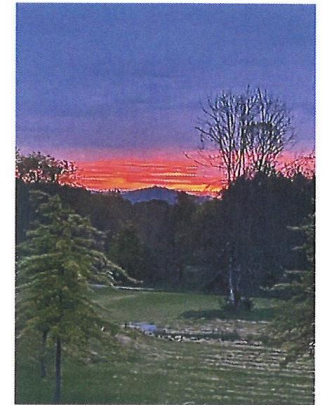


Season's Greetings!

I feel like I'm behind in getting into the holiday spirit. Maybe it's because Advent starts late this year—the second Sunday after Thanksgiving, not the first. Maybe it's because the vacation I usually take in October I didn't take until November—and having been in another time zone, it's taken even longer than usual to adjust to the time change. Maybe it's because the youth event that happens before Christmas is requiring more immediate attention. But whatever the reason, even though Thanksgiving is over, I haven't decorated the tree or broken out the ugly sweater; it isn't beginning to feel a lot like Christmas at my house yet.



I thoroughly enjoy sitting in my living room when its decorated for the holidays, and I believe it does change my mood and my mindset, but even if the tree were never to make it out of the attic, Christmas would arrive anyway. I hope you find that comforting, as I do, especially if you ever find yourself “running out of time” to finish all the preparations you intend to make.

That, too, is the meaning of Christmas: that God comes to us, whether we are ready or not. If a census, an ill-timed journey from Nazareth, and a full inn couldn't keep Jesus from being born in Bethlehem, neither will anything keep God from us—whether things done or things left undone. So deck all the halls if it will feed your soul this season; but rest assured that Emmanuel—God with us—meets you right where you are, this and every day.

*Peace,
Pastor Traci*

Worship Schedule for December

10:30 AM Worship in the Sanctuary—Full Spoken Liturgy of Word & Sacrament with Communion every Sunday

Christmas Eve Service: December 24 - will have a Candlelight Communion Service at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 31 - service of the Lessons & Carols at 10:30 a.m.



Mitten Tree

Our Mitten Tree is available to be decorated with mittens, hats, gloves, scarves, socks and earmuffs near the entrance to the Sanctuary until Sunday, December 17. All these items will be distributed to needy children at the local elementary schools before Christmas

Any donations of money can be placed in a pew envelope marked with "Mitten Tree". These will be used to purchase needed items. Help children have a warmer Winter

Change of Address

Ruth Johnson
318 Bassler St
Martinsburg, PA 16662-1417



Longest Night Dinner & Worship



People have celebrated the winter solstice since they first recognized the darkest time of year and therefore the beginning of a return to longer, brighter days. In recognition

that this season can be difficult, especially for those who feel loss more keenly during the holidays, we will be gathering for dinner at 6PM and worship at 7PM on Thursday, December 21st to spend the longest night together in community. The meal and the worship service will be held in the Fellowship Hall.

2024 Offering Envelopes



Everyone who is a confirmed member or is a visitor and has requested envelopes receives Offering Envelopes.

The Offering Envelopes will be MAILED directly to your homes monthly.

Please **do not use** the "**Initial Offering Envelope**" until 2024.

The other options for offering or tithing are below:

Ways to Support St. Matthew

Offering Envelopes: These are mailed to our contributors at their homes monthly.

❖ if you would like to use the "**Simply Giving**" on-line program of automatic bank drafts from your checking account. (*Forms are in the church office.*)

Giving Online: St. Matthew is excited to announce that you can now manage your giving online! Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions from anywhere you have access to the Internet. Simply follow these easy steps:

- 1) Visit the church website at "**www.stmatthewlc.com**"
- 2) Click on the "**Give**" button, (on the top white banner)
- 3) Follow the onscreen instructions to create an online profile and to schedule your recurring contributions.

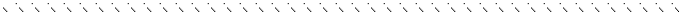
Mobile Giving: Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions. Electronic giving offers convenience for individuals and provides much-needed donation consistency for our congregation. Simply follow these easy steps:

- 1) Visit "**Play Store on your mobile device**"
- 2) Find the "**Vanco Payment**" app (this is free)
- 3) Click on the "**Install**" button
- 4) Open the app on your device
- 5) Follow the onscreen instructions to schedule your one time contribution or recurring contributions.



Thank you to St. Matthew Women for the \$30.00 donation to the Martinsburg Food Pantry in memory of Rev. Shaffer. It is appreciated!

