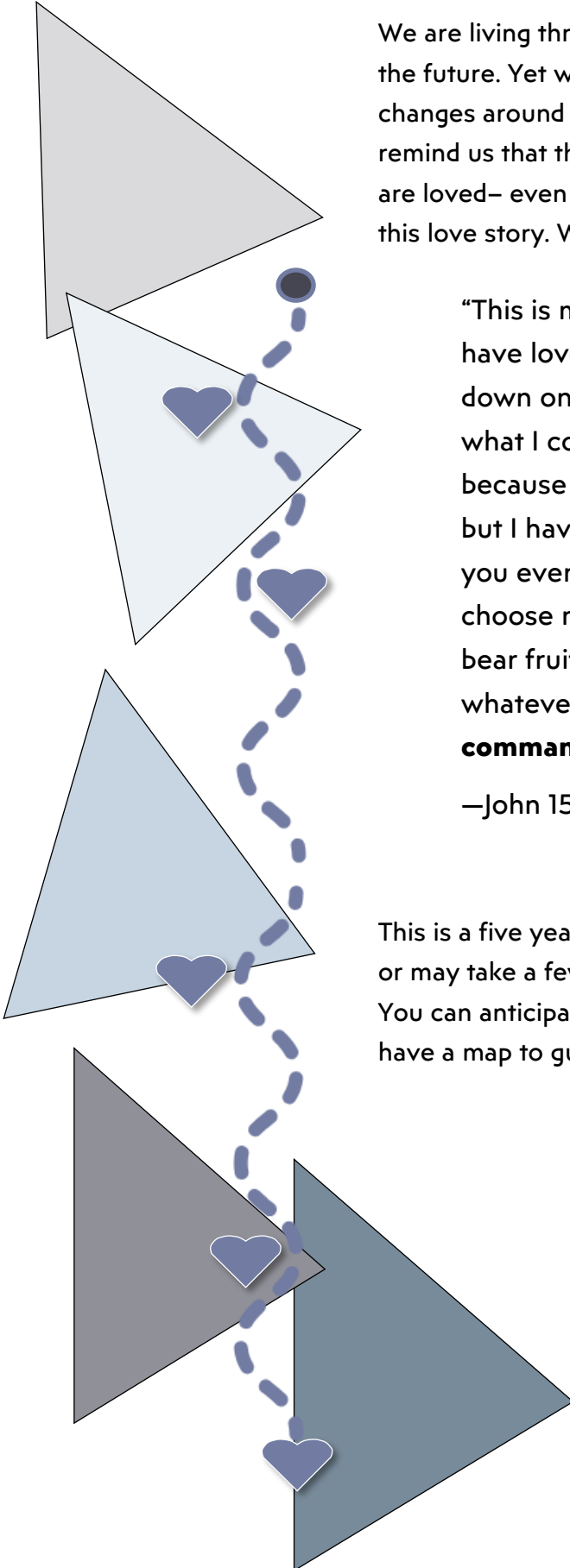
“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but 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!

