

Dear St. Matt's friends,

In January many of us pause to take stock of the year that's just passed and set intentions for the year to come. But it can be challenging to chart a path when faced by many unknowns. That's the land I'm passing through—the land of uncertainty. Allow me to share my family situations.

On October 4, after spending eight days in the hospital, my mother-in-law Linda was diagnosed with stage 3 cancer. Since then, she has undergone four rounds of chemo in Grand Forks. She is still working as much as she can as a school librarian, but she is scheduled to have a very serious surgery on January 12 at the University of MN hospital. *Possibly.* We don't yet know what the laparoscopic exploration will find or whether they will go ahead with the surgery. We are trying to anticipate her needs in recovery and continued treatment. We are trying to prepare for every possibility. It is hard. Many of you have dealt with the scary unknowns of cancer.

At the same time my mom (who lives in Windom MN where my sister is a pastor) has recently experienced significant declines in her Alzheimer's disease. At a care conference in November, my siblings and I were informed that she could no longer stay in her current setting. In two days my sister will move her to a new place in a neighboring town and we will be helping her settle in over Christmas break. We don't know how long she can stay there as the disease progresses, or how long we have with her. Many of you have cared for a loved one with dementia and you know--it is a marathon and there is grieving all along the way, as well as moments of grace and even humor. But it's getting harder for us to connect with her from a distance.

At the same time, we are still in limbo about where our son Micah will be going to college next year. As I write this, we are waiting to hear back from one more college, and the FAFSA is late this year so we won't get our full financial packages schools for a while. So we just don't know yet.

So...the year ahead...Hmmm. Kinda hard to say how it's all going to play out! A while back we had tentatively made a plan to move this summer after Micah graduates. We weren't sure exactly where, but closer to my mom, closer to other family, closer to where our kids will be-- but given everything that is happening with my mother-in-law, we don't know if that will be possible. Or if so, where?

These are the big unknowns in my life. I am sharing them with you all because they affect my availability to serve as pastor at St. Matt's. A year ago I contracted with you all to stay until the end of May 2024. I may be available for longer, at least through June. Beyond that, I'm not sure. I need more clarity. I have let the council know my situation and that I support whatever the church decides to do-- starting the pastoral call process up again now or waiting until I have more info about my availability.

Continued on next page



Pastor Kristen's Message Continued:

You all have your own lists of unknowns. Even when things seem to be stable, we never really know what's over the next hill, do we? We can and should create contingency plans but sometimes we just don't know. Sometimes we are waiting for God's Spirit to lead. How do we live in the meantime? **Given all the unknowns in our lives, individually and collectively—how do we BE fully and faithfully HERE, in this moment and in this chapter?**

Uncertainties can produce anxiety. I find it helpful to pray and work through the Serenity Prayer—naming anxieties, considering what I can actually control, and if so, what I want to do about it.

There's a lot we can't control. All that stuff we need to entrust to God. What else can we do?

Jesus promised that he would never leave us nor forsake us, that there is no testing we will go through where we will not be provided for, and that whether we live or die, we are in God's hands.

So then. The ultimate matters are already provided for...if we can wrap our hearts around this gift.

Right here today, there's a lot within our control: Our thoughts, and prayers and practices.

We can build our trust in God by practicing our faith in prayer, worship, devotion and meditation.

We can build our trust in our fellow traveling companions (fellow believers, neighbors, coworkers, family and friends) through fellowship, sharing and serving together. This takes intentionality! We can build our trust in our own future selves by making commitments and keeping them. Even on the road of uncertainty we can take steps every day to care for ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually. This is how we build our trust that when we get to the challenges up ahead, we will be able to handle it with grace and faith in God and continued adaptation. We are ok. We will be ok.

In Matthew 6:34 Jesus told us not to worry about tomorrow because 1) God will provide for tomorrow and 2) living in anxiety about the future steals the joy and peace from this here moment. We just aren't there yet. **But Today We Are HERE.** And we are ultimately called to **BE here.** We are not just called to *do*, to plan, to prepare or fret, but to BE. To experience being alive in God's grace now.

