



THE VOICE

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DECEMBER
2016

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PASTORAL MESSAGE Rev. Allen Mothershed

THE GIFT OF DARKNESS

Psalm 139:11-12

"I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you." (New Living Translation)

This past week, I took a brief tour of the DuPage Historical Museum's new exhibit on the history of light. Looks like our struggle to overcome darkness as been a long one. Even candlelight had its challenges. Wealthier people could afford beeswax candles which produced a nice smell with little smoke, while the poor depended on animal-fat tallow candles that produced a bad smell and lots of smoke. Before the exhibit I had never seen rudimentary candles made from a type of wood stick and covered in fat. That's what you lived with if you were really poor. None of these gave much light, compared even to today's low wattage bulbs.

As children of the Enlightenment, we have come to take light for granted. LED lights, televisions, and computers take more and more of our attention, enabling longer work hours and increased leisurely activities. Our lives are greatly enriched by these gifts of science, but with every gift of modernity comes a dark side. Our sleep rhythms are negatively affected as we are no longer in sync with the natural rising and resting with the changing of the light. Like the lights in our house, and for some the television in their living room, we are always "on." **We no longer prioritize time for the other half of ourselves, the reflective, meditative side. When people had to "befriend" darkness, the night gave a time to let things go and just let them be. Learning to rest in the darkness, to slow down, gave time to reflect and time for quiet conversation with loved ones before sleep.**

Advent comes at a time when the darkness is encroaching upon the daylight a few minutes more each day. Advent is a time of honoring the darkness as we wait for the light of Christ to come. Each week we light one more candle as a reminder of the ever-closer coming of the light that Jesus brings to our lives and our humanity.

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Rather than fighting the darkness, we do well to look for the gifts that are to be found in it. **Allow a holy silence of the nighttime to open your heart to be intentionally in God's** presence and to offer the prayers that are in your heart. You may be surprised by the many prayers that have been waiting to grab your attention and to be spoken in love to God, who is ever waiting to hear. Amen.

Blessings,
Pastor Allen

ADVENT WORSHIP SERIES-RECLAIMING THE SACRED

We don't hear the word "sacred" much anymore, unless someone asks, "Is nothing sacred anymore?" We often feel that way about Christmas. Christmas seems to have lost its sacredness and become a secular holiday. This Advent/Christmas we reclaim a sense of the sacred. In worship we will experience the sacredness of our lives, our relationships, our world.

December 4 - Advent 2

Sacred People - Matthew 1:18-25

God comes to ordinary people and makes their lives extraordinary and sacred.
How might our lives become sacred?

December 11 - Advent 3

Sacred Space - Isaiah 5:1-10 & Luke 1:39-56

Mary creates a sacred space for love to be born.
How can we create space for love to be born?

December 18 - Advent 4

Sacred Knowing - Isaiah 52:7-10, Luke 2:1-15

God's sacred knowledge hidden from many is made known to common shepherds.
How can we live in a world that does not understand God's sacred knowledge?

Christmas Eve

6pm - **First Service (with children's participation)**

The children and the congregation join in the story of Christmas as told by the Star that the Wise Men followed.

10pm - Second Service

When the Word is made flesh in Jesus, our humanity is blessed and reveals our sacredness.

YES, the St. Matthew Family Worships on Christmas Day and New Year's Day

Every few years we are given an opportunity to worship on a Sunday that is Christmas Day. Just think: be with your church family for a brief, beautiful, meaningful worship on the day of Christmas. We will sing carols, pray for peace, and hear more of the Christmas story. **We'll** make this special and brief so you can get back to your other family!
Come in pajamas or jeans, just come!