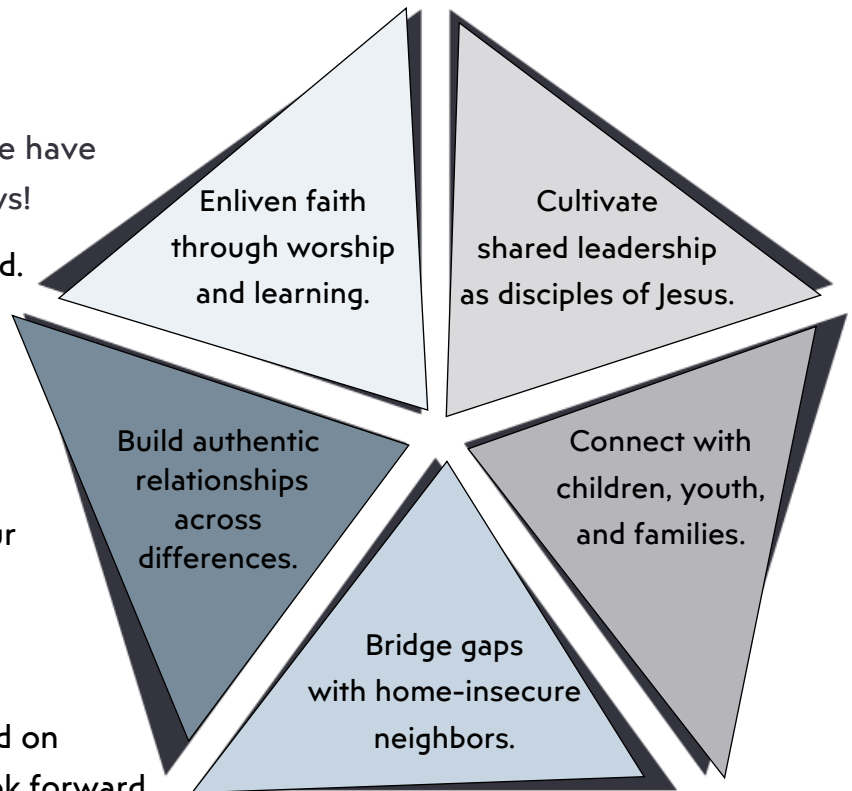
We are excited about the learning ahead.

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.



Enliven faith through worship and learning

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD; for [the LORD] is coming.

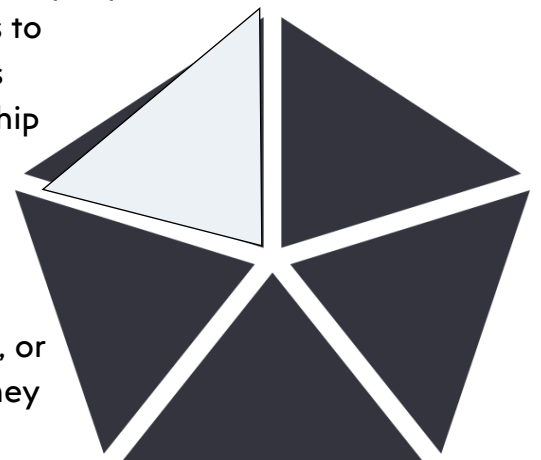
-Psalm 96: 11-13a [NRSV]

As we enliven our faith, we are deeply rooted in our Lutheran heritage. We celebrate God's boundless grace for all, the free gift of faith, and Jesus - whom we meet in Scripture - as the center of our lives. These truths guide us as we live for the glory of God. We imagine joyful worship, playful learning, and people feeling welcomed to our church.

Throughout the centuries, the ways people enliven faith in God have evolved, reflecting the dynamic and living relationship between God and humanity. Today, we embrace these changes, exploring the ways God is calling us to meet people where they are - whether at church, in their homes, or in shared community spaces.

We are committed to honoring the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion while imagining creative and inclusive worship experiences that speak to our diverse and ever-changing world. Together, we seek to nurture a faith that is both deeply grounded in tradition and open to the Spirit's movement in new and transformative ways.

We hope more people have access to the richness of our worship and our faith, whether in person, in our building, or wherever they may go.



Enliven faith through worship, music, study, service, learning, and fellowship in the congregation and in our homes.

Why put worship, music, and learning together?

All three practices center on the Word of God. They bring together all the ways in which people share faith. By creating a Hub of leaders who meet quarterly to explore how people engage God's Word in various ways, we believe we can strengthen the experience of discipleship. People are hungry for meaning in life. They will enter into the congregation looking for community, wanting to make a difference, and most of all, aching for an encounter with Christ.

We will commission a Hub of leaders with a focus on worship and learning as two priority spiritual practices that transform people. The objectives for this shared leadership is to prioritize:

Worship and Music

- Creating worship and music for people of all ages, including nonreaders and people new to the faith.
- Inviting new people into worship and music leadership, to expand the communities of worship assistants, to include musicians, singers, ushers, lectors, etc.
- Exploring innovative worship and ministry.

