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August 2013

Heaven and Hell

This summer I have been nourishing my soul with some meaty theological reading, finally taking on a previous #2 on the New York Times Best Seller list, Love Wins, by Michigan Evangelical Mega-church pastor Rob Bell. Here is a summary by Rob Bell of what the book is about:

A staggering number of people have been taught that a select few Christians will spend forever in a peaceful, joyous place called heaven, while the rest of humanity spends forever in torment and punishment in hell with no chance for anything better. It's been clearly communicated to many that this belief is a central truth of the Christian faith and that to reject it is, in essence, to reject Jesus. This is misguided and toxic and ultimately subverts the contagious spread of Jesus' message of love, peace, forgiveness, and joy that our world desperately needs to hear.

There has been a heaven and hell reception to Rob Bell's book with some praising it as the new path forward for the future of post-modern Christians while others are ready to condemn Pastor Bell into the lowest regions of hell as a heretical threat to the purity of the Christian faith. I found the book a refreshing wind of change, willing to take on an enormously challenging subject with an attempt to not flatten out the ambiguity of what scripture has to say about the topic of heaven and hell.

In a time when Christianity in Western culture is waning, Pastor Bell has written a remarkably readable book, that clears away some of the roadblocks for belief for many skeptics who have dismissed the Christian faith as anything but loving and life-giving.

Is heaven for real and if so, what about hell? Heaven is for real, Bell tells us, but not as we often think of it. For a Jewish rabbi in the first century, the real questions were NOT where you will spend eternity, but how you can find peace and heaven starting now. The Kingdom of God's loving rule is breaking into our world and Jesus shows us the way to die to our old selves and enter into this new way of life that reaches into eternity. The focus, however, is not just on us, but what God is doing to recreate the whole of creation into a unity of justice and peace. Jesus does not die and is not resurrected just to save us, but to bring life for the creation itself, so that all people will one day bow down and proclaim Jesus as Lord.

According to Bell, Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life is at work in other religions to bring about this heavenly unity of heaven and earth.

(Continued on next page)

St. Matthew United Church of Christ

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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

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Mark Restaino, Director of Youth Ministries

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And what of hell? Pastor Bell first guides the reader to consider our attitude towards an angry God of justice. For those who want to dismiss God’s anger and desire for justice, Bell asks them to consider whether or not they would really want a God who did not become enraged at the brutality and inhumanity that happens in our world. He also talks about hell as something that is real, when we acknowledge what life apart from God and love is like. But he points out that hell is only mentioned 12 times in the New Testament, and in each instance it is used not as a literal place of eternal damnation, but as a metaphor based on an actual burning garbage dump just outside the city walls of Jerusalem. It is referred to as the consequence for those whose actions show indifference and cause injustice to the weak and the poor. Hell, however, as a place of eternal punishment established by God as retribution for those who do not accept Christ is nowhere to be found in the scriptures. After all, how can we, on the one hand, talk of a God of love, forgiveness, and mercy and then, on the other hand, say there is a cutoff time when God turns into a God of retribution and punishment for eternity for the many who do not accept Christ as savior?

Rob Bell is not ultimately a Universalist who says that all will end up in heaven. He leaves the question open, alternating between the competing tensions of our choice to exclude ourselves from the way of love and the idea that for God to be God, then love must ultimately win. What is most important is how we are living today in relationship to God and our neighbor. Are we accepting the grace given to us to live in a way that prepares us to share an eternity with God? Now there is something we can all spend some time reflecting upon.

Pastor Allen



RALLY DAY

Rally day is scheduled for September 8th! We will have a carnival theme with games, prizes and lots of fun! Invite your friends and family to join us for this amazing day! Each committee will have a table with a carnival game and we hope to have many games outside as well. We will be holding a bake sale and would appreciate donations brought to church that morning. Come and join the fun!



