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<u>Pastoral Message</u> Pastor Allen Mothershed

Happy Hal, Cabbage Patch Dolls, and Advent

I am one of those people who have always looked forward to the Christmas season. True, the commercialization, gift-giving expectations, and the added stresses can be a damper. But even that seemed built into my excitement about Christmas. Growing up, a few months before Christmas, my dad's store started to receive the year's newest toys to be sold. He had the only store in town that sold toys. Once, I was able to go with him to Memphis on a toy buying trip, and he received my expert advice on which toys I thought were cool and which ones would be duds. Ok, I was wrong about the Cabbage Patch Kids. I thought them ugly as sin. Dad, however, listened to Happy Hal. Happy Hal was the wholesale dealer, who also had a Saturday morning kid's television show where he was Happy the Clown, a great gig for a toy salesman. Happy told Dad that they'd be a big hit, and Dad loaded up. He bought so many that when all the other stores sold out, even up in Memphis, Dad had a ready supply. There were anxious parents of expectant little girls from all over the mid-South waiting at the door of our store first thing in the mornings. Good thing Dad did not listen to me. I suspect ugly Cabbage Patch Kids paid for a good portion of my college tuition.

So I like Christmas, always have and always will. It is with Advent that I have had a problem. I learned in theology school the importance of Advent being valued and protected as a prelude to Christmas. I was taught that it was my duty to sternly remind good church folks that we need to prepare for Christmas by keeping Advent as a time for praying and waiting for the gift of Jesus. However, the kid in me, that same kid who worked as one of Santa's elves in my dad's store, always wanted to sing Christmas carols in Advent, just like everybody else. I do not like preaching on the second coming of Jesus on the first Sunday of Advent and having to come up with a new way to present John the Baptist for a couple of Sundays of Advent. It is hard to cut against the grain of people's hopes and expectations.

This year is different. We have been living in a fog of uncertainty. We are not sure how to keep the beloved traditions of Christmas, both in our family and in our church. How do we get excited when what we have come to expect has changed? We are grieving so much that has been lost. So I have been thinking: Maybe this is the year we need to open early the first gift of Christmas, the one that has the word Advent written on it. Then we will discover, inside the box, the many gifts of Advent. Advent is a reflection of the experience of people throughout history who have endured hardship and longed for, prayed for, and prepared for a time of salvation. That pretty much sums up much of what we feel this year. We know what it means to put things on hold, to have to wait, and to hope for salvation. Let's open the early gift of Advent and discover the meaning of those Advent candles we light.

The gift of HOPE: We look forward in anticipation of a time when all are made well, this virus is defeated, and we have a time of normalcy restored.

The gift of PEACE: We look to the time when divisions and animosities are overcome, and a new peace settles within each of us and between us.

The gift of JOY: We are learning to be surprised by joy each day of our lives, discovering a God who graciously gives us what we need, even in a time of turmoil.

The gift of LOVE: We feel in our hearts the great love God has for us, who is willing to be born into our world in Jesus.

May we all find a way to keep Christmas. Before that, may we open the gifts of Advent.

Peace to each of you, Pastor Allen

A Word from Pastor Allen

My dear friends, we are now entering an even more difficult stage in the struggle against the Covid-19 virus. We may find this news discouraging and wonder how much longer we must live with the stress and the challenges that began in March. I want to encourage you not to lose hope. Now is a time when we do well to lean into the signs of hope rather than crumble with the weight of more bad news. This time will not last forever, and normal times will return. We do well not to set our expectations so high for the recovery that we set ourselves up for repeated letdowns. However, light is shining from the future into the darkness of our present with reports of new treatments and effective vaccines on the way.

Our seeing a light from the future, offering us a glimmer of hope which helps us to make it from day-to-day is what the ancient practice of Advent has always been about. We walk in the darkness, but when our eyes of faith adjust, we find it is not as dark as we think. A pathway appears. Take a look around and see what God is providing you for this journey. We walk not alone but with each other.

Pastor Allen

2020 Advent Series - Let Joy Overcome Us



This year in worship, we will focus on the Christmas story as presented in the Gospel of Luke. More than any other gospel writer, Luke turns the focus away from those with power and influence and onto those who were powerless: Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist; Mary, the mother of Jesus; and the shepherds living on the

edges of life out in the cold. They have much to teach us about finding JOY in difficult times.