You can also start the New Year by joining us for worship on January 1st. **We'll let go of the** past and pray together for the New Year. This will also be a service of carols, prayer and reflection.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Parents Shopping Day Out

hosted by Santa's Little Helpers

Parents, we invite you to enjoy a few hours of shopping or wrapping Christmas presents without your kids on **Sunday, December 4th** from after church until 2pm. At the church we will provide crafts, songs, games and a movie to keep your Sunday School aged children (3+ and potty trained) happy and having fun. (Please send a sack lunch with your child.) Sign up in the narthex so we know how many volunteers will be needed and which children will be staying upstairs after dismissal. If you would like to help, please contact Susan Wold.

Merry Christmas!

-The Christian Education Committee



Renewing Faith Bible Study: The Experience of Salvation

At the heart of the Christian faith is the belief that we as human beings and the creation itself are in need of salvation. If we take our Scriptural tradition more seriously, we will discover images of salvation that are far more comprehensive and powerful than is commonly understood. Join us in the new year for an experiential exploration of the nuanced meanings of salvation in Scripture. Each week we will reflect on a particular scripture in order to experience its relevance for our lives, as we also deepen our understanding of what it means to be saved.

Tuesday, January 10 7-8pm

Sin and Redemption: David and Bathsheba - 2 Samuel 12:1-15

Tuesday, January 17 7-8pm

Disease and Healing: Healing of the Leper - Luke 17:11-19

Tuesday, January 24 7-8pm

Exile and Coming Home: The Prodigal Son - Luke 15:11-32

Tuesday, January 31 7-8pm

Oppression and Liberation: Moses and the Burning Bush - Exodus 3:1-12

Tuesday, February 7-8pm

Blindness and Seeing: The Blind Man - John 9



NOTES FROM THE MUSIC ROOM

I hope you had a Happy Thanksgiving!

On November 27th we held our third "Open Choir" Sunday, which started the Advent season. It has been wonderful to have different singers join us this fall. We will continue these in the New Year, so please watch for dates.

And while the holiday season is now in full swing, let us never lose **sight of the miracle of Jesus' birth and His life. Please take time to** take a breath and enjoy all that Christmastime has to offer – **the songs, the children's** happy faces, the peace that Jesus brings.



Mary, Did You Know? Four words that conjure up what the future held for baby Jesus. What wonder, awe and even trepidation she must have felt. Please join the choir on December 11th as we present **"Mary, Did You Know?"** -- a beautiful arrangement that tells of the coming of Jesus.



From all of us in the Music Ministry, a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone!

Peace - Jamie Craig
630.202.6788
music.director@stmatthewucc.org.
Lanni1@comcast.net

WEEKLY REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Tuesday

IntergeneRingers
6pm
Chancel Ringers
7:30pm

Wednesday

Praise Band
6:30pm
Sanctuary Choir
7:30pm

MISSION NEWS

DECEMBER PADS ASSISTANCE

During our December 14th PADS night, the church site will be having an Advent supper and we will not be able to use the ovens. Instead, we will be ordering pizza for our guests to serve along with salad, chocolate cake, and peppermint ice cream.

Cash donations would be appreciated to help pay for the pizza, along with our usual requests for your help in filling the remaining food and time slots. Many thanks for your continued dedication to this important mission. Merry Christmas!

Your PADS Committee

FOOD ON THE FIRST

Thank you for all the November donations. Here is what is needed in December:



- Canned vegetables
- Canned pineapple slices
- Boxed stuffing
- Boxed potatoes
- Baby wipes
- Diapers - sizes 5&6
- Feminine pads
- Pull-Ups
- Soap
- Shampoo
- Toothpaste & toothbrushes

Please make sure all items are not expired and packages are unopened. If you have any questions please call Betty Greer, 630.682.4084.

Blessings to all.

MARIAN PARK CHRISTMAS SHARING

Gifts need to be wrapped, labeled and dropped in the box in the church narthex by Sunday, December 11th for delivery on Wednesday, December 14th. Please consider signing-up as a driver to help deliver gifts to Marian Park on December 14th from 6-8pm. For more information, please contact Andrea DiOrio, oreoseven@yahoo.com, 630.881.8611.



FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN

The annual Feed My Starving Children trip is coming up. It will be Monday, January 16th, Martin Luther King Jr. Day. We will meet at the church at 1:45pm and carpool to FMSC to pack food for starving children in countries all over the world. We will pack from 2:30 to 4:30pm and then carpool back. If you haven't packed before, it is a great experience and we always love to have new people join us. There are 50 spots reserved, and the sign-up board will be up in the narthex in mid-December. Save the Date!



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE & UPCOMING EVENTS

Hope Lifted by Action

St. Matthew continues along the journey of making our church open and welcoming to all who wish to follow in the ways of Christ. We are a vibrant church with many ministries focused internally and externally, and we took the necessary step to ensure our vibrancy by conducting our Annual Stewardship Campaign titled Hope Lifted by Action. So much of what we do at St. Matthew is geared towards providing hope and support to all those in need. And we see in very tangible ways how the hope that we spread lifts spirits and inspires people in times of need. It is the collective action of St. Matthew that makes a profound difference!

If you have not had the opportunity to turn in your commitments of time, talent and treasure, we ask you to do so as soon as possible. We are moving into the budgeting season and the filling of ministry positions and we need your participation!

We also recognize that the VOICE reaches those who have moved away from the Wheaton area but who are still interested in our journey. Even if the distance precludes your involvement, you can support our ministry with your contributions. You can be assured that St. Matthew has perfected the ability to maximize all the gifts entrusted to us.

MARKETING AND MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

We have engaged Elmhurst College to conduct a marketing study for us with the purpose of giving insight into ways to increase our membership. The study will be organized and funded through the Elmhurst College D.K. Hardin Center for Marketing Research with the involvement of graduate students under the supervision of Professor Sherry Smoak.

The purpose of the proposed project is to collect attitudinal, behavioral, motivational, and general demographic information to address several key questions regarding the St. Matthew membership base, focusing on increased membership to help support our future.

The first part of the study will be two concurrent surveys, one for members and one that will be targeting potential churchgoers within a 15-mile radius of our location.

If we have your email address, you can anticipate a request to take the membership survey through Survey Monkey - **yes that's a thing** - beginning the week of November 28th. If you do not see your email address in our church directory, or are a visitor and you have not given us your email yet, please update your information ASAP so your voice can be heard. Send the information to office@StMatthewUCC.org.

We hope to have some results and be able to draw some conclusions by the time of the annual meeting. Thank you in advance for your help!

Bruce Anderson,
Council President

NOVEL APPROACHES

The novel to be approached for December is "The Valley of Amazement" by Amy Tan.

Date: Friday, December 2nd - 7:30pm

Place: Linnea Karpenske's - 21W144 Glen Park Road, Lombard



PENNIES FROM HEAVEN/MANNA

Manna cards are always a great gift for Christmas— one size fits all, without the hassle of returns. Not only are you giving gifts to your family and friends, but the retailers also donate to St. Matthew. Wow - two gifts in one!

Stop by the Manna table in Dobstaff for a list of ideas for men, women, and stocking stuffers. Are you hosting celebrations this season or making dozens of yummy cookies? Get your cooking and baking supplies with grocery cards from Manna.

Orders will be taken as late as December 19th. They will be available for early pickup at church by December 21st, or after the service on Christmas morning. No orders will be taken on December 25th because the Manna office will be closed the following week.

A NOTE OF THANKS



After many years of coordinating the Memorial Service receptions and luncheons for Women's Fellowship, we have turned over the reins to Linnea Karpenske and Leslie Ortman.

Heartfelt thanks to all for your willingness to answer our calls for help over the years...you made our jobs much easier! We KNOW you will show that same support to Linnea and Leslie.

