



Saint Matthew
LUTHERAN CHURCH

St. Matthew's Messenger

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church

115 E. Penn Street, Martinsburg, PA 16662-1127

Phone 814.793.2413 • Fax 814.614-4003 • e-mail stmatthewmartinsburg@gmail.com

• web: www.stmatthewlc.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/stmatthewlc

Volume 65

JANUARY 2025

Number 1

Happy New Year:

It is once again that time when we look ahead in hope and expectation: *What will happen this year? What will we accomplish? How different will life look a year from now?* Since not much in life can be reliably controlled or even, to some extent, planned, it is bold of us to arbitrarily decide that the first day of January will mark a significant shift in our fortunes, but it would be disingenuous to pretend we aren't hoping that this year will be better than the last.

One concrete shift we can depend on at this time of year is progress from the longest, darkest nights to longer, brighter days. As one who is susceptible to the winter blues, I appreciate each additional minute of daylight as the sun sets later and later each day. But especially at this time of year I'm reminded of the promise in John's gospel that we read by candlelight at Christmas: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

Even in seasons when we most long for change, and even when our progress toward that change is painstakingly slow, God is with us; God doesn't wait for us to fulfill resolutions or for our circumstances to change for the better. We don't know what this new year will bring, but we do know that God will be with us, and that no darkness is deep enough to overcome the light of Christ.

So we begin a new year boldly hoping for the future and comforted that God is still with us until those hopes are fulfilled.

Peace,
Pastor Traci



Prayers and Christian Sympathy are requested for the family and friends of Vivian Beach upon her death on Thursday, December 5th.

Prayers and Christian Sympathy are requested for the family and friends of Rodger Hoover upon his death on Thursday, December 26th.

Thank You

Thank you for all your cards, food and sympathy expressed to our family during the recent passing of our husband, father and grandfather, Goerge Gilbert. Your kindness was greatly appreciated. We are so grateful to God for our St. Matthew family.

The Gilbert Family

Many thanks to the Council for your generous Christmas gift and to the whole congregation for another year of ministry together at St. Matthew. I am truly blessed by this community all year long.

Thank you!
+Pastor Traci

Mitten Tree Thank You!



Many thanks to everyone who contributed generously to the "Mitten Tree" by bringing colorful homemade, bought items and financial gifts for needy elementary school children! Because of your kindness, they will have a Warmer Winter!

These items were distributed to Martinsburg and Spring Cove Elementary Schools. The total items received were 95 items! (56 hats, hat/mittens/gloves sets, 18 pairs of gloves/mittens. 3 sweatpants, 1 sweater, 1 pair slip on shoes).

Linda Smith

Thank you to WELCA from the Martinsburg Food Pantry for the donation of \$30.00 in memory of Rev. D.L. Shaffer.

Linda Smith

Thank you for all your meals that you have delivered to me this year. Everything was good.

Mary Jane Allison

Dear Social Ministry Committee,



I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the care package you sent me during my law school finals. Your thoughtful gesture was such a blessing, and it truly lifted my spirits during a stressful time. The contents of the package were not only practical but also deeply meaningful. The On Eagles Wings Advent Devotional, in particular, became a cherished part of my nightly routine as I was studying. As I navigated the pressures of exams, the reflections and scriptures helped center my thoughts and reminded me of the peace and hope that comes through Christ. I am so thankful for the support of St. Matthew Lutheran Church. Your prayers, encouragement, and kindness have been a source of strength during my law school journey.

Thank you again for your generosity,
Olivia R. Day

Thank you so much for my finals care package! It meant a lot knowing people were thinking of me during such a stressful time. Having something I could easily prepare to eat allowed me to better focus on my studies.

Lacey Ripka

Thank you for your thoughtful Christmas gifts, cards, and well-wishes. It has truly been a pleasure working at St. Matthew this past year. I look forward to continuing to getting to know everyone and being inspired by witnessing God's work in action on a daily basis.

Jen Ripka



At 10:00 a.m. on Christmas morning, local churches ring their bells in unison to celebrate Jesus's birth. Thank you to Jeff and Jay Hoenstine for ringing the church bells at St. Matthew.

