

St. Matthew United Church of Christ

(630) 665-1236 (Office)
(630) 665-1436 (Fax)
Office Email: office@stmatthewucc.org
Web Site: www.stmatthewucc.org
Office Hours:
Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Church School: 10:00 a.m.

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.

Our Staff

Rev. Milton Allen Mothershed, Senior Pastor
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Susan Wold, Director of Children's Ministry
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Mark Restaino, Director of Youth Ministries
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Kim Congdon, Handbell Director
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December 2013

Why Do Christians Celebrate Christmas on December 25th?

The original birthday of Jesus is unknown. The first celebrations of Christmas would have been in association with another faith festival, Epiphany, which happened on January 6th. Epiphany is the day Christians celebrate the coming of the Wise Men and the manifestation of Christ to the Gentile world. Even today, in some cultures, Epiphany is the day when gifts are traded.

In the second and third centuries there was much disagreement about the appropriateness of celebrating the birth of Christ. Many great leaders in the early church, such as Origen, felt that celebrating the birthday of our savior was just too close an association with the pagan practice of celebrating the birthdays of the gods.

We probably do not realize the enormous daily cost to be a Christian in the second and third centuries. Roman life was centered around pagan holidays in which practically everyone would enjoy taking part. These first Christians stood apart from their friends, neighbors, and business associates in their refusal to participate in such festivals. They were often ostracized for doing this at great economic and social cost. It is likely that the celebration of Christ’s birth became common because these Christians who had lost the pagan festivals needed the rhythm and the faith discipline of special days throughout the Christian year to celebrate. By the year 272 C.E. the celebration of Christmas was common.

The sad irony is that Christmas has become so much a part of our culture that there is the danger of losing loses its ability to deepen our faith. Here are some ways for us to keep the festival as a faith celebration:

- ◇ Develop and keep meaningful rituals as a family, such as lighting the Advent wreath in your home, reading Christmas stories and Christmas tales that relate aspects of our faith, and working in a shelter or soup kitchen.
- ◇ In a culture that mistakenly believes more is better, use the season to practice simplicity. For every gift you receive, donate two items to the poor, and for every dollar you spend on gifts, share the same amount with organizations that support the poor.
- ◇ Determine to change the predictable negative outcomes that seem to habitually happen each year between some family members. Think through how you can defuse painful and charged issues to create a positive spirit.
- ◇ Invite someone new to your family gatherings who does not have a place to experience the holiday.

May God bless you in this season of peace, hope, love, and joy.

Pastor Allen



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Joe Chumas
Elizabeth Hambrick-Stowe
- 5 Judi Gonzalez
- 6 John Adams
- 7 Jerry Stoller
- 8 Jan Beaton
Mike Thornton
- 9 Nathan Baird
Peter Lindquist
- 10 Laura Christensen
Rachel Uhrig
- 11 Alex Alavi
Charles Schmidt
- 13 Anna Neufelder
- 16 Dave Boyd
Matt Guerrieri
- 18 Laurel Caldwell
- 19 Carolyn Armstrong
Jamie Colella
Richard Fine
- 20 Lisa Stubbee
- 22 Tim Kelleher
- 23 Rachel Cole
Cathy SooHoo
- 27 Dave Mook
- 28 Jeannine Adams
Carol Domal
Blake Erickson
Kelly Lubbs
- 29 Tyler Faith
Sharon Schlenker
- 30 Bob Barnshaw



*Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year
from the
St. Matthew
United Church of Christ
Staff*

crazies

St. Matthew UCC

November was a busy month for crazies. We started out doing Feed my Starving Children and Sleep out Saturday the first weekend of the month. We had a meeting for our parents about the youth group and summer mission trip. We saw Catching Fire and watched the Doctor Who Fiftieth anniversary special together. We shopped for gifts for the outreach store and had loads of fun pulling an all-nighter at the Lock-In. The annual Thanksgiving turkey bowl was a competitive blast. Lessons this month included the American Dream, Stewardship, and Contentment. Next month, we're having our Christmas party and preparing for our winter retreat during the first week of January. We hope your Christmas season is not too crazy, but filled with joy. Merry Christmas!