December 6th Joy from Silence

Luke 3:1-18 We do not often think about repentance as a joyful event. But making a decision to turn a new direction in our lives is cause for a joyful celebration. We look at the prophet John the Baptist, who calls us to a new beginning.

December 13th She Who Ponders Luke 1:26-38

Mary is the one who pondered the mystery of what God had done in making her the mother of Jesus. How is it that God has a way of making what seems impossible possible?

December 20th Songs from the Heart Luke 1:39-59

When Mary sings the song we now call the "Magnificat," she does so as if the very voices of angels are singing through her. Her joy is pure and her words remind us of how God lifts up those who have been low. How will we find joy in this time of our lives?

December 24th Those Who Hear Angels Sing Luke 2:8-20 Birth

We may feel something has been lost this Christmas. But this may be the year we are freed from the clutter of Christmas to hear the purity of the Good News of Christ's birth which was announced only to the shepherds.

Notes from the Music Room....



It's Christmas Time in the City. While it may be Christmas time, it isn't anything like what we think of as normal. Probably fitting to the last month of this year, that strange trip we call 2020.

I hope you all were able to enjoy a safe Thanksgiving. Ours was definitely smaller. For the first time in 25 years, it was without my mom, sister, or brother due to safety concerns. None of us wanted it that

way but knew that mom's health is much more important than a dinner. We did enjoy some Facetime/Zoom, so we got to see each other. In that way, we are fortunate that technology allows virtual closeness, something those in the past did not have.

As you know by now, our Christmas Eve service will be a virtual one. We all would prefer to be in church together, worshiping the Savior's birth, with the warmth and comfort that it brings. So, the next best thing is our virtual service. There have been requests for photos of you and your families so we can be 'together.' Please submit them by the requested deadlines, as there is quite a bit of time-consuming editing needed.

The choir will be putting together virtual choir selections of Christmas carols to lead everyone in the hopes that you will sing along as if we were in church together. Bells are also putting together some prerecorded selections for the service, and our praise band will sing one of the scripture lessons.

A reminder for Choir members: please submit your videos by December 6th if you haven't already done so.

Christmas Eve. The night a Light came into the world to save us. Jesus gives us hope, no matter what is happening around us. Even a pandemic. And, as I write this article, word comes to us of two possible vaccines that appear to hold great promise. If it turns out to be true, there will be many who say the timing is political. But maybe politics has nothing to do with it. Maybe the timing is from a higher source, to coincide with the gift of Jesus' birth? A subtle reminder of God's power and love?

May you all have a Merry (and safe) Christmas.

Peace~

Jamie Craig

Music Director 630,202,6788



Pennies From Heaven (SCRIP)



SCRIP orders are suspended until we resume in-person activities.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Joe Chumas
- 6 John Adams
- 7 Jerry Stoller
- 8 Jan Beaton
 - Mike Thornton
- 10 Laura Christensen
- 13 Payton Neufelder
- 16 Dave Boyd
- 20 Lisa Stubbee
- 23 Rachel Cole
- Cathy Caallas
 - Cathy SooHoo
- 27 Dave Mook
- 28 Jeannine Adams

Carol Domal

Blake Erickson

- 29 Sharon Schlenker
- 30 Bob Barnshaw



Pastor Allen's schedule varies from week to week. He is in and out of the office during the day for meetings, visits, and study. Please call ahead to check his schedule or to set up an appointment. His cell phone number is 630.441.5962. He is available by phone when not in the office.

OFFICE HOURS

office@st.matthewucc.org

Office hours are suspended until further notice.

Christmas Activities



Christmas Caroling December 13th at 4:30pm

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The Good News of Christ's birth always needs to be ushered in with joyful singing! We will not let Covid-19 prevent us from finding a safe way to do this with each other. You are invited to join us on December 13th at 4:30pm in the parking lot at St. Matthew to join in the singing. We will set up the keyboard and some mics and provide you with a music sheet and bulb candles.

Jamie and Brian will lead us in singing your favorite Christmas carols. We will also read together the Christmas Story we find in Luke's gospel and share a brief Christmas prayer. This is a great way to safely see everyone and bring in the season. You might also make it an outing to go and look at the Christmas lights in the community after our time together.