Breathe in. Breathe out. By grace.

We cannot be alive in the past nor future, but only THIS moment. So. Let's BE fully, faithfully HERE. After all, "THIS is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24)

Rejoicing in this new year, this new day, just being here with you.

Pastor Kristen

Faith Formation

Confirmation Reminders

- Students are reminded to complete and keep track of their Worship Notes. 12 notes are required this year.
- Once completed, fill out your Service Project form, found in your folder, to receive credit for service completed.
- Reminder to sign up for Worship Assisting. Each student needs to assist in worship at least 3 times.
- 8th Grade students should be working to set up a Confirmation Mentor . Mentors should be a trusted Christian adult students can have guided conversations with over soup suppers during Lent.

Education News

- Thank you to all our Cheer Visit hosts! The kids really had a great time coming out to visit you!! We hope you enjoyed the visit too!
- Thank you to Travis & Shannon Johnson for the delicious popcorn for our movie day in December!
- Sunday School will resume January 7th at 9 am!
- Confirmation will resume Wednesday January 10 at 7 pm!
- Thank you SO much to our Sunday School & Confirmation Guides this year! We are so lucky to have kind & caring people working with our kids!

Sunday School Christmas Program—Living Word: Telling of the Christmas Story!

- Thank you to everyone who made our Christmas program a success!! Our kids really enjoyed entertaining everyone with their program! The program is recorded on St.Matthew's YouTube page for viewing!



First Communion

St Matthew's offers First communion to our 5th graders and anyone who would like to receive their First Communion. This year we will be holding a First Communion event in place of the 4-week course. We are tentatively planning the event for March 24, with First Communion on Maundy Thursday March 28.

If you are interested in signing up your child or yourself, please let Bre Berberich know breberberich@gmail.com



Confirmation Cheer Visits

The confirmation youth had a wonderful time visiting seven households of our church and helping spread Christmas Cheer on December 13! They brought each family a goodie cheer and sang a Christmas Carol (or a few).

Our youth are very lucky to have such wonderful leaders in our Church. Thank you for all you do!



Worship Team News

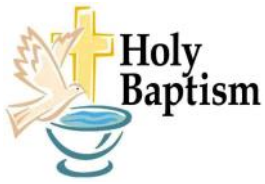
Thank you to the Worship Team for your continued help! We would love to welcome new members to our current team. If you are interested in joining the Worship Team please reach out to Sue Simon (701)739-3227

**Thank
You!**



Annual Meeting and Celebration of St. Matt's Ministry

Please plan to attend the Annual Meeting scheduled for **January 28, 2024** following worship service. This year's meeting will include a slide show of our year together!



Congratulations to
 Camden Verlyn Henningsgard
 son of Braden & Anna Henningsgard
 Baptized December 3, 2023



Blessings to everyone who contributed to this year's Angel Tree Project! You are indeed the hands and feet of Christ! There were 26 area families gifted by your generosity.

Thank you to WELCA and the Men's Group for gifting each family a grocery gift card!



LYO News

Our LYO (Lutheran Youth Organization) group finished up the year with cookie decorating and a Christmas party. For service projects, we wrote on Christmas cards for nursing home residents and donated items for baskets to be auctioned off at Sox for Kids. This was a joint project between LYO and the St. Matthew's Outreach team.



We will kick off the new year with a game night on **January 10th at 6:30pm** and will plan activities and service projects for the rest of the year. We will meet again on **January 24th at 6:30 pm**. All youth in grades 9-12 are welcome!

Outreach News

A caramel roll fundraiser was held in November to raise money for the Sox for Kids program, which was founded in 1989 to raise money for children in need from surrounding communities to buy Christmas gifts for themselves and their families. A total of \$452 was raised from the caramel roll sales. In addition to the caramel roll sales, the money raised from November's noisy offering (\$183) was also used to provide a donation to the program. The money was used as a cash donation to Sox for Kids and to purchase items for two gift baskets that were prepared by the Outreach Team and by the Thompson community LYO participants (who donated items for the gift baskets). The gift baskets were raffled off as silent auction items during the Sox for Kids annual fundraising event held in Hatton on December 9. Between the cash donation of \$385 and the money raised by the baskets during the silent auction (\$325), our contribution to the program totaled \$710!