Learning

- Discovering ways to engage all generations in dwelling in the Word and living out that Word in our lives and world.
- Experiencing prayer and faith practices that help people see the Holy Spirit moving through their lives.
- Experimenting with new ways to grow the faith, including online faith formation, parent-led practice in the home, and liturgies for daily life that open up space for new people to lead and deepen discipleship.

Worship & Music	Learning
2025 Build the Hub	
<p>Integrate worship and faith formation as a way to transform lives. Align strategically to support wholistic faith formation.</p> <p>What needs to happen for new people of all ages to be invited into worship leadership?</p>	<p>Learn what parents and grandparents need to worship God in daily life.</p> <p>How can we use technology and creative worship to engage more people in experiencing the faith?</p>
2026 Experiment	
<p>Enliven worship with new ideas at church and at home. Discover new ways to grow the faith. Equip and mentor leaders in every aspect of worship.</p>	<p>Equip people to lead new learning groups online and in-person, at church, in homes, etc.</p>
2027 Increase Hospitality	
<p>Welcome and try new ideas for worship and music that deeply engages our neighbors.</p>	<p>Expand learning through online and in-person community alongside new ways of being church.</p>
2028 Grow Emerging Faith Experiences	
<p>Expand worship by empowering leaders to innovate, exploring micro-church, online church, etc.</p> <p>Welcome new kinds of music in worship.</p>	<p>Engage new people in faith deepening experiences and conversations.</p> <p>Continue to raise up young and new leadership.</p>
2029 Innovate	
<p>Continue to gather people together to worship God.</p>	<p>Listen and respond to the longings of people's hearts, their questions and pain.</p>
2030 Ongoing Evaluation	
<p>What have we learned? Set new goals for worship.</p>	<p>What have we learned?</p>



Cultivate Shared Leadership

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

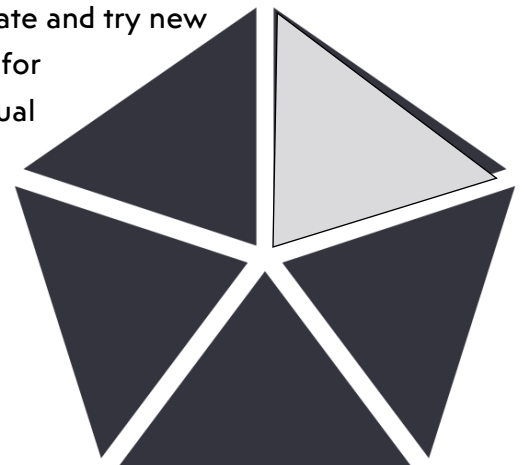
-Philippians 1:27 [NRSV]

Congregational leaders shape the culture of the community by the decisions they make, or don't make, the commitment to internal or external focused ministry, and the way people treat each other. We can find ourselves creating hurt feelings or unintentional power struggles when roles and responsibilities are not clear. Relationships can get damaged by people doing the best they can in leadership. This is not easy.

Shared Leadership is a different model with the intent to start with holy listening, trusted relationships and clear boundaries. The goal is to move from a hierarchical model to a collaborative practice. The shift is not easy because trust is at the core of trying new governance. We are

recommending this model with the goal of inviting people who are new to the church and younger generationally to help guide the future. These people are not attracted to committees and councils in the ways we have operated in the past. They are looking for shorter time commitments, with room to create and try new things and yearn for meaningful spiritual experiences.

We look forward to the learning ahead of us as a community.



Cultivate shared leadership and practice the Priesthood of All Believers, to support an expanding community of trusted leaders.

Christian leadership starts with spiritual practices as we create a life of discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit. We open ourselves up to listening to God in scripture, prayer, one another, and new voices that help us ask new questions.