You will remain by your car. Bring folding chairs and blankets or you can remain in your car if you feel safer. As usual, masks are required and we will social distance throughout the service. If the weather is miserable, our rain/snow day is December 20th, same time and place. PLEASE RSVP TO office@stmatthewucc.org IN THE EVENT THAT WE NEED CONTACT TRACING.



Merry Christmas Pictures

We miss seeing your happy faces! For our virtual Christmas Eve service, we would like to give you the opportunity to wish your St. Matthew family a Merry Christmas. Here's what we are asking you to do:

Send us a picture of you or your family. Hold up a sign that says "Merry Christmas" or just send us a festive picture—in front of the tree, by your decorations, anything at all—we just want to see you!

Email your photo to the office (office@stmatthewucc.org) no later than December 18th in .jpg.

Pictures will be posted on the website as part of the service, so only include your name if you are willing for it to be posted publicly. We can't wait to see your pictures!



Virtual Christmas Eve Service

One positive outcome of these times is that it has brought out some creative, out-of-the-box thinking by our staff and lay leadership. Christmas Eve is going to be quite an extravagant celebration, even if it is virtual and not in-person. You will hear joyful bells, anthems of Christmas, and have a chance to join in with the carols you love. You

will have a chance to pass the light of Christ in your homes with those you love; the children and the youth will bring the Christmas spirit in their preludes and in their readings. It will be one blended service that you can gather around to watch and participate in from the comfort of your home. Plan a time on Christmas Eve to join the celebration and welcome the newborn Christ child into your hearts.

Missions



Marian Park Senior Christmas Basket Raffle

Marian Park Seniors are in for a different Christmas treat this year. Instead of hosting a "store," we have been asked to put together some pretty looking baskets or boxes that contain necessities, such as personal care products, and as always, a bottle of laundry detergent (which they all love). They are asking for about 20 baskets to raffle off, for free, to the low-income seniors who live in Marian Park. Marian Park families will not be participating this year.

If your family is interested in helping, please find a basket or box and fill it with personal care items, such as shampoo, conditioner, lotion, hand soap, dish soap, socks, and deodorant. Items are your choice and can be whatever you think an adult would need and enjoy using. Seniors love laundry detergent, which may not fit in a basket/box but could be given alongside your decorated/wrapped basket or box of goodies.

Please email Joyce Miller (<u>JoyceMiller@ameritech.net</u>) if you plan to fill a box or basket so we can let Marian Park know how many gift baskets we will have.

Plan to drop off your gift by Wednesday, December 9th, for a raffle to take place at Marian Park on Sunday, December 13th. Please coordinate dropping off your gift with Liz Westergaard (<u>LizWestergaard@outlook.com</u>), Joyce, or the office. They will provide you further instructions on when and where to drop your donation.

Thank you!

Stu Blake and the Mission Committee

PADS



Due to the increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases in DuPage County, PADS has been put on hold.

They are still in need of monetary donations. You can either go directly to their website or contribute to our PADS account for the future.

If you have any questions, please contact Julie Schubert at tijjr7@att.net. Thank you! Julie Schubert

Adult Ed

New Series: Community and Conversation

Advent has begun! Join us on Wednesday nights at 7pm, December 2nd through December 23rd. We will offer an Adult Education series designed to encourage hope, peace, joy, and love, plus conversation and community. We encourage you to read specific devotions from the booklet <u>Draw Near</u> each week in preparation. We'll reflect a few minutes on a devotion and then offer up questions to start/guide the conversation. Most importantly, we hope to promote interaction, community, and preparation for celebrating the coming of Christ. We hope you will make a cup of coffee, tea, or chocolate and join us by Zoom. Participation by children is welcome.