by Jennifer Buhmann

December 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:30 am Worship Service with Communion (No Sunday School) Bells Sunday	2 7p Christian Education Committee	3 7p Membership Committee 7:30p Mission Committee	4	5	6	7 12p-3p Cantata Rehearsal
72 9:30a Worship Service - A Christmas Cantata	9 7p Worship Committee	10	11 PADS	12	13	14 Church of the Savior Retreat 4p Sounds of the Season
15 9:30a Worship Service Children's Musical Birthday Party for Jesus	16 7p Finance Committee	17	18	19 6p Staff Relations Committee 7p Church Council	20	21 8a Men's Fellowship
22 9:30a Worship Service	23 7p Rosewooden Carols Concert	24 6p Family Friendly Christmas Eve Service 10p Christmas Eve Service	25 Office Closed, Merry Christmas!	26 Office Closed	27	28
29 9:30a Worship Service January Voice Articles Due	30	31			Every Tuesday: 6p IntergeneRingers 7p Bells Potluck 7:30p Chancel Ringers	Every Wednesday: 6:30p Praise Band 7:30p Choir

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

For the Period Ended November 30, 2013

	ACTUAL CURRENT MONTH	ACTUAL YEAR-TO- DATE	ANNUAL BUDGET
RECEIPTS:			
Pledge Contributions	-	275,017	347,136
Loose Offerings	-	4,391	8,000
Rental Income	-	3,240	6,000
Fund Raising	-	8,919	10,000
Investment Income	-	(94)	500
More Property	-	41,500	54,500
More Property (special projects)	-	3,429	-
Miscellaneous Income	-	100	500
TOTAL RECEIPTS	-	336,502	426,636
EXPENDITURES:			
Ministry	-	180,588	224,061
Building	-	109,029	121,775
Mortgages & Notes	-	22,291	26,750
Mission / OCWM	-	19,953	29,000
Committees:			
Christian Education	-	8,051	10,150
Membership	-	1,243	3,900
Music	-	2,056	4,200
Worship	-	780	3,500
Congregational Life	-	298	800
Misc. & Contingency	-	363	2,500
TOTAL EXPENDITURES (before Special Projects)	-	344,652	426,636
Special Projects	-	3,429	-
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	\$ -	\$ (11,579)	\$ -



Notes from the Music Room.....

December is such a wonderful time of year, yet it can be very stressful. Everyone, it seems, is busy shopping, wrapping, decorating inside and outside, planning parties and visits with friends and relatives. In addition to all of the above, the wonderful volunteers in music have been attending weekly rehearsals in preparation for Advent and Christmas Eve. These rehearsals help remind us of why we go through what we do for Christmas, and provide a respite from the hustle.