Linda Smith



Martinsburg Food Pantry

We will be open for food distribution on Thursdays, December 7 and December 21 from 9:00am until 11:00am. Volunteers from Refined Community Church will be assisting along with the regular helpers. There are 12 churches, one for each month that help at the food pantry.

Holiday foods will be the focus in December: Beverages, Canned Fruit, Scalloped Potatoes, Vegetables and Paper Towels.

We are grateful for the tremendous response of giving over the holidays!

Please place any of these foods in the basket at church. Many thanks to all who generously gave all year to the Food Pantry! It is greatly appreciated!

Linda Smith



The *Stewardship* December newsletter is now available attached to the December Messenger email and at the usher station.



A Stewardship Moment DECEMBER 2023

There is a compelling sentence in an article found in the December issue of *Stewardship*:

“Let us not be ashamed to have the Lord look not only at our gifts, but also into our hearts.”

Christmas, of course, is basically all about giving. Christians understand that the first Christmas giver was God. As the Gospel of John puts it, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

It is because of that incomparable gift that we Christians are stirred to be givers ourselves. We give because God has given to us greatly and generously. We respond to God’s blessed gift to us by giving back to God through God’s church and Christian institutions that strive to meet the needs of those suffering from various causes. Christmas inspires us to also give to others: family members and friends whom we love and cherish.

We need to remember that we give because God has given to us first. We give because our hearts are greatly appreciative of what God has given to us: our families, our lives, our talents, and so forth. But we give mainly because of the gift God gave us in Christ who saves us, sustains us, and who gives us meaning, hope, and joy as we live out our life’s journey from now to eternity.

Prayer: Loving God, we rejoice in your bountiful gifts to us day in and day out. We thank you most of all for your matchless gift of Christ our Lord, whose birthday we joyfully celebrate again. In his name we pray. **Amen.**

A **Stewardship Minute** is available to subscribers of **Stewardship** at www.parishpublishing.org.

Birthdays for December

02	Chris Cronrath	10	Andrea McGraw	18	Larry Irvin
	Alexis Hicks	11	Mace Baker	19	Tonya F. Walter
	Kyla Paul		Leah Park	21	Tyson Rodgers
03	Cathy Henzler	12	Samantha Tremmel	27	Beth N. Snyder
	Norah Kuster	14	Jennifer Metzler	28	Noah Metzler
05	G. Devin Baker	15	Emily Gunnett	30	Carlos A. Lamborn
06	Gloria Guyer		John Russell	31	Ivy Haffling
	Katherine Orczeck		Rev. Anamae Storbeck		
08	Elizabeth Bithell	16	Janet I. Kreider		
	Beth Garner	17	Russell G. Dickson		
	Joshua W. Gilbert		Ed C. Kreider		

Anniversaries for December

13	Mark & Debra Guyer	24	Dennis R. & Barbara A. Brown
19	Glenn & Elaine L. Diehl	26	James A. & Janet F. Stewart
		30	Adam & Ashley Zanfino



May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ child this Christmas Season.

*From the staff of
St. Matthew Lutheran Church:
Pastor Traci, Jen, Laura, Phil, Camden,
Mary, De and Jay*



Cove Christmas Love

The Martinsburg ministerium is again helping to provide presents for children in need through Cove Christmas Love. We will have an additional tree in the nave with tags identifying the Christmas wishes of the recipients; our congregation's goal for this year is to provide 90 presents through this initiative. Please take a tag (or tags) no later than TODAY Sunday, December 3rd and shop for the items listed, returning them WITH THE TAG no later than Sunday, December 10th. You can direct any questions to Peggy Steinfurth. Thank you for sharing with the community in this time of Christmas cheer.