Outgoing and continuing Council members (2024 Council):

Please return the brief synopsis of your committee's work in 2024 to the office by Thursday, January 9th.



A Stewardship Minute JANUARY 2025

No matter how small our income, the task before us is how to divide our money proportionately between our own needs and the needs of our church community. Surely that is true for a great many of us ... and if it isn't, shouldn't it be?

Each of us should take time to consider how seriously we want to take our stewardship as members of God's Church. It is a given that we take seriously the needs of our family. We are compelled to do that as the bills we may owe remind us regularly. When it comes to dividing our money between our family's needs and the needs of our church, we should be very serious in our decision making.

There is a true story found in Philip Yancey's devotional book called Grace Notes that is quite interesting. It is about a pastor in Washington, D.C. who was told about a widow in his church whose income was barely enough to feed her family. A deacon who knew about the situation suggested the pastor go to her and suggest that the woman cut back on her gifts to the church in order to meet her family's needs. The pastor did and it turned out to be a suggestion he learned he should not have made. The widow said with sadness in her voice the following: "You are trying to take away the last thing that gives me dignity and meaning."

Prayer: *Dear Lord, please help us to live to please you. We know that it is in living for you and serving you that will make our lives the most meaningful and joyous. In Christ's name. Amen*

Ways to Support St. Matthew

Offering Envelopes: These are mailed to our contributors at their homes monthly.

Person Bank Drafts if you would like to use this method contact your bank and have the donation taken from your bank account and sent to St. Matthew (usually monthly automatic bank drafts from your checking account. **(There is no fee to the church or to you for this convenient donation.)**)

"Simply Giving" by Vanco. If you would like to use the on-line program of automatic bank drafts/debit card from your checking account. **(Forms are in the church office. Please see Jen. The church gets billed a monthly fee for this service.)**

Giving Online: Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions from anywhere you have access to the Internet. Simply follow these easy steps:

- 1) Visit the church website at "www.stmatthewlc.com"
- 2) Click on the "Give" button, (on the top white banner)
- 3) Follow the onscreen instructions to create an online profile and to schedule your recurring contributions.

Mobile Giving: Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions. Electronic giving offers convenience for individuals and provides much-needed donation consistency for our congregation. Simply follow these easy steps:

- 1) Visit "**Play Store on your mobile device**"
- 2) Find the "**Vanco Payment**" app (this is free)
- 3) Click on the "**Install**" button
- 4) Open the app on your device
- 5) Follow the onscreen instructions to schedule your one time contribution or recurring contributions. **(There is a processing fee at the time of the transaction. You have the choice to pay the fee for the church or have the fee taken from your donation.)**



SERVING GOD AND US January 2025

Date	January 5 <i>Epiphany of Our Lord</i>	January 12 <i>Baptism of Our Lord</i>	January 19	January 26
Acolytes	Gabby Decker Lily Lightner Lucy Lightner	Ben Decker Gavin Kuster Norah Kuster	Jay Hoenstine	Mace Baker
Lectors	Janet Stewart	Linda Smith	Jean Sinal	Greg Haffling
Assisting Minister	Greg Haffling	Shawn Orczeck	Amanda Decker	Tina Harclerode
Ushers	Steve Oswalt	Ed Kreider	Randy McGraw	Dennis Smith
Audio/Video	Camden Kuster	Camden Kuster	Camden Kuster	Camden Kuster
Altar Guild	Jean Sinal Jane Fagans	Jean Sinal Jane Fagans	Jean Sinal Jane Fagans	Jean Sinal Jane Fagans
Offering Counters	Jim Barley Beth Garner	Jim Barley Beth Garner	Jim Barley Beth Garner	Jim Barley Beth Garner



Birthdays for January

01 Anna Weaver	10 Catherine Corcoran	24 Doris L. Waddick
02 Stacy Kuster	11 E. Kaye Burket	28 Ryan Frederick
Margie J. Smith	13 Janelle R. Dennis	Jackie Lightner
04 Jenna Metzler	15 Michele M. Smith	Kim Oswalt
05 Peggy Freyer	16 Thomas Beyer	Michele L. Smith
06 Laurie S. Smith	Gavin Kuster	29 Dwight Kensinger
07 Dr. Murray S. Smith	20 Jean L. Stonerook	
09 B. Ann Baker	22 Bill Brown	