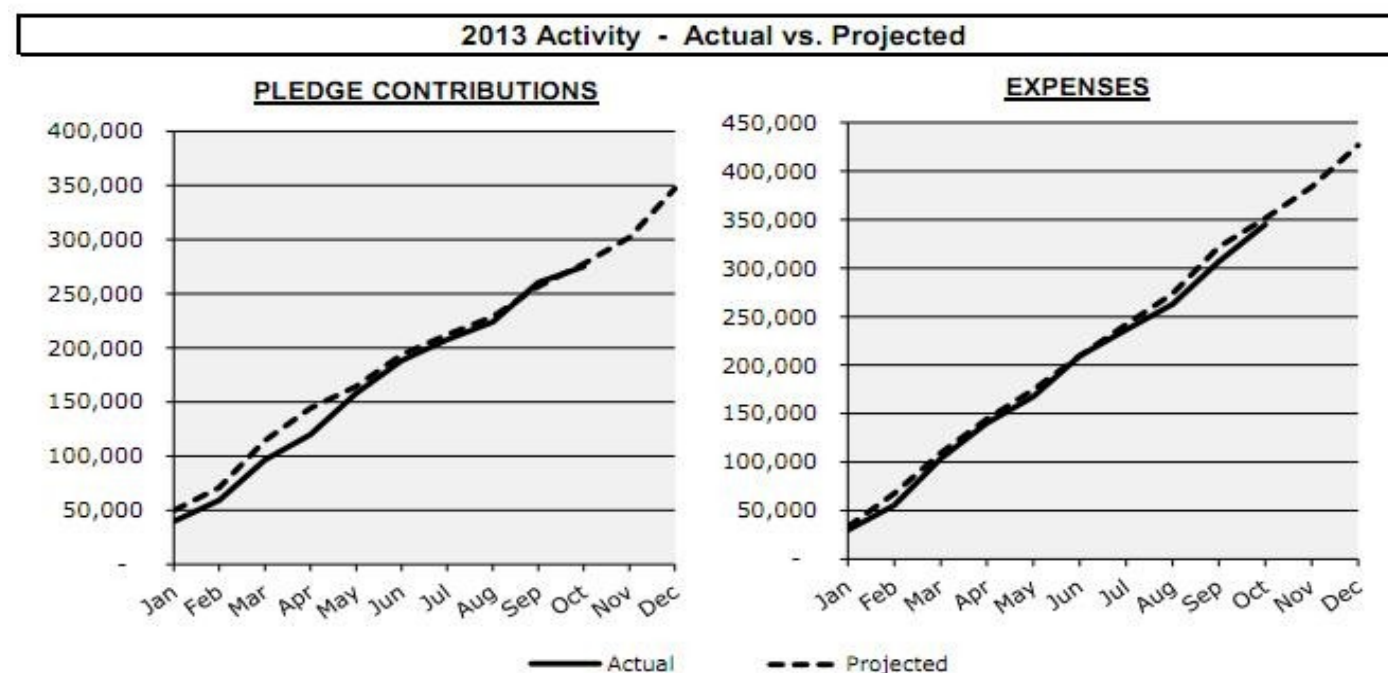
We wish to share that respite with everyone. Sundays offer us a sanctuary from what can be a maddening pace, and music is a big part of that. December 1st, we started Advent with our bell choirs performing Carillon for Advent and Soon and Very Soon. Next Sunday, December 8th, the Sanctuary Choir will present Appalachian Winter. On December 15th, our children's choir will present their musical, The First Christmas. And on the fourth Sunday in Advent, December 22nd, we will have an Advent carol sing, much like we did last year. On Christmas Eve, there will be handbells at both services as well as the Sanctuary Choir at the 10:00 p.m. service.

I hope you are able to make each Sunday to worship together and enjoy wonderful musical presentations of the season. It is also a great way to invite friends and neighbors to experience St. Matthew.

From all those involved in music, and KC, Brian, Wendee, and myself, we wish you a Very Merry Christmas.

Yours in Christ through Song,

Jamie Craig
Cell: 630-202-6788
Lanni1@comcast.net



Please contact John Adams if you have questions or need additional information.



Children's Ministry December 2013



It is so important that children from Christian families understand that the birth of Jesus is the reason for celebrating Christmas. It is something they need to be reminded of and shown year after year. Children need to know that gifts, parties, cookies and Santa may be fun, but they are not the true meaning of the holiday. Please make it a priority to come to church this Advent season as a way of bringing Christ into your Christmas. Also, consider doing some fun and meaningful Advent activities:

- ♦ Talk about what gifts you can give Jesus this Christmas: kindness, good deeds, etc.
- ♦ Give to the needy: donate food for Christmas dinners, Toys for Tots, donate unused clothes and toys, etc.
- ♦ Make cards for an elderly neighbor or seniors at a local nursing home.
- ♦ Go to church on Christmas Eve.
- ♦ Sing Christmas carols.
- ♦ Light Advent candles each night at your dinner table.
- ♦ Make homemade gifts with a loving heart.
- ♦ Talk about each piece as you put out your Manger scene.
- ♦ Read the Christmas story from your Bible, either a little each night or on Christmas morning in between opening gifts.
- ♦ Read books that tell about the birth of Jesus. There are many in our children's library that can be checked out. (Look on the display rack at the top of the stairs.)
- ♦ Make popcorn and watch *The Nativity* movie. This is also available in our adult library.