Our first meeting on December 2nd will center on hope. We encourage you to read the devotions on pages 16, 34, and 49 in the booklet <u>Draw Near</u>. You may arrange to pick up a free copy of the booklet from Kenna Anderson (<u>Kenna1@comcast.net</u> or 630.209.5710). Click the links for digital copies of each week's readings:

December 2nd Devotions

December 9th Devotions

December 16th Devotions

December 23rd Devotions

The following Zoom link below is good for each week:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83112296996? pwd=cXpISGt5SHo0Mi9yRGJyUTJMUS9nZz09

Meeting ID: 831 1229 6996

Passcode: 245313



A Note from Former Pastor Neal Sadler

Dear Folks at St. Matthew UCC,

Carolyn and I think of you often. Our family truly enjoyed our 10 years in Wheaton. We value the friendships we made among you.

Many of you know, that after 35 years in full-time ministry I retired in 2016. Carolyn and I have enjoyed travelling (pre-Covid) and I have served as a Transitional pastor on occasion. I have also enjoyed writing. I recently completed a book I entitled <u>Looking for Life on the Way to the Grave: Pastoral Journeys amidst the Dying and Grieving</u>. The book contains 80 stories of journeys I was privileged to undertake with parishioners as we travelled through doubt and belief, fear and faith, humor and laughter on the way to the grave.

The book will soon be printed and available through Sigel Press (www.sigelpress.com). The direct link to the book is:

https://www.sigelpress.com/product/looking-for-life-on-the-way-to-the-grave-pastoral-journeys-amidst-the-dying-and-grieving/

There is a pre-publishing discount for those who want to purchase the book by December 15th. May God bless you during these weird and difficult times of Covid-19.

Grace,

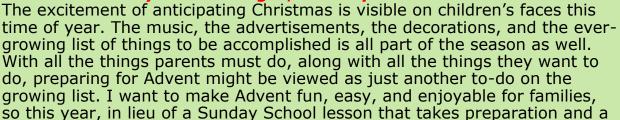
Neal Sadler, nealsadler@yahoo.com

Children's Ministry December 2020

We will begin the Advent season reading the book *A Nest for the Savior*, written by Didi Zayas and illustrated by Deja Sessa. The story is of a sparrow, who after learning that the manger is empty, goes on a quest to build a nest for the Christ child. Parents can access the YouTube link, via the St. Matthew Facebook page, where I read the book to the children, something that I miss doing very much. Afterward, they can begin building a bed for the Savior, using the hay and manger that we gave them for Christmas last year. The children will also make bird seed ornaments at home to hang on their tree for winter birds and if they like, they can bring one to St. Matthew

to hang on a tree outside the church. (Bird seed ornament supplies will be provided.)





block of time, each family will receive the gift of a beautiful family devotional book, **The Way to the Manger**, written and illustrated by Jeff and Abbey Land. Families will come together for a few short minutes each day to experience the richness of Advent reflecting on the true meaning of Christmas, and celebrating the arrival of the Savior! **The Way to the Manger** walks through the themes of hope, love, joy and peace, with features and activities that will make the Advent season a beloved and anticipated time each day for families to take this journey together. Each day features a family devotion, memory-maker journaling pages to fill with Advent memories, family activities, crafts, and discussion questions. Finding a few minutes each day before or after dinner, before bed, or upon waking in the morning might be easier for busy families. My hope is that our Sunday School families will make this family Advent time part of their yearly traditions.



The Way

to the Manger





Sunday School Advent Mitten Tree Mission Project

- Sunday, December 13th, 3:30-4:30pm or bring to the outdoor Carol Sing at 4:30
 - Tuesday, December 15th, 2:30-4pm

During one of the two above dates and times, families can bring their children to church to decorate our Mitten Tree with hats, gloves, mittens, and scarves (we will accept gently used items). The tree will be set up outside, in the back of the church. Children can take a treat bag off the tree when placing their items. The warm winter wear will be donated to People's Resource Center after the second collection date. Beginning Sunday, December 13th, the children can listen to Mrs. Kenna read *The Mitten Tree* by Candace Christiansen, via the link on our St. Matthew Facebook page. We welcome donations from all our St. Matthew family. Together let's help adults and children in our community stay warm this winter!

Shhhhhh, it's a surprise!

We are asking Sunday School children to make an ornament for some of our church members who are going to be alone this Christmas. The craft supplies and simple instruction will be delivered, along with bird seed ornament supplies and the family Advent book. Once made, bring the ornament when you come to place your winter items on the Mitten Tree. There will be a basket to place the ornaments in.