We will commission a Hub of leaders who will focus on rethinking how St. Matthew makes decisions, communicates, equips new people to serve, and grows the next generation of faithful leadership.

- Learn about the Shared Leadership model of governance as we create a community of leaders who humbly serve in the name of Jesus.
- Create strategic pathways for new people of all ages to be mentored into leadership. Who are the mentors? Is there training, tools, expectations, and support for leadership? How do our values, traditions, and faith in Jesus inform our leadership?
- Continually learn effective internal and external communication systems and techniques that will help share clear messages to people in the congregation and community.

Note: The constitution of our church is clear about the fiduciary responsibilities of the council for the care of the congregation. The ways in which the council carries out this work is in our bylaws. We do not recommend changing our bylaws at this time. We can explore alternative leadership practices and be in compliance with our governing documents at the same time. Any changes to our official documents can be considered after practicing Shared Leadership for several years.

Shared Leadership	Discipleship
2025 Build the Hub	
Shift to Shared Leadership to include more people in ministry. Teach the congregation about this new decision-making system. Start experimenting by August.	Lean into the marks of discipleship as we explore Christian leadership. What kind of formation is helpful? How do we nurture Christian leaders?
2026 Experiment	
Try Shared Leadership and adapt as needed by adjusting the model as we learn. Continue to teach the congregation about Shared	Test a plan to grow the theological and Biblical core of our leadership. Make a plan to grow leaders in their faith.
2027 Increase Hospitality	
How are new people, of all ages, invited into leadership? What roles can new people engage, even before they are members?	How do people who are new to the church learn about our Lutheran faith? How are we helping new people understand and participate in Shared Leadership?
2028 Grow Outward-focused Leadership	
What does the leadership need to know about welcoming new people? Who should be invited to our leadership tables?	What spiritual practices are central to our way of being church, regardless of where we find ourselves?
2029 Innovate	
What does the St. Matthew Shared Leadership School look like?	How can our faith formation for adults be expanded beyond members?
2030 Ongoing Evaluation	
What have we learned? Set new goals for Shared Leadership.	What have we learned? Do we still need this hub or can the council manage this?



Connect with children, youth, and families

For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.

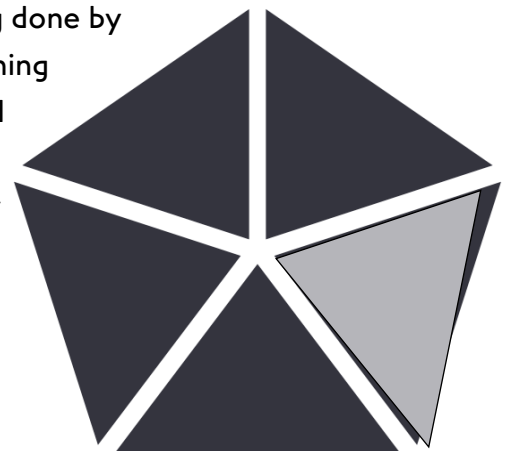
- Acts 2:39 [NRSV]

Most of us have been taught that children, youth, and families faith formation is for people who come to church. Our member-centric understanding has distracted us from seeing the potential of a wider vision that understands all children in our neighborhood as God's children and therefore included in our ministry. In many ways we are reclaiming an older vision. Did you know that Sunday School was first launched in 1780 to educate poor children, most of whom worked in factories during the other six days of the week?

Our questions are different today. We can have blind spots when we compare family life today to the way we were raised, or maybe even the way we raised our children.

St. Matthew has a high value of ministry with children, youth, and families that we believe should include young people and their caregivers in our building, and the surrounding areas. There is a lot to learn about the lives of these people, these families.

The initial listening done by our Strategic Planning Team has revealed opportunities for us to further study and respond with new partnerships as we care for the most vulnerable.



Connect with children, youth and families in the congregation, Hanover, and surrounding area.