August 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Every Sunday: 5p crazies Free Time 6p crazies				1	2	3
4 9:30a Worship Service with Communion	5 7p Christian Education Meeting	6 7:30p Mission Committee Meeting	7 7p Membership Committee	8	9	10
11 9:30a Worship Ser- vice	12 7p Finance Committee 7p Worship Committee	13	14	15 6p Staff Rela- tions Commit- tee 7p Church Council	16	17 6:30p Kane County Cougars Game
18 9:30a Worship Ser- vice	19	20	21 Choir Re- hearsal Re- sumes! 6:30p Praise Band 7:30p Sanctu- ary Choir	22	23	24
25 9:30a Worship Ser- vice, Youth Sunday 10:30a Memo- rial Committee Sept VOICE Articles Due	26	27 Bells Rehearsal Resumes! 6p IntergeneR- ingers 7p Bells Potluck 7:30p Chancel Ringers	28 6:30p Praise Band 7:30p Sanctu- ary Choir	29	30	31

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

For the Period Ended June 30, 2013

	ACTUAL CURRENT MONTH	ACTUAL YEAR-TO- DATE	ANNUAL BUDGET
RECEIPTS:			
Pledge Contributions	30,001	188,082	347,136
Loose Offerings	291	3,169	8,000
Rental Income	450	2,480	6,000
Fund Raising	-	200	10,000
Investment Income	(26)	(35)	500
More Property	-	19,929	54,500
Miscellaneous Income	-	-	500
TOTAL RECEIPTS	30,716	213,825	426,636
EXPENDITURES:			
Ministry	24,223	110,436	224,061
Building	14,112	71,434	121,775
Mortgages & Notes	2,229	13,374	26,750
Mission / OCWM	-	6,926	29,000
Committees:			
Christian Education	1,183	5,157	10,150
Membership	-	217	3,900
Music	190	966	4,200
Worship	30	589	3,500
Congregational Life	-	177	800
Misc. & Contingency	-	-	2,500
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	41,967	209,276	426,636
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	\$ (11,251)	\$ 4,549	\$ -



Notes from the Music Room.....

The time is almost here. Many have been waiting. The schedule is almost finalized, music selections are being made; in short, your music ministry is gearing up to be ready for the fall schedule that starts on Rally Day. Welcome to August!!

The fall rehearsal schedule is the same as last year. Our bell choirs rehearse on Tuesday evenings with the IntergeneRingers at 6:00 PM and the Chancel Ringers at 7:30 PM. I hear there are some openings, so if you have ever thought about ringing, I think KC has some room. This would be a good time to consider trying it.

The Praise Band meets on Wednesday evenings at 6:30. While we have a core group that supports this area of music, there can be schedule conflicts due to work and school and we find ourselves in need of some additional people. Singers are needed as well as instrumentalists. While guitars and drums are what people think of first, those are not the only instruments that can participate. Brass, woodwinds, synthesizers come to mind, but I have also seen the string instruments participate, too. It would be great to have some of our younger church members join in too.

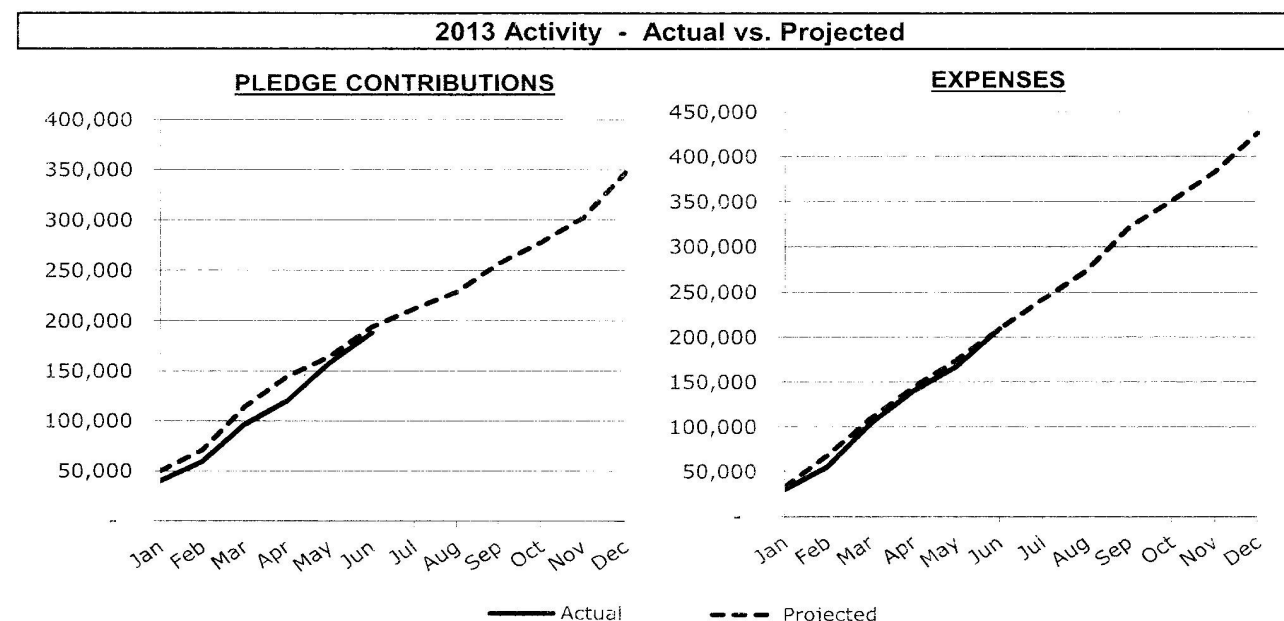
Our Sanctuary Choir also rehearses Wednesday evenings at 7:30 PM. This group too can use some additional voices for the same reasons as noted above - conflicts with work, school, family, trips to check out colleges and vacations. By working ahead several weeks, missing a rehearsal here and there does not mean one cannot participate. We need all ranges of voices, but I am sure you may have noticed our smaller numbers in the bass and tenor sections. To our high school youth... I know many of you have good voices and like to sing. We need your younger voices that will compliment some of us who are over 30.