December Birthdays:



Greyson Scalora Fiona Walsh Evelyn Henderson Maribel Ortman

December 11th December 17th December 25th December 26th

Merry Christmas!

Susan Wold Director of Children's Ministry



As we kick off the holiday season and finally enter our last month of 2020, we should remember that God gave us the time this whole year to reflect on how He was in control. As for crazies, whether we were meeting in-person or through Zoom, we always had a great time. So, this month we are planning some fun activities for

the group. On December 6th, we are planning to gather outside at church at 3pm and decorate one of the evergreen trees. We will decorate using some creative ornaments that the kids will have made, and we will also have some hot chocolate.



On December 20th, we will have our mini-Christmas Party over a Zoom call. We will have an Ugly Sweater contest and will also have a craft activity that Blessy will share. Crazies will then be off for 2 weeks from December 27th-January 3rd.

Although many of us are sad that we haven't seen our family members or our friends, all I can say is that with God's help and guidance, things will get back to normal in the coming days.

On behalf of the crazies, we wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We will see you soon.

God Bless,

Mel Jerome Director of Youth Ministry

Announcements



Prairie Path Clean-Up

Our final clean-up of 2020 that was to be held on Sunday, November 15th was canceled due to weather. Better luck in 2021!

Many thanks to our faithful volunteers for your ongoing commitment to the environment and your service to St. Matthew. I appreciate all of you!

Look for the 2021 dates in a future issue of the VOICE.

~Dawn Schubert



Prayer Requests

Please send prayer requests via the following links and we can share them (or keep them private, if you prefer). You can also email them to the office.

You can make a public prayer request here:

https://www.stmatthewucc.org/joys-and-concerns

Private prayer requests can be made here:

https://www.stmatthewucc.org/prayer-chain

A Prayer for Putting on a Face Mask

Creator God, as I prepare to go into the world, help me to see the sacramental nature of wearing this cloth. Let it be a tangible and visible way of living love for my neighbors, as I love myself.

Christ Jesus, since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart, that people would see the smile in the crinkles around my eyes. Since my voice may be muffled, help me to speak clearly, not only with my words, but with my action.

Holy Spirit, as the elastic touches my ears, remind me to listen carefully and caringly to all those I meet. May this simple piece of cloth be shield and banner, and may each breath that it holds be filled with Your love. In Your name and in that love, I pray.

Amen.

Rev. Richard Bott, Moderator Presbyterian Church of Canada

December Yoga



Advent Yoga

Tuesday nights at 6:30pm December 1st, 8th, and 15th

Yoga (regularly offered class) Thursday mornings at 10am December 3rd, 10th, and 17th

Yoga is in the Sanctuary (masks as we enter and exit, generous space between us). Beginners are welcome!

Donations accepted and will be given to Missions.

Contact Marla Mothershed, mmothershed63@gmail.com or 630.441.5963 to sign up.



The Men's Group continues to meet via Zoom at 8am every Tuesday morning.

We typically have eight men on the call and discussion is vigorous and usually uplifting. All men are welcome!

To get a Zoom invitation, please contact

byronmiller@ameritech.net

2020 Voice, Happenings, and Bulletin Due Dates



All submissions for the weekly Happenings and bulletin should be submitted to the office *no later than 9am Tuesday for the week it runs.*

2020 VOICE deadlines: Typically the second to last Sunday of the month, with exception of November and December.

December 13th

Simple Communion Bread

Ingredients:

1 cup all-purpose flour

1/3 cup vegetable oil

1/8 teaspoon salt

1/3 cup water

While any bread or juice will do for Communion, if you like to do something creative, then try this simple communion bread recipe.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Mix flour, oil, and salt together in a bowl; add water and mix using a pastry cutter until dough is soft. Form dough into 6 balls and press into disks onto the prepared baking sheet using your hands.

Bake in the preheated oven until bread is cooked, 8 to 10 minutes.



<u>Check out the</u> <u>St. Matthew website</u>

For the most up-to-date St. Matthew information, please check the St. Matthew website! You will find instructions on accessing the Sunday online service, make a prayer request, sign up for the newsletter, learn about online giving, and so much more!

https://www.stmatthewucc.org/

Online Sunday Worship



While we are unable to share Sunday worship as a group, please join us online for Pastor Allen's weekly message and worship service. The service will be posted by Saturday evening.