2023 data points for the 17331 Zip Code worth noting:

- The median income: \$64,135
- The per capita income in the last 12 months is \$35,747
- Persons in poverty: 13.5%
- High school graduates: 86.5%
- Bachelor's degree or higher: 16.4%
- People without health insurance: 6.8%
- White: 83.6%
- Black: 3.1%
- Hispanic: 10.4%
- Two or more races: 8.6%
- Persons under 18 years old: 20.8%
- Persons 65 years and over: 18.8 %

* Data from [Census.gov/quickfacts/](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/)

We will commission a Hub of leaders with a focus on children, youth, and families. The objectives for this shared leadership is to prioritize:

Supporting Children:

Pre-school and elementary school families that use St. Matthew's building or are nearby are a priority to our congregation. As we focus on their faith formation, we will also support gaps in their care as we invest in their families.

Supporting Youth:

Middle and high school students are seldom connected to the church unless their parents are active, but they will come if they are invited into leadership. We will learn by listening to these students and their caregivers to grow a ministry beyond church members. What if the youth were joining the church on their own because the congregation was so supportive of their lives?

Children	Youth
2025 Build the Hub	
Design and host quarterly gatherings of parents, educators, counselors and partners to learn what preschool children and their families need for spiritual, emotional, and relational health. What is ours to do?	Listen to middle and high school students. What questions are they asking? How can we equip caregivers to support the teens in their faith? What support do caregivers and parents need?
2026 Experiment	
Try new partnerships with preschools, teachers, and parents. What do busy parents need? Where should we host this?	Equip youth to lead in the congregation and neighborhood. Create spaces (like day camp) for practicing faith and life.
2027 Increase Hospitality	
What needs to change at church for parents of young children to feel welcome? To lead?	What needs to happen for youth to bring their friends to church? To meaningful community?
2028 Grow Children and Youth in Leadership	
Create an emphasis on faith in the home with teacher, parent and grandparent support. Host meaningful outreach experiments for families of young children.	Add new, trained, adult leaders to youth ministry as mentors. Experiment with youth small group ministry. Incorporate youth in leadership of groups.
2029 Innovate	
Continue to innovate with parents as partners. Encourage children to share their gifts at church.	Listen and respond to the hearts of young people. Invite students into peer ministry.
2030 Ongoing Evaluation	
What have we learned? Set new goals for children and youth.	What have we learned?



Bridge the Gap with Home Insecure Neighbors

Love your neighbor as yourself.

-Mark 12:30-31 [NRSV]

Our listening revealed the unexpected housing challenges in Hanover and surrounding communities. We learned enough to recognize that this is a goal for St. Matthew that includes partnership. While there are congregations and organizations supporting un-homed people, as we listened, it became clear that there are certain threats that make families vulnerable to losing their home (owned or rented.) We feel called to discover an asset approach—what does it take for people to stay in their place of residence? What are the accompanying needs that families have when faced with the risk of losing their home?

Our care for children and elderly make this a priority as they are the most vulnerable.

We have a lot to learn as we discover our role in supporting our neighbors in staying in their homes. New partnerships, including relationships with home-insecure neighbors will help us engage as a faithful friend.



Partner with organizations and community efforts to bridge gaps with home-insecure neighbors.

We will discern what needs of home insecure people align with the values and strategic direction of St. Matthew. Is it unhoused youth wrestling with their sexual orientation? Is it unhoused mothers trying to gain work to feed their children? Is it unhoused people recovering from addiction? What is the healing ministry St. Matthew is called to support?

We will commission a team of people who will learn more about the housing needs in our community.

Our focus will be to discover what is most helpful for people as they are in transitions that make housing a challenge in their life. We will identify partners who share a passion for keeping people in their homes or helping people find a home to stabilize their life.

We will engage in advocacy for unhoused and home insecure people through local community initiatives. Discover the gaps in the community associated with housing.