Announcing the 2025 Council

On Sunday, December 15th during our Annual
Congregational Meeting new Council members
were elected:

Council President	Greg Haffling
Council Vice President	Don Bulger
Christian Education	Amanda Decker
Property	Paul Decker
Social Ministry	Lottie Ebersole
Finance	Jim Barley

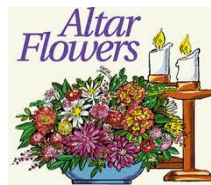
2025 Nominating Committee

Ed Kreider
Jane Fagans

**Installation of New Council Members will be
Sunday, January 5, 2025 during the 10:30 a.m.
worship service.**

Anniversaries for January

06 Michael B. & Kathryn A. Panek
28 Paul L. & Rosie Johnson



The 2025 Altar Flower chart is posted on the Narthex bulletin board. Altar Flowers are a perfect way to remember loved ones or to honor loved ones. There are plenty of dates available. Please sign up now for the Sunday you wish to place flowers on the Altar. Price-\$40.00.



Martinsburg Food Pantry



Volunteers from St. Matthew will be helping and assisting in the distribution of food on Thursdays, January 2 and January 16 from 9:00-11:00 a.m.

January food items most needed are: Fruit, Instant Oatmeal, Scalloped Potatoes, Ravioli, Rice Sides.

Our Thanks to all who have contributed food, supplies or monetary donations during this past year! We ask for your continued support and prayers in serving needy families in 2025.

Linda K. Smith

2025 COUNCIL DIRECTORY AND MINISTRY STAFF

All phone numbers start with (814) unless otherwise noted.

Pastor	Rev. Traci Marriott	935-9267	Christian Ed.	Amanda Decker	934-8798
Admin. Assistant	Jen Ripka	935-3801	Evangelism	Vacant	
Assistant Admin. Assist	Laura Orczeck	224-1208	Stewardship	Vacant	
President	Greg Haffling	793-9827	Finance	Jim Barley	793-4623
Vice President	Don Bulger	329-3412	Social Ministry	Lottie Ebersole	232-6665
Secretary	Carla Brumbaugh	932-4082	Worship & Music	Tina Harclerode	317-5312
Treasurer	Beth Garner	793-3966	Staff Support	Vacant	
Property	Paul Decker	330-6345	Sexton	Phil Claar	215-0885

HIGHLIGHTS BY COUNCIL IN DECEMBER 2024

1. The Social Ministry committee packed and mailed 10 college student/military care packages and will be filling boxes with Christmas goodies to be distributed to shut-ins later in December.
2. Some of the pews and the wall in the back section of the sanctuary were repaired.
3. On Christmas day at 10:00, all the churches in Martinsburg will ring their bells. Jeff and Jay Hoenstine will ring the bells for St. Matthew.
4. New council members will be installed on Sunday, January 5, 2025.

Journey to Bethlehem Thank You

Every Christmas we read the story of the birth of the Christ child in the Book of Luke. Do you ever think what it might have been like for the shepherds, for the people in the Bethlehem community, for Mary and Joseph?

Once again, the members of St. Matthew brought the story to life in a unique journey beginning in the fields where shepherds were tending sheep and ending in a little stable in the back streets of Bethlehem.

Even though the weather was uncooperative, nearly 80 persons took the journey, either with the walk-through version, or the modified version, whereby the characters came to the attendees to tell their story, then assembled a scene around the manger. It was exciting to see the manger scene come to life.

The congregation has not presented Journey to Bethlehem since 2019—the pandemic restrictions necessitated a 5-year break in the every-other-year routine of presentations. The cast members were all veterans to the Journey; however, some roles were changed. All the little angels and shepherds that used to float from shepherd field to shepherd field were now in major speaking roles. I found that to be quite incredible.