There are more wonderful ideas for celebrating Advent on the Internet. When your children are grown they will take these traditions and use them with their own family. That is what I have found with my own adult children.

Workshop Rotation – During Advent the children will gather together to learn about important people and animals leading to the birth of Jesus. We will gather as a group and learn through games, stories and crafts.
Week 1: December 8, the Angels; Week 2: December 15, Birthday Party for Jesus
Week 3: December 22, the donkey; Week 4: December 29, the sheep; Week 5: January 5, the kings and camels

Sunday school annual prayer mission – On December 8th the children will choose a *Peace* ornament off the Sunday school Christmas tree. The ornament will have the name of a military man or woman who they will commit to pray for throughout the Advent season. They will also make a commitment to pray for Peace on Earth. The prayers of children are very powerful if spoken from the heart. Please encourage your child to pray each day for the soldier they have chosen.

Birthday Party for Jesus – On **December 15th**, after the children's musical, the children will gather together in Dobstaff Hall to begin their Birthday Party for Jesus celebration. We will play games and make a craft. Once church is over the church families will join us to sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus and eat birthday cake.

M&M Christmas Gathering – On **December 15th**, after fellowship time (about 11:00 a.m.), the M&M partners will gather together to make bird feeder ornaments to hang on the evergreen tree, which is a memorial to Mary Jane Schnack. Mary Jane is the one who started the M&M program and this will be a fun way for partners to celebrate the season and decorate the tree in a way that would please Mary Jane. Lunch will be provided.

December 24th, Christmas Eve family service 6:00 p.m. Candle light service, 10:00 p.m.

December Birthdays: Justin Kirincich 12/22, Kylie Caprini 12/25, Emma Beres 12/27

*Merry Christmas to families, teachers, shepherds,
nursery care givers and committee members.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

JOIN US FOR PRAYER A women's weekly prayer group has been meeting for anyone seeking fellowship and spiritual growth. Meetings are **every Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.** in the parlor at St. Matthew. If interested, please call Kathy Skwara at 630-690-4490 for more information.

SOUNDS OF THE SEASON The Agape Ringers (including KC Congdon, our very own bell director and Kirsten Hendrickson, a member of the Chancel Ringers) will be performing a family-friendly holiday show along with guest artist, Pan Go Trio (steel drum ensemble) on Saturday, **December 14th** at 4 p.m. at Elmhurst Christian Reformed Church. Many of the Chancel ringers will be ushers. Visit www.agaperingers.org for more details and to order tickets.

ROSEWOODEN CAROLS A Marimba Quartet, featuring professional local area percussionists including member Shelley May Hutchison, will perform on Monday, **December 23rd** at 7 p.m. in the St. Matthew Sanctuary. Admission is free, but donations of food items will be graciously accepted and passed along to People's Resource Center.

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP The December Men's Fellowship meeting is **December 21st** in Dobstaff Hall from 8 a.m.-10 a.m.. Wes Curda will do the breakfast and Bob Crooks will do a program on the evolution of the high rise.

DUPAGE CONVALESCENT CENTER Come join us for Fifth Sunday at the DuPage Convalescent Center on **December 29th**. We meet at 9:30 a.m. to help residents in wheelchairs get to the Protestant Worship Service, stick around for worship, then roll them back, finishing up about 11:45. It's a great opportunity to visit with a wide variety of folks, including a number of St Matthew members. Contact Ellen Ribe at ellen.ribe@dupageco.org or [630-784-4262](tel:630-784-4262).



