Saint Matthew LUTHERAN CHURCH

St. Matthew's Messenger

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church
115 E. Penn Street, Martinsburg, PA 16662-1127

Phone 814-793-2413 ● Fax 814.614-4003 ●e-mail stmatthewmartinsburg@gmail.com
● web: www.stmatthewlc.com Facebook: www.facebook.com/stmatthewlc

Volume 66 **DECEMBER 2026** Number 12

Greetings People of God:

As much as I resist the cold and the dark, I'm relieved that the leaves are mostly off the trees. Walking Angus has been such a challenge lately because every leaf that skitters across our path grabs his attention. As those distractions test my patience, I try to remember that for me, falling leaves are the most predictable part of this season, but for Angus, who wasn't even alive this time last year, this phenomenon is entirely new.

As the church, as families, and as individuals, this time of year can tax our patience and deplete our energy; we do so much to prepare for the holidays in such a short time. Many of us who do this preparatory work in the church have been doing it for years if not decades. We may wonder if it's really worth repeating the effort yet one more time.

In September I was fortunate to spend a few days at the annual Stewardship Kaleidoscope conference in Baltimore. Although some of the workshops focused on specific practical applications, the event overall served as a reminder that we are stewards of the story of God's love made manifest in Jesus Christ. All of the work, paid and volunteer, that we do in the church, all of the offerings and expense, all of the effort to keep traditions alive—all of that is, or is meant to, tell the story of the creative, redemptive, sustaining love of God.

Some of us may know that story inside and out, but for others, it's entirely new. This may be the first time a neighbor is bold enough to investigate the candlelight flickering in the nave on Christmas Eve, the first year your grandchild realizes who that is in the manger. As we work together in this busy time of year, even doing work that we've done dozens of times before, may we be enlivened and encouraged in telling the story that has and will transform the world.

Peace,
Pastor Traci





Mitten Tree

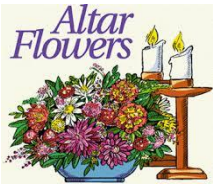
Coming soon will be the first Sunday in Advent, November 29th when our annual "Mitten Tree" will arrive! Please be thinking as you shop, or make Children's mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, earmuffs, or socks to be hung on our "Mitten Tree" during Advent until December 20th. These will be distributed by the school nurse at the Spring Cove Elementary Schools for children in need. Let's help children have a warmer Winter!



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, Sheila and Jay

Altar Flowers



The 2027 Altar Flower chart is posted on the Narthex bulletin board. Altar Flowers are a perfect way to remember loved ones or to honor loved ones. Please sign up now for the Sunday you wish to place flowers on the Altar. Cost is $40.00 with checks made payable to St. Matthew Flower Fund. Questions regarding Altar Flowers can be directed to either Elaine Smith or Mary Nelson.

2027 Offering Envelopes

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The Offering Envelopes are mailed directly to your homes monthly. Please let the office know if you would like added to the mailing list.

Please do not use the "Initial Offering Envelope" until 2027.

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.

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 "Giving" button, (at the left side of the main screen)
3) Follow the onscreen instructions to create an online profile and to schedule your recurring contributions.

QRCode Offerings:

1) Hold your mobile phone in the camera position over the "QR Code"
2) A link will pop up on your phone and tap the link
3) Follow the instructions on your phone.

Stewardship
a way of life

A Stewardship Minute
DECEMBER 2026

The December issue ***Stewardship*** has an article about the many blessings, both spiritual and material blessings, each of us has received. We should stop and consider the goodness of God to us every minute of every hour.

The article reminds the reader of God's greatest blessing to the world: *God's gift of Jesus Christ*. Oh, how we need to remind ourselves of God's gift of love in the person of our Lord Jesus and our salvation through him.

What does Christmas remind us of? Giving, of course. And that is what stewardship is all about. God gave and so we are prompted to give. We have received life from God, and therefore we thank God by giving of our time, our talent, our resources, and our love.

In the newsletter, there is another challenging article that has these words:

"Every day is a time to reflect on all that God has given you and a time to share and care about others."

I suggest that each of us take the time to read one of the four Gospels before Christmas day. Read about how Jesus went about "doing good." Then ask yourself if you are doing the same. Christ's loving service challenges us all.

Prayer: Merciful and loving God, keep challenging us to be good stewards, good followers of Jesus our Lord that we may hear you say "Well done good and faithful servant." **Amen**

Martinsburg Food Pantry



We will be open for Food Distributions on Thursdays, December 3 and December 17 from 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m.