Snow Camp 2024

"Sabbath in the Snow"

Friday-Sunday, February 2-4
Camp Sequanota, Jennerstown PA
6th - 12th Grade

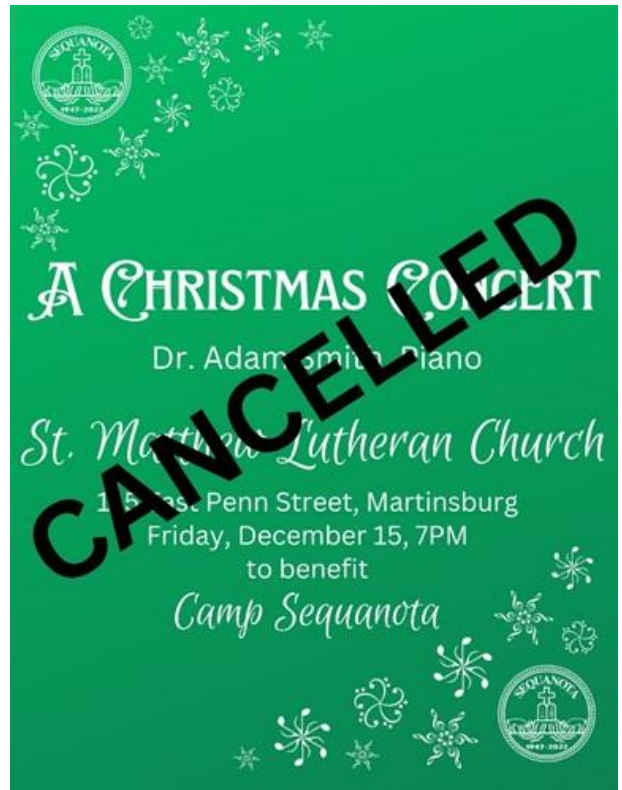
Games, Crafts, Food, Sledding, Worship, & Learning
Accommodations in Sequanota's Winterized Cabins

Register from December 15 to January 20 at www.sequanota.com

Families are asked to pay \$10; St. Matthew will cover the rest.

Please contact Pastor Traci with any questions.

****Adult Helper(s) Welcome!****



Advent Concert: Canceled

Because of an unexpected conflict, we regret that Dr. Smith's concert is cancelled.

2023 National Youth Gathering Christmas Candy Sale

We are offering our famous:

_____ White Chocolate Peppermint Bark for \$6.50 per half pound

_____ Dark Chocolate Peppermint Bark for \$6.50 per half pound



Orders will be accepted through Sunday, December 3, 2023
All proceeds benefit youth attending the National Youth Gathering.



Payment is due at pick-up Sun., Dec. 17, 2023.

Checks made payable to: St. Matthew Lutheran Church

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Order forms also are available at the usher station. Place form in the offering plate, or return it to the office.

SERVING GOD AND US December 2023

Date	December 3 Congregational Mtg.	December 10	December 17 Youth Sunday	December 24	December 24 Christmas Eve	December 31 Lessons & Carols
Acolytes	Lily Lightner	Lucy Lightner	Calleigh Wright	TBD	Jay Hoenstine Mace Baker Max Baker	TBD
Lectors	Linda Smith	Carla Brumbaugh	Youth	Jane Fagans	AJ Hoenstine	TBD
Ushers	Martie Gilbert	Stanley Smith	Ed Kreider	Paul Decker		Tina Harclerode
Assist. Min.	Jane Fagans	Greg Haffling	Youth	TBD	TBD	Tina Harclerode
Altar Guild	Jean Sinal Cindy Snyder Jane Fagans	Jean Sinal Cindy Snyder Jane Fagans	Jean Sinal Cindy Snyder Jane Fagans	Jean Sinal Cindy Snyder Jane Fagans	Jean Sinal Cindy Snyder Jane Fagans	Jean Sinal Cindy Snyder Jane Fagans
Audio/Video	Camden Kuster	Jay Hoenstine	Camden Kuster	Jay Hoenstine	Jay Hoenstine	Camden Kuster
Offering Counters	Jim Barley Beth Garner	Jim Barley Beth Garner	Jim Barley Beth Garner	Jim Barley Beth Garner	Jim Barley Beth Garner	Jim Barley Beth Garner

2023 COUNCIL DIRECTORY AND MINISTRY STAFF

All phone numbers start with (814) unless otherwise noted.