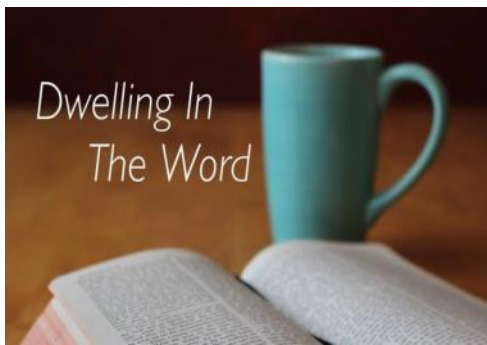
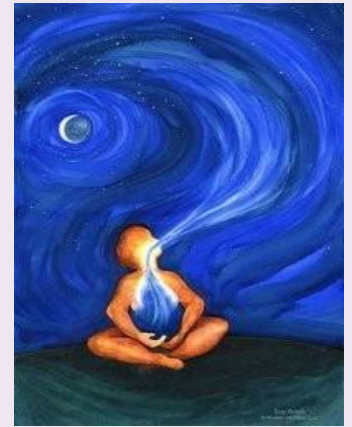


Breathe: Focus on Renewal

Bible Reflection and Gentle Yoga

Thursday January 4. 6:30pm-8pm at St.Matt's

New Year, New Beginnings! This night is an invitation to take a breath, become more centered in grace and set meaningful intentions for the year ahead. Please bring a mat or towel and possibly a friend!



You are invited to join Pastor Kristen **EVERY MONDAY at 1PM** for an informal time of connecting with God and with one another through scripture, coffee, conversation and prayer.

No homework.

No experience necessary.

ALL are WELCOME!



The Food Pantry is open during January on Tuesday, January 9th from 11:00 am-1:00 pm and Tuesday, January 23, 6pm-8pm.

If you or someone you know could use the assistance of the food pantry, please let them know, or come to the pantry during their open hours.



All women of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church are welcome to Women's Bible Study Monday, January 15th at 10:00 am at the Church

Upcoming Important Dates

- January 14th Church Council Meeting at 11:15am
- January 28th St.Matthew's Annual Meeting at 11:15am
- January 31st All Teams Meeting at 6pm



MEN IN MISSION St. Matthew's men gather on Sunday mornings at 9 am in the Fellowship Hall for a chance to chat, drink coffee and learn together. Their topics of discussion vary, but new folks are always welcome to join them.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY This group meets at the Church on the third Monday of the month. Their next gathering will be on Monday, October 16th at 10:00 am. All women of St. Matthew's are welcome!



January

Paul & Brooke Bakke Family
 Sarah & Charlie Krogfoss
 Kelby & Angie Laxdal Family
 Derek & Bobbi Sondreal Family
 Kory & Susie Sondreal
 Travis & Shannon Johnson Family
 Kevin & Lorelei Robinson Family
 Tyson & Heather Sondreal Family

February

Dylan & Sara Anderson Family
 Mark & Kristie Adams Family
 Nathan & Melissa Berger Family
 Randy & Becky Bohlman
 Brock Vaagene Family
 Josh & Tessa Clemetson Family
 Kodey & Kimberly Mohagen Family

Interested in joining St Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church? You are invited to our new member interest supper on Monday, January 22 from 6:30-7:30pm. Childcare will be provided after supper. Anyone is welcome!



Thank you to everyone for your helping hands. We apologize if we missed anyone, know that you are all appreciated!

- Gary Welsh for scraping ice in the parking lot
- Cheryl and Bill Widman for polishing the Altar, Pulpit, and Advent Stand
- To all those who gave of their time and talents to make the Christmas Eve services special
- The anonymous donor for the sound system updates
- The donor who made a substantial gift toward building upkeep.
- Gary and Mary Welsh for the donation of the outside nativity scene
- The drivers of our confirmation kids for their cheer visits and the parents who provided treats.
- All those who helped provide special music on December 17th and at the Christmas Eve service, including Emily Dobmeier, Liam Wojciechowski, Mary Mitchell, Justin Uhler, Josh & Julie Brorby, Brian and Gracia Larsen-Schmidt



Happy Birthday in January!