There are three ways to access Sunday worship:

Through YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/StMatthewUCC

Once you are on YouTube, you have the option to turn on closed captioning and resize the font. Once the video is playing, click on the setting wheel in the lower-right of your screen, choose Subtitles/CC, then choose English.

Through the St. Matthew Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/stmatthewucc/ Select YouTube on the left side.

Through the St. Matthew website: https://www.stmatthewucc.org/ Click on Full Service under the banner.



Online Giving

During this time when we cannot worship together in-person, please make an effort, if able, to continue your offerings. We are so grateful for your continued support of St. Matthew.

If you would like to give to St. Matthew UCC, you can donate in the following ways:

- Mail a check to the church (1420 S. Gables Blvd., Wheaton, IL 60189)
- Online with PayPal
- 1. <u>Simply click here to be directed to PayPal</u> (or copy and paste): https://www.stmatthewucc.org/donate and click the yellow DONATE button.
- 2. You will then be directed to PayPal where you can use your own personal PayPal account or a credit card to make your donation.
- 3. Click on either <u>+Write a note (Optional)</u> on the first page or <u>+Add special instructions to recipient</u> on the "Review your donation" page. Please indicate Sunday Offering so the money gets credited to the correct account.
- 4. Please include your <u>phone number</u> so that we may contact you if we have any questions, and your address if you would like to receive a giving statement.
- NOTE: You will be credited for the full amount of your gift on your giving statement; however, PayPal charges a \$.30 + 2.2% fee on each transaction. St. Matthew will receive the net amount. **The minimum amount for this online contribution method is \$25.**
- Monthly electronic donations from your checking account

If you would like to set up monthly electronic donations, please download this form: **Electronic Donation Authorization**, fill it out, and mail it to the church. You can also scan this form, along with a voided check, and email it to financial.secretary@stmatthewucc.org.

These options are also listed on the St. Matthew website: www.stmatthewucc.org

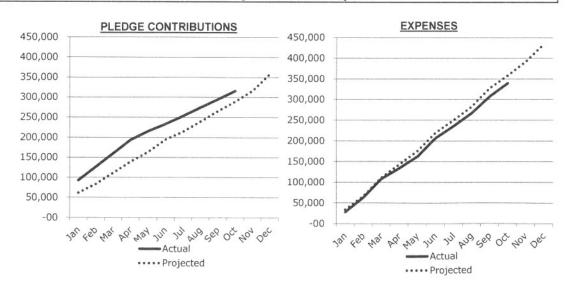
Questions can be directed to Edie DeBoard at financial.secretary@stmatthewucc.org.

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

For the Period Ending October 31, 2020

	ACTUAL CURRENT MONTH	ACTUAL YEAR-TO- DATE	ANNUAL BUDGET
RECEIPTS:			
Pledge Contributions	21,145	315,806	358,364
Loose Offerings	0	872	5,000
Rental Income	0	4,000	9,600
Fund Raising	0	407	2,200
Interest Income=Bk accts	1.75	149	120
Investment Income	0	1,115	0
More Property	0	0	37,000
Miscellaneous Income	0	2,544	5,000
TOTAL RECEIPTS	21,146	324,894	417,284
EXPENDITURES:			
Ministry	17,710	200,857	245,572
Building & Admin	13,041	92,388	116,678
Loans & Notes	-00	20,063	26,750
Mission / OCWM	1,155	20,205	27,250
Committees:	50. * 000.00000		30,000 F 100 30,000.
Christian Education	269	4,224	8.000
Membership/Congregational Life	0	26	3,000
Music	0	1,120	4,895
Worship	207	745	1,500
Memorial/Endowment	0	0	0
Stewardship	0	0	0
Misc. & Contingency	0	0	1,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	32,382	339,628	434,645
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	¢(44 226)	¢(44.724)	¢(47.2C4)
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	\$(11,236)	\$(14,734)	\$(17,361)

2020 Activity - Actual vs. Projected



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



St. Matthew United Church of Christ

630.665.1236 (Office)

Office Email: office@stmatthewucc.org

Web Site: www.stmatthewucc.org

Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday: 10am-2pm

Friday: 9am-11am

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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