Pastor	Rev. Traci Marriott	935-9267	Christian Ed.	Jean Sinal	793-9507
Admin. Assist.	Jen Ripka	935-3801	Evangelism	Michael Lamborn	793-4212
Financial Bookkeeper	Laura Orczeck	224-1208	Stewardship	Vacant	
President	Martie Gilbert	793-4461	Finance	Jim Barley	793-4623
Vice President	Greg Haffling	793-9827	Social Ministry	Tina Harclerode	317-5312
Secretary	Elaine Smith	(434) 981-0560	Worship & Music	Jane Fagans	793-4401
Treasurer	Beth Garner	793-3966	Staff Support	Kaye Burket	224-5224
Financial Secretary	Vacant		Sexton	Phil Claar	215-0885
Property	Ed Kreider	793-4302			

HIGHLIGHTS BY COUNCIL IN NOVEMBER 2023

1. Services are planned in December for Christmas Eve morning and an evening candlelight service. There will also be a longest night meal and service in the fellowship hall on December 21.
2. DeAnna Cree, the new organist, will first accompany the congregation on Sunday, November 26.
3. Heard concerns about the decreased level of weekly offerings and an approximate \$50,000 deficit in year-to-date giving.
4. Approved a proposed 2024 budget for \$188, 996, representing a 11.34% decrease in spending compared to 2023's budget. The budget will be recommended for congregational approval at the December 3 rd annual meeting.
5. St. Matthew assisted with the Community Meal at the Church of God on November 6, and there was record attendance.
6. St. Matthew will participate in Cove Christmas Love by supporting 6 families. Ages and gift preferences of the children will be provided.
7. Final inspection of the wheelchair platform lift into the fellowship hall is expected soon and when passed, the lift will be usable.
8. Plans for the concrete work at the Maple Street entrance have been received and approved. The property committee will now solicit bids for a contractor with scheduling of the job projected for early spring. The temporary fix by Duane Smith was appreciated.
9. Accepted the gift acceptance and use policy which will now be presented for approval at the December 3 rd congregational meeting.
10. The nominating committee has identified candidates for 5 of the 2024 Council openings. Nominees are still needed for evangelism, stewardship, staff support, and social ministry Council positions.

Donations of Cookies and Treats requested

The Social Ministry/Fellowship Committees will prepare and deliver Christmas Treat boxes to our Shut-in members, on Monday, December 11, 2023, at 1:30 pm in the church kitchen.

We are asking for your donations of cookies, snack mixes (i.e. Chex Party mix), candy, fudge, etc., to fill the boxes.

Bring your donations to the church by 1:30 pm on the 11th.

Please indicate below your donation and the amount. If you are able to help assemble and deliver the Boxes indicate your intent as well. Place in the offering plate, or Jane Fagans or Tina Harclerode's mailbox.

Yes, I will donate (indicate amount) _____ cookies, _____
candy/fudge; _____ other treats

For treat boxes for the shut-ins.

I will help assemble treat boxes on the 11th. _____



December 2023

St. Matthew Lutheran Church
 115 E Penn St., Martinsburg, PA 16662-1127
 Email: stmatthewmartinsburg@gmail.com
 814-793-2413



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
FH—Fellowship Hall CL—Church Lounges QR—Quilt Room WR— Window Room K—Kitchen In case of emergency, Pastor Traci maybe reached at 814-935-9267 Jen will be in the Office Mon.-Fri. from 9:00 am-12:00 pm	CE—Christian Ed Office QR—Quilt Room WR— Window Room K—Kitchen In case of emergency, Pastor Traci maybe reached at 814-935-9267					
3 1st Sunday of Advent 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship in Sanctuary 3:00-5:00 p.m. Fellowship Hall In Use	4 6:00 pm Worship & Music Meeting Zoom Only 6:00 pm Cub/Boy Scouts	5	6 1-4 pm Pastor in Office	7	8 Pastor's Sabbath	9 Fellowship Hall in Use 8 am—4 pm
10 2nd Sunday of Advent 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship in Sanctuary The Weekend Synod Event grades 6-12	11 1:00 pm Fellowship Committee boxing cookies and treats for shut-ins, Kitchen 6:00 pm Cub/Boy Scouts	12 6:30 pm Council Mtg., WR/Zoom	13 1-4 pm Pastor in Office	14	15	16
17 3rd Sunday of Advent Youth Sunday 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship in Sanctuary Messenger Deadline	18 6:00 pm Cub/Boy Scouts	19	20 10 am Staff Meeting, FH 1-4 pm Pastor in Office	21 Longest Night Service with meal, FH 6:00 pm Meal 7:00 pm Service	22 Pastor's Sabbath	23
24 4th Sunday of Advent 9:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship in Sanctuary 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Candle-Light Service	25 Office Closed	26	27	28	29 Pastor's Sabbath	30
31 10:30 am Service of Lessons & Carols with Communion	1 Office Closed					