Volunteers from Redefined Community Church will be assisting along with regular volunteers. There are 12 churches, one for each month, that help at the pantry.

Items most needed for December: Juice, Hamburger/Tuna Helper, Fruit, Peanut Butter/Jelly, Baked Beans, and Paper Products.

We thank St. Matthew Women for the donation in memory of Rev. Shaffer.

Many thanks to those who generously have given all year the Food Pantry!

Linda Smith

Cove Christmas Love



The Martinsburg Ministerium is, again, helping to provide presents for Spring Cove School Children in need. We have a tree in the church narthex with tags identifying the Christmas wishes of the recipients. Our congregation's goal for this year is to provide gifts for about 20 children through Cove Christmas Love. Shop for the item(s) listed on tag and return the unwrapped gift(s), WITH THE TAG, no later than Sunday, DECEMBER 7th You can direct any questions to Peggy Steinfurth or Linda Smith. Thank you for sharing with the community as we help families in need at this time of Christmas cheer!



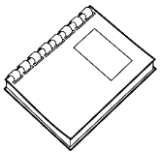
Advent Devotionals provided by On Eagle's Wings missionaries are available at the Usher Station.

Congregational Meeting



This year's Annual Congregational Meeting will be held at the end of the 10:30 a.m. worship service on Sunday, December 6th. Copies of the 2027 Proposed Congregational Budget, 2027 recommendations for Ventures In Faith and Special Envelopes, and Giving Report are available at the usher station or the church office. The congregation will be asked to approve these proposals for 2027 at the 2026 Annual Congregational Meeting. If you have questions about the budget in advance of the meeting, please contact Finance Committee Chair Jim Barley.

2026 Parish Directory / 2025 Annual Report



Copies of the 2026 Parish Directory / 2025 Annual Report are now available at the Usher Station. There is a copy of the Parish Directory at the Usher Station with a red pen attached to mark any needed corrections/updates that you find. Thank you for your assistance in keeping the Directory current. If you need a copy of the Parish Directory/Annual Report mailed or delivered to you, please contact the church office.

Social Ministry Committee Corner

Social Ministry Committee will be assembling Christmas Blessing Bags on Wednesday December 9th at 9 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

They will be distributed by members of the Social Ministry Committee to our homebound and Nursing Home residents in December. This will be our last project for 2026.

As we prepare for the Christmas season, Social Ministry Committee members would like to send these Christmas messages:

May the joy of Christmas fill your heart with love, your life with purpose, and YOU be the gift that keeps on giving throughout the New Year.

And also give thanks for all you have, find joy in giving to others, and celebrate the Love of Christ that fills our hearts.

Merry Christmas!
Lottie Ebersole, Social Ministry Committee Chairperson

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Social Ministry Committee assembling care packages for our college students.
Photos submitted by Jean Sinal

New Bible Study Opportunity

Thanks to the work of the Go Tell It IN The Mountains team, a new Bible Study opportunity will be available each week.

We will meet together in the Window Room and video conference with leaders and other participants from Allegheny, Upper Susquehanna, and North West Pennsylvania Synods. You can also access the study by Zoom from your home. These lectionary studies will cover the upcoming Sunday's gospel and other readings as time permits, from 6:30PM to 7:30PM on Wednesdays.



HIGHLIGHTS BY COUNCIL IN NOVEMBER 2026

1. St. Matthew will participate in Cove Christmas Love. Choose a tag from the Christmas tree and return gifts to the church by December 7.
2. The Social Ministry committee distributed take-out meals to St. Matthew homebound persons from the Community Thanksgiving Meal. They were able to do this in exchange for St. Matthew providing desserts to serve 80 people for the meal. Thank-you to all who contributed!!
3. The Evangelism committee began scheduling greeters for Sunday services.
4. Don Bulger has been working on nominations for the following open positions on council for 2027: Vice President, Stewardship, Social Ministry, and Nominating Committee (1 opening). Please contact Don if you are interested in filling any of these positions.