Note: In Hanover, of those currently in a home, about 50% are renters and 50% are home owners. The challenges facing people to stay in their homes includes both of these demographics. The renters are often the most vulnerable. Changes in employment, health, age, addiction, or many other factors make a home at risk for so many. Children cannot thrive in school when their home is insecure. The mental health of all ages is threatened through a lack of housing.

Home-Insecure	Related Concerns
2025 Build the Hub	
Listen to potential partners to learn all we can about the gap faced by people who are home-insecure. Work to fill this gap. Equip and engage the congregation in this ministry.	Search for partners that can support related concerns experienced by the home-insecure. Who can support mental health care, food, medication, etc.?
2026 Experiment	
Partner with organizations and community efforts to bridge gaps. Learn what is ours to do.	Experiment with select partners to address needs.
2027 Increase Hospitality	
Welcome people with home-insecurity and partners to be part of the ministry of St. Matthew. Commission these leaders.	Invite the St. Matthew congregation to participate in supporting our home-insecure neighbors.
2028 Grow disciples in new ways	
What does church look like for un-homed people? What is St. Matthew's call to disciple people as they live in uncertainty?	What are the little things that become big barriers keeping people home-insecure? How can we remove obstacles?
2029 Innovate	
What new need has arisen that we should build new partnerships to solve?	What is missing in the support system?
2030 Ongoing Evaluation	
What have we learned? Set new goals for greater inclusion.	What have we learned?



Build Authentic Relationships Across Differences

How good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

-Psalm 133:1 [NRSV]

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

-Galatians 3:28 [NRSV]

Our core value to embracing one another as God created us is an invitation to understand people from diverse life-experiences and perspectives. As St. Matthew prioritizes on children, youth, and families in Hanover and the surrounding areas we know this includes generational differences as well as some ethnic, language, gender, and sexual diversity. We see this as a strength—becoming more like Jesus as we love our neighbors as ourselves.

If we are honest, this is a point of growth for all of us. Most people tend to build relationships with people who are more similar to themselves, so learning to bridge differences is important. We will

use proven methods for crossing the difference divide, with structured conversation and thoughtful questions. This is an important way our congregation can be part of helping our country heal across a variety of perspectives.



Build authentic relationships across differences by practicing sincere hospitality, listening to each other, and embracing one another as God created us.

Listen with an open heart to the stories of our faith, our congregation, and our neighbors. Prepare the congregation to welcome new people to church, including home-insecure families.

Discover blind spots in our congregation to raise our personal and community awareness as we walk with our neighbors.

We will commission a Hub of leaders who will focus on hospitality as St. Matthew welcomes all people. Learn what Christian hospitality means to people of all ages, recognizing that young families, single people, empty-nesters, and retired people have differing understandings of what it means to be included in a faith community. Teach what is learned to the congregation as we expand our welcome to each generation.

Engage and include a wider team of volunteers in all aspects of St. Matthew's ministry. Invite and support new people serving as ushers, greeters, teachers, mentors, worship leaders and church council leaders.

Over time this can include a better understanding of what generosity, leadership, and service looks like to people from different worldviews. By engaging our curiosity about differences we will also have a deeper understanding of who God is, as we are all made in God's image.

Authentic Relationships	Crossing Differences
2025 Build the Hub	
Invest in understanding what helps people from diverse backgrounds feel truly welcome at church. Live into new practices that encourage engagement, belonging, and genuine hospitality.	Welcome people of all backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives into leadership. Practice listening across differences—generational, cultural, and personal—to discover how those differences strengthen our community. Teach the congregation what is learned.
2026 Experiment	
Host gatherings that foster meaningful connections across differences. Ask: Who is missing from our leadership and ministries? Build relationships that ensure all people feel valued and cared for.	Host <i>Three Circle Practices</i> by Jim Henderson and Jim Hancock, to truly listen to people across differences.
2027 Increase Hospitality	
Engage the whole congregation as a welcome center! How will we welcome all people? What needs to change?	Prepare the congregation to welcome our neighbors by building deeper relationships. What barriers need to be lowered?
2028 Grow a diverse community	
Create intentional ways to welcome people who are part of Hanover and surrounding communities. Continue to welcome new people.	Welcome people who are not members into leadership (other than council) as they explore what it means to belong to a church.
2029 Innovate	
What needs to be created to help St. Matthew be the most welcoming church?	Notice blind spots and learn more about this. Teach the church.
2030 Ongoing Evaluation	
What have we learned? Set new goals that include home-insecure people.	What have we learned?