Feed My Starving Children

The yearly Feed My Starving Children trip will be on **January 20th**, Martin Luther King Jr. Day. We will meet at the church to carpool at 1:45 p.m., and arrive around our scheduled start time of 2:30 p.m. We will stay from 2:30-4:30, and then carpool back. My hope is that we are able to fill all fifty spots we have reserved. Just a reminder, that we need adults AND children, but the children MUST be 3rd grade or older to come. No open-toed shoes please! You may either call me at (630)-665-7577 to reserve names, or put the names on the board that will be in the Narthex starting soon in December. If I get your names over the phone, I will put them on the board for you. Save the date! -Alex Johnson

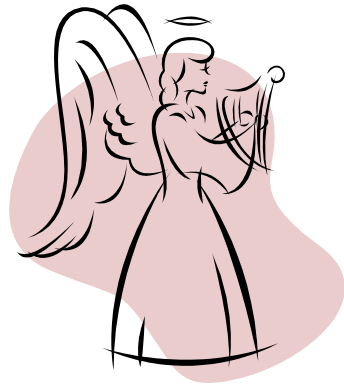


NOVEL APPROACHES

Novel Approaches will not meet in December, but looking ahead to the new year, we will be reading "The Lowland" by Jhumpa Lahiri in January. Two brothers bound by tragedy. A fiercely brilliant woman haunted by her past. A country torn by revolution. A love that lasts long past death. An extraordinary new novel, set in both India and America.

The date: Friday, **January 24th, 2014** at 7:30 pm.
The place: Char & Bob Cooper, 422 W. Evergreen, Wheaton

Everyone is welcome. Please join us for lively discussion, food and fellowship.



Advent and Christmas Worship Schedule

In Advent, we move from “ordinary time” to “extraordinary time” as we anticipate with excitement the coming of our Lord. This Advent, the sermons will also use short clips of some of our favorite Christmas movies to experience the message of our Advent scriptures.

Sunday, December 1

“It’s a Wonderful Life” Isaiah 2:1-5

No Sunday School

IntergeneRingers and Chancel Ringers Perform

Sunday, December 8

St. Matthew Music Ministry presents: A Christmas Cantata

“*Appalachian Winter*” by Joseph M Martin

“A Christmas Carol” Matthew 3:1-12

Sunday, December 15

“Will Someone Tell Me What Christmas Is About?” Luke 1:47-55

Children’s Musical, “*The First Christmas*”

A Birthday for Jesus Party

Sunday, December 22

“Christmas Vacation” Matthew 1:18-25

Tuesday, December 24

“The Nativity” Luke 2:1-20

6:00 pm A Family Friendly Christmas Eve with candle lighting

10:00 pm Christmas Lessons and Carols with candle lighting

Stewardship Corner St. Matthew is Responding!

Thank you to all of those who have completed and returned their Time and Talent Sheets (T&T) and Estimate of Giving (EOG) cards in the last couple of weeks.

We appreciate you choosing St. Matthew to be your **Force Multiplier** and partner as we seek to live St. Matthew’s stated purpose to *Become, Live and Serve as Disciples of Jesus Christ*.

For those who have yet to make your commitments, we ask that you do so soon as we are finalizing budgets and looking to fill many volunteer positions.

St. Matthew continues to do the work of Christ in our local community, across the country, and around the world. Thank you for being an integral part of our efforts!

Peace & Blessings



Memorial Gifts dedicated

On November 17th, 2013 the St. Matthew Congregation celebrated the dedication of two new Memorial Gifts: a bench in memory of Patricia Crooks and a tree and landscaping in memory of Kenneth Ridgway. The Memorial Committee continues to work with families to provide meaningful gifts that enhance the beauty and functionality of St Matthew UCC.



Mission Activity

St. Matthew serves residents of Marion Park. Other opportunities will be occurring as we go through 2014. Please feel free to join this effort as it supports in a very personal way those less fortunate in Wheaton.





A Few Moments for St. Matthew Children



And now for something completely different...

the poem for December from Linda Leinweber, in transit from Kazakhstan

Blow, blow, thou winter wind
By William Shakespeare

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude,
Heigh-ho! Sing, heigh-ho! Unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then, heigh-ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
That dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remembered not.
Heigh-ho! Sing, heigh-ho! Unto the green holly:
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
Then, heigh-ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly.

Well, by the time The Voice goes out, I should be back to St. Matthew church, but I thought I better send this before I leave, not trusting jet lag. I turn to Shakespeare and this cold weather poem. It has a mixed message in the folly of man but takes cheer in the holly, and so do I as I join with friends and family for the holiday season. Blessings to all and heigh-ho the holly!

Silviani
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