- 1 Cheryl Widman
- 2 Barry Arntz
- 3 Angie Muhs
- 4 Garnet Bischoff
- 5 Averie Geatz
- 6 Kristie Adams, Brandy George
- 7 Samantha Johnson
- 8 Kimberly Mohagen
- 9 Ellie Schumacher
- 11 Jaxon Clemetson, Cassie Riewer
- 12 Arvin Brorby, Jesse Hegg
- 13 Cornelius Everett
- 14 Collin Hancock, McKenna DeMoe
- 15 Lucy LaRoque
- 16 Noah Novak
- 17 Kelby Laxdal
- 19 Jailin Avdem, Shannon Hancock, Megan Kadrmas
- 20 Marcus Hughes
- 21 Joey Overby, Hadley Plautz
- 23 Kevin Cooper
- 24 Jordan Johnson
- 25 Damon Pearson
- 26 Brook Fretheim, Richard Staveteig
- 28 Christi Johnson
- 29 Lauren Plautz
- 31 Zakary Kadrmas

Special Thank you to Pastor Kristen for making the Advent season a meaningful experience for all of us.



Thank you for all your time, effort and talent!



A Note from your Church Council:

Happy New Year!

Scripture states “Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say again: Rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4).

With the new year upon us, many of us are looking ahead and have started to set our intentions for 2024. Yet, it is important to look to the past and recall God’s work in this world both the expected and unexpected. The seen and unseen gives us faith for what He will do next. Our trust in the Lord grows when we take time to remember He has always been faithful.

So, let us celebrate all the good we have experienced this past year as a church family and not let busyness get in our way of making Jesus first in our lives.

May this New Year bring you an abundance of joy, A joy that radiates from within, A joy that infects everyone you encounter.

Church Council News

Below, you will find a current summary of our Finances and updates impacting the entire congregation.

Summary of Finances

Financial Reports Summary	October	November
	2023	2023
General Giving Income - YTD	\$107,027	\$118,254
General Giving Income - Month	\$12,270	\$11,226
Net Income - YTD	\$ (25,773)	\$ (26,052)
General Giving Checking Account	\$29,359	\$28,868
Special Giving Checking Account	\$37,650	\$49,371
Line of Credit	\$0	\$0

Church Council Treasurer, Justin Bergeron had these noteworthy items to share with the Council and the Congregation:

Negative net income has been stable since August.

Break even for the month of November.

Special Giving is up thanks to a generous donation of \$10,000 for the Building Improvement Fund.



Updates

Our Annual Meeting will be held after worship on January 28 and at the conclusion we will gather in fellowship for a potluck luncheon. At the meeting will be carrying on with the theme of remembering the past and celebrating all the wonderful events at St. Matthew's during 2023 with a joyous and fun filled year in review. We will also spend time planning for our future and setting goals and/or intentions for the year ahead. All members of our congregation are encouraged to participate, and childcare will be provided by our Confirmation and/or LYO students. Mark your calendars (January 28, Annual Meeting) and we look forward to you joining us!

Also, taking place on January 28 will be New Member Sunday. Over the last several months we have had inquiries from families in our community who wish to join our church family. There will be a New Member interest event held the evening of January 22 and those who wish to move forward with their membership will be welcomed into our congregation during worship on the 28.

We invite all members of St. Matthew's to attend our Council meetings which generally will be held the second Sunday of every month. Our next meeting will take place on Sunday, January 14 following worship. Approved meeting minutes will be made available upon request.

Stay connected to what is happening at St. Matthew's via our Facebook and Instagram pages, the church website, and of course through announcements made during Sunday service.

Please let us know if we can answer any questions you may have. Thank you for taking the time to read this information. It is truly a blessing to be in fellowship and service with all of you.