With love and appreciation,
Wendy Fanning and Barbara Giordano



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|----|--------------------------|
| 3 | Joe Chumas |
| | Elizabeth Hambrick-Stowe |
| 5 | Judi Gonzalez |
| 6 | John Adams |
| 7 | Jerry Stoller |
| 8 | Jan Beaton |
| | Mike Thornton |
| 10 | Laura Christensen |
| 11 | Alex Alavi |
| 13 | Anna Neufelder |
| 16 | Dave Boyd |
| 20 | Lisa Stubbee |
| 23 | Rachel Cole |
| | Cathy SooHoo |
| 27 | Dave Mook |
| 28 | Jeannine Adams |
| | Carol Domal |
| | Blake Erickson |
| 29 | Tyler Faith |
| | Sharon Schlenker |
| 30 | Bob Barnshaw |

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Children's Ministry

This advent season in workshop rotation, the children will go on a meaningful journey learning the story of what took place leading up to Christ's birth. As part of our Christmas holiday the children will celebrate at our annual Birthday Party for Jesus, which has always been a fun way to bring praise to God for Jesus' birth and true meaning to the holiday.

Mitten Tree

This year, in memory of Mary Jane Schnack, the children will be decorating a "Mitten Tree." The tree will be at the bottom of the Sunday School stairs and we will decorate it with mittens, gloves, hats and scarves that will be donated to People's Resource Center after the holidays. Mary Jane was a beloved member of St. Matthew and a devoted Children's Ministry volunteer. She was also the creator of our M&M program, which is in its 9th year. Beginning December 4th children can bring items to hang on the tree.

Parents' Shopping Day

On Sunday, December 4th we are offering a babysitting service to our St. Matthew parents so you can have some time for shopping, lunch, (a nap?). From 11am to 2pm parents can leave their children at church to enjoy crafts, Christmas movies and games. Send a sack lunch with your child for us to serve them for lunch.

Birthday Party for Jesus

Sunday, December 18th during the Sunday School hour, the children will have fun celebrating Jesus' birthday with crafts, games, gifts and birthday cake. The children will join their families in Dobstaff Hall after worship to sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus and eat birthday cake.

Family Christmas Eve service

On Christmas Eve, St. Matthew will offer two candlelight services. The 6pm family service will have both flame and battery candles for our closing "Silent Night" candlelight song. If your child would like to participate in the service as part of the Nativity scene, please notify Susan Wold before December 11th.



Happy Birthday: Heidi Bourne 12/5, Greyson Scalora 12/11,
Evelyn Henderson 12/25, Kylie Caprini 12/25