Talk-O Tuesday



Feliz Navidad

Fellowship, Food, & Faith Conversation
Tuesday, December 15th at 6PM
La Fiesta at the Airport
RSVP to the office by Noon

Journey to Bethlehem

The Journey comes to you in a newly-staged (seated) performance of the story of Christmas

Sunday, December 20th
12PM, 4PM, 5PM, & 6PM



St. Matthew Lutheran Church
115 E Penn St, Martinsburg ~ Maple St Entrance

Free will *contributions are always welcome:*
Non-perishable items for the Martinsburg Food Pantry or monetary donations to the Ministerium PIN (Persons In Need) Fund

Birthdays for December

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

Anniversaries for December

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

SERVING GOD AND US
December 2026

Date	December 6 . Congregational Mtg	December 13	December 20 Journey to Bethlehem	December 24 Christmas Eve	December 27
Acolytes	Gabby Decker	Norah Kuster	Ben Decker	Gabby Decker Lily Lightner Lucy Lightner	Gavin Kuster
Lectors	**TBD**	**TBD**	**TBD**	**TBD**	**TBD**
Ushers	Steve Oswalt	Dennis Smith	Paul Decker	Tina Harclerode	TBD
Assist. Min.	**Dawn Alexy**	**Tina Harclerode**	**Shawn Orczeck**	**Jane Fagans**	**Steve Oswalt**
Altar Guild	Tonya Walter Jane Fagans	Tonya Walter Jane Fagans	Tonya Walter Jane Fagans	Tonya Walter Jane Fagans	Tonya Walter Jane Fagans
Audio/Video	Camden Kuster	Camden Kuster	Camden Kuster	Camden Kuster	Camden Kuster
Offering Counters	**Jim Barley** **Beth Garner**	**Jim Barley** **Beth Garner**	**Jim Barley** **Beth Garner**	**Jim Barley** **Beth Garner**	**Jim Barley** **Beth Garner**

2026 COUNCIL DIRECTORY AND MINISTRY STAFF

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

Pastor	Rev. Traci Marriott	935-9267	Evangelism	Peggy Steinfurth	515-6205
Admin. Assistant	Jen Ripka	935-3801	Stewardship	Vacant	
Assistant Admin. Assist	Laura Orczeck	224-1208	Finance	Jim Barley	793-4623
President	Greg Haffling	793-9827	Social Ministry	Lottie Ebersole	232-6665
Vice President	Don Bulger	329-3412	Worship & Music	Tina Harclerode	317-5312
Secretary	Carla Brumbaugh	932-4082	Staff Support	Beckie Erb	312-7087
Treasurer	Beth Garner	932-4156	Sexton	Phil Claar	215-0885
Property	Paul Decker	330-6345	Pastor	Rev. Traci Marriott	935-9267
Christian Ed.	Amanda Decker	934-8798			

December 2026



St. Matthew Lutheran Church

115 E. Penn St., Martinsburg, PA 16662-1127

814.793.2413 stmatthewmartinsburg@gmail.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 4:30-6:30pm Pastor in Office 6:30-7:30 pm Bible Study WR/Zoom	3 9-11 am Food Pantry, Allegheny St.	4 *Pastor's Sabbath*	5
6 ***2nd Sunday of Advent*** 9:30 am Sunday School, WR 10:30 am Worship in Sanctuary Congregational Meeting Cove Christmas Love Deadline	7	8 6:30 pm Council Meeting, WR/Zoom	9 9 am Social Ministry Christmas Blessing Bags assembly, FH 5-6:30 pm Pastor in Office 6:30-7:30 pm Bible Study WR/Zoom	10	11 *Pastor away at The Weekend from 12-11 to 12-13*	12 Fellowship Hall in Use *In case of emergency Pastor Traci can be reached 814-935-9267*
13 ***3rd Sunday of Advent*** 9:30 am Sunday School, WR 10:30 am Worship in Sanctuary	14	15 6 pm Talk-O Tuesday, La Fiesta, Airport	16 3 pm Employee Meeting 4-6:30 pm Pastor in Office 6:30-7:30 pm Bible Study WR/Zoom	17 9-11 am Food Pantry, Allegheny St.	18 *Pastor's Sabbath*	19
20 ***4th Sunday of Advent*** ****Please note Worship begins at 10 am this week**** **10:00 am** Worship in Sanctuary w/Journey to Bethlehem Journey to Bethlehem 12, 4,5,6pm in Sanctuary	21	22 12:30-3:00 pm Knotty Ladies, QR	23 4:30-6:30pm Pastor in Office 6:30-7:30 pm Bible Study WR/Zoom	24 7 pm Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols	25 *Pastor's Sabbath*	26
27 ***1 Christmas*** 10:30 am Worship in Sanctuary	28	29	30 6:30-7:30 pm Bible Study WR/Zoom	31		

FH—Fellowship Hall CE-Christian Ed Office CL-Church Lounge QR-Quilt Room WR– Window Room K—Kitchen

In case of emergency, Pastor Traci may be reached at 814-935-9267

Jen can be reached on her cell for immediate office concerns or to schedule an appointment; otherwise, please email or leave a voicemail as she will be checking messages regularly.