NOTE: It is OK to be in more than one musical group. There are individuals participating not only in the Sanctuary Choir or bells or praise band, but some are in Choir and Bells, in Choir and Praise Band, and even in all three!

So, get ready for music to start. The Sanctuary Choir kicks off the rehearsals on Wednesday August 21, 2013 with our annual pot luck and then an abbreviated rehearsal. Dinner is at 6:30 and rehearsal at 7:30. See you soon!

Yours in Christ through Song,

Jamie Craig
Director of Music
630-202-6788
Lanni1@comcast.net



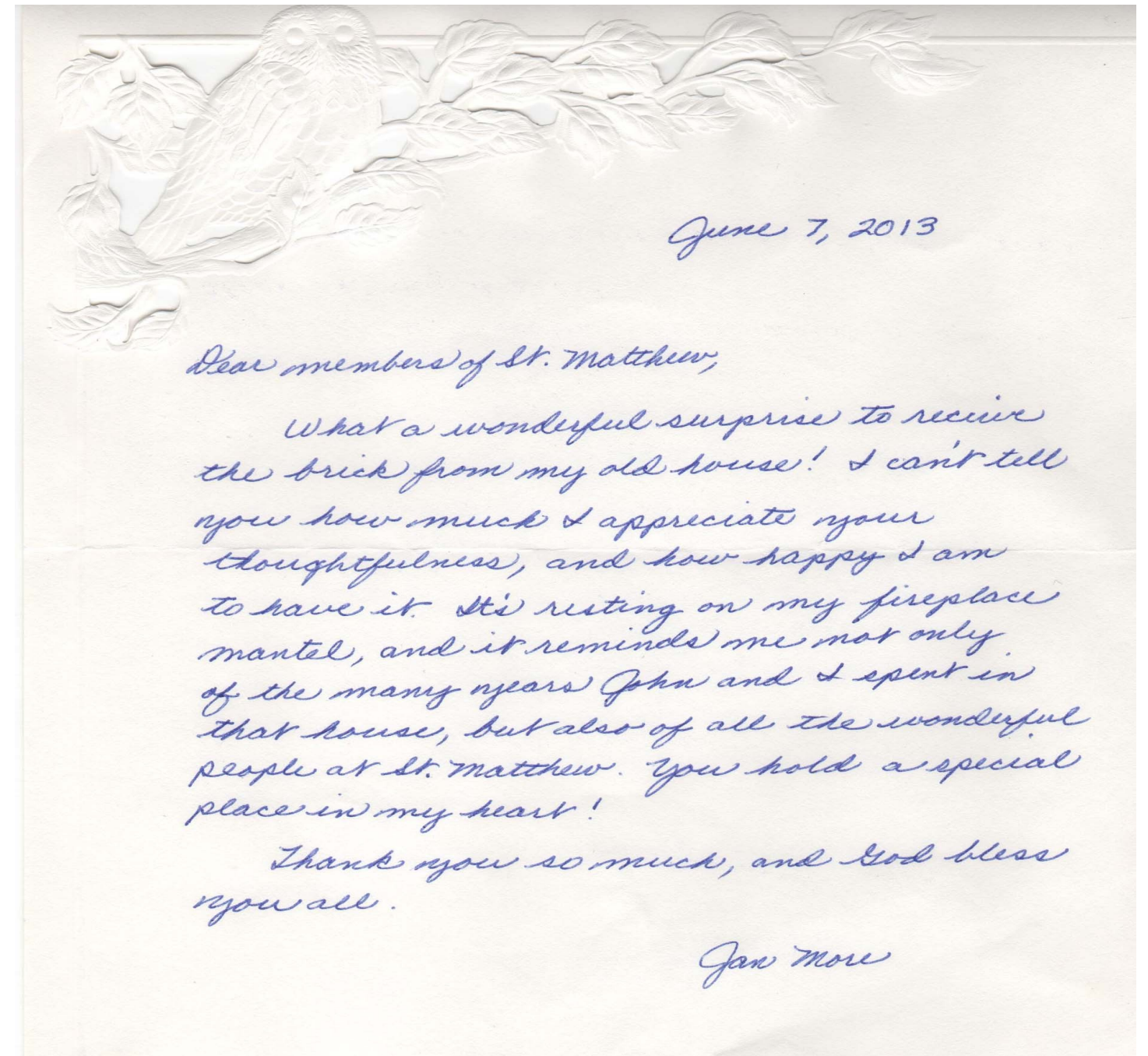
Please contact John Adams if you have questions or need additional information.