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.



Staff Alignment

The staff at St. Matthew are important as this plan unfolds. The following recommendations are offered as these faithful leaders discern the best way to incorporate these five goals in their work.

1. Encouraging Staff Collaboration, Learning, and Alignment

Focus on Hubs: The Leadership Hubs foster collaboration by connecting staff across areas of expertise. For instance:

- **Children, Youth, and Families Hub:** Aligns with the Enliven faith through worship and learning Hub to better engage children and youth.
- **Home-Insecure Hub:** Collaborates with the Authentic Relationship Hub to welcome new people and navigate diversity.

2. Adaptive Leadership: Staff are encouraged to align calendars, programs, and expectations to support cross-ministry work. This practice will help navigate the intersections of new ministry opportunities.

3. Transitioning to Empower Lay Leaders

- Staff will focus on equipping lay leaders for ministry rather than taking on all tasks themselves.
- An intentional focus will be placed on inviting and integrating new members of all ages into leadership roles.
- Experienced leaders will mentor newer participants, ensuring knowledge and skills are shared across generations.
- Building supportive and empowering systems for leadership development will be key to this strategy.

4. Creating Opportunities for Staff to Learn and Grow

- Staff are encouraged to dedicate 10% of their time to exploring new passions, learning opportunities, and spiritual practices.
- Staff accountabilities for welcoming and equipping others in ministry will take encouragement and new skills.

5. Increasing Congregational and Community Partnerships

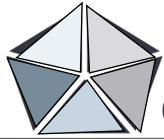
- Recognizing limited staffing capacity, partnerships beyond congregational leaders may play a vital role in accomplishing new ministry goals.
- Collaborations within the Hanover community will create fresh opportunities for ministry and shared mission.

Summary

This approach fosters curiosity and creates space for staff and volunteers to discern callings, discover new gifts, and expand ministries. The staff roles may shift from direct ministry to empowering others in ways they never imagined.

The Council will support consistent self-care, expecting the staff to integrate new work and existing work with appropriate time off, vacation, and continuing education based on contract or call.

This approach ensures that St. Matthew's staff have a high commitment to leading a quality ministry, support one another, and plans ahead. The ministry will be dynamic, adaptive, and inclusive while strengthening both staff and lay leaders in serving the congregation and the broader community.



Council Leadership

The council at St. Matthew have three essential roles as this plan unfolds.

1. Shared Leadership Hub:

This goal is of particular interest to the council as the heart of shared leadership includes a shift in the overall leadership culture. Rather than our traditional practice of having the council make most key decisions, this is a clear shift to drive ministry into the hands of more leaders. This has many benefits, including the freedom of time available for the council to pray, learn, and steward all five goals. Most importantly, the council becomes the central visioning hub of the congregation. This includes making policy decisions that support the vision as needed.

The meetings at the council table will initially feel different than current practices as the council makes these shifts:

- Organizes meetings around a Consent Agenda.
- 25% of time spent in prayer and scripture study.
- 25% of time spent learning about the neighborhood, generational groups, and trends.
- 25% of time spent guiding the congregations vision and strategic goals.
- 25% of time doing congregational business.

This is a culture change that encourages the council to delegate to ministry hubs who will oversee their portion of the budget and use new learnings to drive ministry decisions.