Respectfully submitted on the behalf of the Church Council by Carrie Herrig, Council Secretary

**From the
Eastern
North
Dakota
Synod:**

Exploring Acts:

Synod-wide Scripture Read

with Dr. Eric Barreto

January 7- February 4, 2024



All congregation members across the Eastern North Dakota Synod are invited to participate in a synod-wide Scripture read! Together, we will dwell in the words and stories of the book of Acts.

Each day, you are encouraged to read one chapter of Acts, and every Sunday afternoon we will gather via Zoom from 2:00-3:30 for conversation with Dr. Eric Barreto, Professor of New Testament at Princeton Seminary. This event kicks off with an introductory Zoom session on January 7, and our reading schedule begins January 8. We hope you'll consider joining us!

Learn more at www.eandsynod.org/events/exploring-acts

Zoom Meeting ID: 898 7923 8361

Zoom Meeting Schedule:

January 7, 2:00-3:30 (Introduction)

January 14, 2:00-3:30

January 21, 2:00-3:30

January 28, 2:00-3:30

February 4, 2:00-3:30 (Wrap-up)

Reading Schedule:

January 7: Introductory Zoom (no assigned reading)

January 8: Acts 1

January 9: Acts 2

January 10: Acts 3

January 11: Acts 4

January 12: Acts 5

January 13: Acts 6

January 14: Acts 7 & Zoom Conversation

January 15: Acts 8

January 16: Acts 9

January 17: Acts 10

January 18: Acts 11

January 19: Acts 12

January 20: Acts 13

January 21: Acts 14 & Zoom Conversation

January 22: Acts 15

January 23: Acts 16

January 24: Acts 17

January 25: Acts 18

January 26: Acts 19

January 27: Acts 20

January 28: Acts 21 & Zoom Conversation

January 29: Acts 22

January 30: Acts 23

January 31: Acts 24

February 1: Acts 25

February 2: Acts 26

February 3: Acts 27

February 4: Acts 28 & Zoom Conversation

January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 9am Quilting	3 No Confirmation	4 6:30pm Breathe: New Beginnings	5	6
7 <i>Baptism of our Lord</i> 9am Men In Mission 9am Sunday School 10am Worship	8 1pm Dwelling In the word 7pm Quilting	9 9am Quilting 11am Food Pan- try	10 6:30pm LYO (all 9-12 Graders) 7pm Confirmation	11	12	13
14 9am Men In Mission 10am Worship 11:15am Church Council	15 10am Women's Bible Study 1pm Dwelling In the Word	16 9am Quilting	17 7pm Confirmation	18 Newsletter Deadline	19	20
21 9am Men In Mission 9am Sunday School 10am Worship	22 1pm Dwelling In the Word 7pm Quilting	23 9am Quilting 6pm Food Pantry	24 6:30pm LYO (all 9-12 Graders) 7pm Confirmation	25	26	27
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St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
701 Broadway St. Thompson, ND 58278
(701) 599-2081 | stmatthewslutheranchurch.org

Welcome to worship

Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Education Hour Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

All services live on our YouTube Channel

Address service requested

Saint Matthew's Lutheran Church

701 Broadway St. Thompson, ND 58278 (701) 599-2081

ST. MATTHEW'S LEADERSHIP

Pastor: Kristen Larsen-Schmidt stmattspastor@midconetwork.com

Administrative Assistant: stmattsadmin@midconetwork.com

Bookkeeper: John Schumacher stmattsbookkeeper58275@gmail.com

Council President: John Schumacher stmattspresident@gmail.com

Council Vice President: Scott Kuster scottkuster@gra.midco.net

Council Secretary: Carrie Herrig carrie.herrig@outlook.com

Council Treasurer: Justin Bergeron jbergero@yahoo.com

Outreach Team Lead: Beth Kurz bkurz@undeerc.org

Fellowship Team Lead: Unfilled. Interested? Please talk with a council member!

Properties Team Lead: Dan Herrig dan@sandsteelbc.com

Education Team Lead: Bre Berberich breberberich@gmail.com

Youth Team Lead: Dara Faul darafaul@gmail.com

Worship Team Lead: Sue Simon ssimon@gra.midco.net