Fourth of July Parade

Join Us For Prayer

A women's weekly prayer group will be forming this fall for anyone seeking fellowship and spiritual growth. The first meeting will be on Wednesday, Sept. 11 at Francine Alavi's home, 26 W 258 Menomini Dr., at 10:00 AM. We will be using the book, Two or Three Together by Freer and Hall to guide us in the process of defining our purpose and format as a prayer group. If interested, please call Kathy Skwara at 630-690-4490 for more information and to be included in the book order.



And now for something completely different...

The poem for August, from Linda Leinweber, in Kazakhstan

Eagle Poem

By Joy Harjo, 1990

To pray you open your whole self
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon
To one whole voice that is you.
And know there is more
That you can't see, can't hear,
Can't know except in moments
Steadily growing, and in languages
That aren't always sound but other
Circles of motion.
Like eagle that Sunday morning
Over Salt River, Circled in blue sky
In wind, swept our hearts clean
With sacred wings.
We see you, see ourselves and know
That we must take the utmost care
And kindness in all things.
Breathe in, knowing we are made of
All this, and breathe, knowing
We are truly blessed because we
Were born, and die soon within a
True circle of motion,
Like eagle rounding out the morning
Inside us.
We pray that it will be done
In beauty.
In beauty.



This poem from Harjo, a poet born of mixed Cherokee, French and Irish blood, struck a chord with me in the beautiful, distant land that I am living in now. From our living room window, we see the mountains, which cause me to reminisce about the American west. I think one can easily read this poem, which is influenced by the Navajo Beauty Way Chant, meditatively and prayerfully. Within it lie hints of a spiritual journey. Enjoy!

NOVEL APPROACHES

The novel to be approached in September is “**The Cheynesville Incident**” by David Bradley

The date is **Friday, September 20, 2013 at 7:30 pm**

The place is **Mooks**, 1523 Surrey Drive, Wheaton

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

Stewardship Connections...

Getting Involved: Involvement in your church is an excellent way to share your blessings and talents with other Christians. The Stewardship Committee, led by Rob Neufelder, is a good place to start if you have questions about how to get involved. Whatever your passion, I am confident that we can find an opportunity for you to faithfully serve in a setting that you'll find suitable.

I returned my Time & Talent Sheet but didn't hear from anyone? Our sincere apology if we failed to call you! We are currently revisiting our process to ensure that we properly follow up with all those who have volunteered to serve through the T&T sheets. If we somehow missed you, please don't be discouraged, but rather let us know. We promise to do better in the future.

New Time & Talent Sheet: We are working with the various ministries and Pastor Allen this summer to update our Time and Talent sheet. Look for us to roll it out the new T&T sheet on Rally Day!

Where do St. Matthew funds come from to support all our ministries?

Like all UCC churches, St. Matthew is a self-sufficient congregation, meaning that we receive no funds from a national organization, like in some other denominations. All of our monetary support comes from our members, guests and friends. Fact is, we not only support our own needs, but we also provide budgetary support to the national UCC organization through Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) - look for that budget line item in your annual report.

Summer Swoon: It is not uncommon for pledge income to be down in the summer due to vacation season. If you are behind on your pledge, we would appreciate you getting caught up by summer's end if possible.

Upcoming Stewardship News: Soon we will begin a series of 'spotlights' on the many different ministries of St. Matthew through a series of interviews with key participants. Our first such sharing will occur in next month's newsletter. Stay tuned!