2. Staff Relationship

The council will work closely with the staff to learn about the neighborhood and guide the congregation's vision. The lead pastor will continue

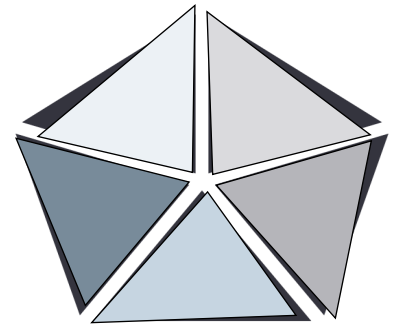
to serve as head of staff. Other staff and Hub leadership will be included in Council conversations when the council is focused on that area of ministry. A schedule can be formed in advance on a rotating basis. Strategic Hub Gatherings led by the council might be held as follows (see underlined). Here is an example of these shifts:

- January:** Onboard new members
- February:** Cultivating Shared Leadership
- March:** Worshiping God and Growing Faith
- April:** Connecting with Children, Youth, and Families
- May:** Bridging Gaps with home-insecure neighbors
- June:** Building Authentic Relationships Across Difference
- July:** Mid-year Goal Review
- August:** Worshiping God and Growing Faith, Begin budgeting process in partnership with the hubs for the next year in alignment with objectives for each goal.
- September:** Connecting with Children, Youth, and Families
- October:** Building Authentic Relationships Across Difference
- November:** Building Authentic Relationships Across Differences
- December:** Evaluate the year

This approach ensures that St. Matthew's ministry remains dynamic, adaptive, and inclusive while strengthening both staff and lay leaders to serve the congregation and the broader community. These practices of sharing leadership will encourage new people into leadership.



Glossary of Terms



Experiments: A method employed by congregational leaders during periods of change to test their insights or problem-solve by implementing ideas with minimal risk to the overall ministry. This adaptive strategy enables rapid, iterative learning at a lower cost and commitment than launching a new program or project.

Generations: Identifying with a generation serves as shorthand for referencing shared cultural experiences, technological advances, and behaviors shaped by significant historical events. Generational identity influences faith formation, language, perceptions of God, marketing preferences, healthcare, and retirement. Each generation spans approximately fifteen years, encompassing Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha.

Hub: A dedicated group of teams and leaders united by shared goals and aligned commitments. A hub may consist of several ministry teams functioning under a strategic umbrella to achieve collective objectives.

Learning: The primary strategy during significant change is adaptive leadership. This discovery process acknowledges that past understandings may no longer be effective. We lead with the intention of learning to uncover new insights that will inform future leadership.

Micro-Church Movement: Churches can take various forms, often without a physical building. They may operate in homes or public spaces and typically decentralize leadership, sharing responsibilities among a team rather than relying on a paid pastor. While there may be minimal programming and no designated Sunday service, the focus remains on making new disciples and supporting individuals in their faith journeys. These communities prioritize developing new leaders, reproducing churches, and expanding their reach, regardless of their connection to larger church communities.

Peer Ministry: Ministry or care provided for individuals within the same generation. This approach is particularly effective for new or young leaders, as mentors and mentees often share similar curiosities and concerns.

Priesthood of All Believers: The belief that all baptized Christians are called to share in Christ's ministry, serving God and others without needing an ordained intermediary. This emphasizes that every believer has gifts for leadership, service, and spreading the gospel.

Shared Ministry/ Leadership: A leadership practice that intentionally connects staff, lay leaders, and neighborhood partners to carry out the church's ministry. This learning community thrives when individuals from diverse generations, educational backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures collaborate on ministry initiatives.

Spiritual Practices: Intentional experiences and behaviors that deepen a person's faith and foster encounters with the sacred. Examples include prayer, walking a labyrinth, going on a pilgrimage, serving those in need, and journaling.

Three Practice Circle: A structured approach for engaging in deep, meaningful conversations across differences. This methodology promotes listening and respectful sharing of diverse perspectives, as outlined in the book *3 Practices for Crossing the Difference Divide* by Jim Henderson and Jim Hancock.