MARIAN PARK THANKSGIVING



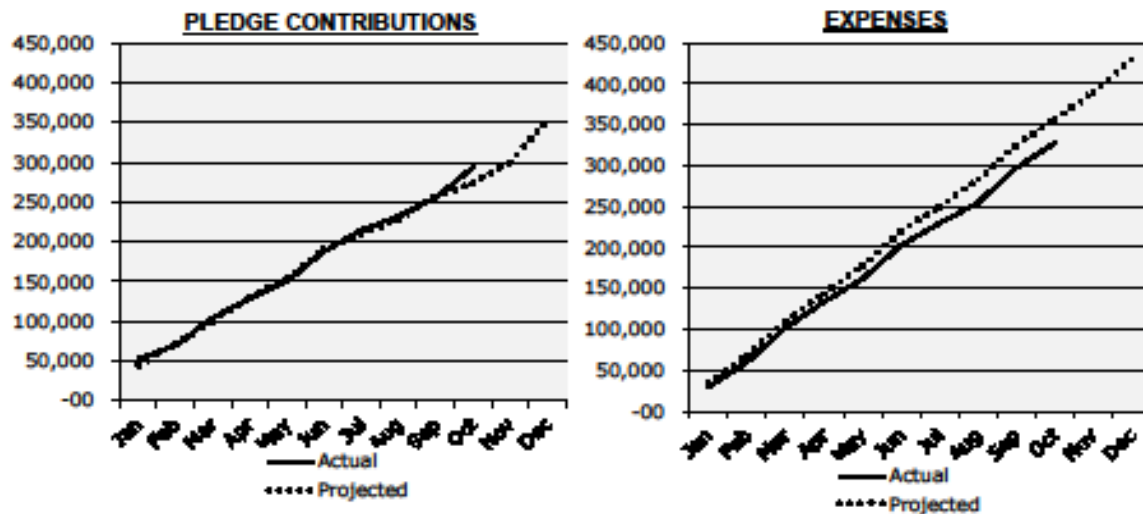


**ST. MATTHEW UCC GENERAL OPERATING FUND
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES**

For the Period Ending October 31, 2016

	ACTUAL CURRENT MONTH	ACTUAL YEAR-TO- DATE	ANNUAL BUDGET
RECEIPTS:			
Pledge Contributions	32,772	288,163	353,000
Loose Offerings	284	3,782	10,000
Rental Income	450	2,855	5,000
Fund Raising	260	3,336	8,000
Investment Income	32	162	-00
More Property	-00	-00	-00
Miscellaneous Income	-00	5,000	-00
TOTAL RECEIPTS	33,778	303,298	376,000
EXPENDITURES:			
Ministry	17,983	189,989	234,195
Building	6,210	79,330	118,253
Mortgages & Notes	2,229	22,291	26,750
Mission / OCWM	500	24,061	29,200
Committees:			
Christian Education	560	6,988	9,970
Membership	177	807	2,750
Music	293	2,516	4,700
Worship	140	699	1,500
Congregational Life	-00	710	800
Memorial	-00	45	100
Stewardship	-00	-00	500
Misc. & Contingency	-00	440	1,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	28,092	327,876	429,718
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	\$5,686	\$(24,578)	\$(53,718)

2016 Activity - Actual vs. Projected



Please contact Howard Peterson if you have questions or need additional information.

DECEMBER 2016

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		TUESDAY NIGHTS 6pm IntergeneRingers 7:30pm Chancel Ringers	WEDNESDAY NIGHTS 6:30pm Praise Band 7:30pm Sanctuary Choir	1	2 7:30pm Novel Approaches	3
4 9:30am Worship Service 11am-2pm Parents' Shopping Day Out 2-4pm crazies	5 7pm Building Committee 7pm Christian Education	6 7pm Membership 7:30pm Mission Commit- tee	7 10am Women's Prayer Group 7:30-8:30pm Cantata Rehearsal	8 11:30am - 2:30pm Church Office Closed 7pm Finance Committee	9	10 9am CANTATA Rehearsal
11 9:30 am Worship Service - Cantata 11am M&M Holiday gathering 6pm crazies	12	13	14 10am Women's Prayer Group 6-8pm MARIAN PARK Christmas gift delivery PADS	15 PADS 6pm SRC 7pm Council	16	17
18 9:30am Worship Service Birthday Party for Jesus VOICE ARTICLES DUE 6pm crazies	19	20	21 1:30pm Women's Prayer Group	22	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE 6pm Children & Family Service 10pm Candlelight Service
25 CHRISTMAS DAY 9:30am Worship Service No Sunday School No crazies	25 OFFICE CLOSED	27 No Bell rehearsals	28 No Women's Prayer Group No Music rehearsals	29	30	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE



Find us at: www.stmatthewucc.org
Facebook, Pinterest and YouTube



St. Matthew United Church of Christ
630.665.1236 (Office)

Office Email:
office@stmatthewucc.org

Office Hours:
Monday-Thursday: 9am-4pm
Friday: 9am-1pm

Sunday Worship: 9:30am
Sunday Church School: 10am

Our Purpose:

*Become, Live, and Serve as Disciples
of Jesus Christ.*

Our Identity:

***No matter who you are or where you are on life's
journey, you are welcome and accepted here at
St. Matthew United Church of Christ.***

STAFF

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