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Laura Schlenker
- 2 Chip Henderson
Quinn Rosenthal
Susan Wold
Miegan Bresingham
Julia Buik
Reid Stubbe
- 4 Amy Achammer
Rachel Henderson
- 5 James Ortman
- 6 Nancy Baird
Mark Christensen
Marge Hall
- 7 Traci Colella
Emily Jungk Cortez
Sandy Uhrig
- 10 Sue Lellbach
- 11 Sue Erickson
Drew Justice
- 12 Laura Heck
Dorothy McGowen
Sandy Sapa
- 13 Phil Spicer
- 14 Stacy Kulczewski
- 15 Tammy Cetina
Eric Rauch
- 16 Tina Ciner
Rob Neufelder
Veronica Spitzer
- 17 Kevin Schroer
- 18 Matthew Gonzalez
- 19 Kyle Roggenbuck
- 20 John Barnett (father)
Gary Naydenoff
- 21 John Barnett (son)
- 22 Matthew Raymond
Terry Young
- 23 Haley Wold

- 25 Brad Stoller
- 26 Matt Lewis
Joanne Papp
- 27 Barbara Evans
Ruth Huss
- 28 Joe Fanning
Joe Henderson
Chris Ribe
- 29 Patrick Kelleher

Hot Chicken Salad

This recipe was served at the luncheon for Marla Mothershed in early June. Enjoy!

- 4 cups cubed, cooked chicken
- 3 hardboiled eggs, sliced
- 1/2 can cream of chicken soup
- 2 cups chopped celery
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 8 oz. can sliced water chestnuts
- 1 4 oz. can sliced mushrooms - *optional (I did not use....if using fresh, cook first)
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds
- 2 Tblsp. chopped onion
- 2 Tblsp. lemon juice
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1 cup grated Cheddar cheese
- 1 can French fried onion rings

Mix all except cheese & onion rings. Put into 9 x 13 Pyrex dish.
Top with cheese. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes.
Top with onion rings - bake 5 minutes more.
Delicious hot & cold!

Silent Auction Items Needed!

In preparation for our upcoming fundraiser and night of entertainment (and FUN) by Kym Frankovelgia on **Saturday October 26, 2013**, we are looking for items and services for the Silent Auction. We are looking for 20-25 items and are well on our way. Already pledged items include:

- * A week long use of the Mothersheds' 3 BR condo on the Alabama gulf shore
- * One week use of the Sapas' timeshare in one of many exotic locations
- * A home-cooked Italian meal for a family served at the Mothersheds' home

PLEASE consider donating an item (Sporting or Theater tickets, home-baked foods, wine) or a service (tutoring, lessons, home repair or building) - the sky's the limit!

For more info or to donate, please call or email
Brian English [\(630\) 690-6853](tel:6306906853) or bpetec@juno.com or
Dawn Schubert [\(630\) 665-9860](tel:6306659860) or rural_rococo@msn.com

Thanks in advance for your consideration!



ESSE

September is St. Matthew's month to provide volunteers for ESSE, and the sign-up sheet will be displayed in the Narthex in early August. Please continue our tradition of providing treats and helping with lunch and crafts/games and supporting this important local mission. Call Dawn at 630.665.9860 with any questions. Thanks for your support of this mission!

What Is Our Most Important Choir?

If I were to ask you what the most important choir is in our church, what would you say? Bell Choir, Chancel Choir, Praise Choir, or Children's Choir? You may wonder if I am attempting to build contention between our magnificent choirs. I am not, because the most important choir, in my mind, is the congregation. We are the ones who gather to praise God, and our singing is essential to that purpose. Our various choirs of talented musicians are primarily here to serve that purpose, as well as provide power anthems.

To this end, a team of music staff and lay members and myself have been working this summer on the hymns we will sing in the coming year. First, we have nine newer hymns/songs that we plan to teach during the coming year. About three are newer praise hymns, two or three are child-friendly hymns (some from VBS), three are traditional-style hymns from a more contemporary time (including one very powerful communion hymn). Our next task is to go through our list of favorite hymns which you suggested in a survey some months ago and also go through our hymnal and praise song list. We will choose a long list of hymns and songs we want to sing in our worship services this year.

Our goal is to find singable hymns that speak to heart, mind, and soul so that we may more loudly lift up our voices and sing our faith. Our choirs will be leading us in this effort, so that together we may make music pleasing to God.

- Pastor Allen