2024 Journey to Bethlehem Cast

Cast members were: St. Lucia, Laura Orczeck; St. Nick, Shawn Orczeck; field shepherd, Jacob Orczeck; shepherd guides: Elaine Smith, Carla Brumbaugh, Allen Kuster, and Steve Oswalt (oh wait, Steve mostly served as snow shoveler). Thank you, Steve, for keeping the walks safe for our visitors, that was no easy task. I was happy to see you put on shoes and long pants. Lacey Ripka served as a hallway shepherd. Pastor Traci did her usual excellent characterization of Gabriel. Katharine and Blake Peese filled the roles of Elizabeth and Zechariah; Lucy and Lily Lightner were Mary; Greg Dick was Joseph. Jay Hoenstine and Jeffrey Hoenstine filled the roles of the Centurion and the innkeeper, respectively. Gavin Kuster, Ben Decker, and Mace Baker were shepherds with the sheep in the hallway. Greg Haffling decided it was time to step out of the Centurion costume and head on over to the throne room to fill the role of Herod. Camden Kuster, Nora Kuster, and Gabby Decker all volunteered to be the wisemen. Amanda and Paul Decker played the roles of Mary and Joseph in the final manger scene while Stacy Kuster was the nativity narrator.

The youngsters who filled major roles did an excellent job in bringing their story to the visitors. Their lines were memorized and their presentations were authentic. They were all enthusiastic about their roles and they took them seriously. Gavin and Ben did an exceptional job with the dialogue at the sheep pen, as did the wisemen, Camden, Norah, and Gabby. Lucy and Lily shared the role of Mary, I never knew which one was presenting, only their mother knew. Thank you, Jay, for agreeing to be Centurion, that costume was made for you; and Jeffrey, always eager to help, accepted the innkeeper's role without hesitation. Jacob was slated for several different roles before we situated him with the field shepherd role just before the 2 pm presentation was about to begin. Lacey and Mace authenticated the shepherd areas by taking care of the sheep and tending the fires. Job well done everyone!!!!

Others who contributed to the success of the presentation were greeter Sarah Detwiler and Mary Nelson played Christmas tunes while visitors waited to begin their journey.

The sheep, Turtle, was graciously loaned to us for the event by Dr. Jen Kauf, an associate of Shawn Orczeck. Dennis Smith hauled the straw from the farm, and Jeff Hoenstine literally ran with it up the steps.

Stanley Smith, Jim and Tonya Walter, Kaye Burket, Laura and Shawn Orczeck, Jean Sinal, Pastor Traci, Jane, Jay, and Jeff Hoenstine all assisted with set up and tear down. The Decker and Kuster families helped with tear down and clean up. Great job cleaning up the sheep pen, that's no easy job. Everyone made the necessary work to get the sets ready for presentation and the clean up afterwards seem easy and effortless. THANK YOU!!

Lottie Ebersole took charge of the refreshments for after the journey, and Tina Harclerode led the kitchen crew in serving lunch and supper to the cast and support staff. Tonya Walter, Jean Sinal, Sarah Detwiler, Beth Garner, and Kaye Burket were in the kitchen most of the day helping with meals and refreshments. And thank you to those who baked and donated cookies, made soups and desserts, and provided water and snacks. We were given a generous donation to help defray the cost of the pizza for supper. Four large Dragon pizzas from Small Town Pizza were gone in no time.

Thank you to Phil Claar for his support and help with set up and cleaning up afterwards. Jen Ripka helped with the sidewalk clean up and provided clerical support. I hope I did not miss anyone's name in this thank you.

This was the fifteenth time St. Matthew presented Journey to Bethlehem to the community. Since that first time in 1995, Journey to Bethlehem has become a professional production from the acting of the cast members, to the creation of the authentic sets. Thank you to everyone who helped with this amazing production, and thank you to everyone who supported us in prayer and who came to take the Journey to Bethlehem.

Jane Fagans



Manger scene – modified presentation

A Christmas Message



In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 2:1-7

Years ago, at Christmas time, our family would travel back to where my parents grew up to visit with family that still lived there. It was a tradition. We would share the day together with gift giving, meals, and storytelling. Adults would chat and cousins would play. It would be a long day spent till we returned home, but it was always a wonderful time. I miss those days, that tradition, especially being back in this area – where memories come alive again for me.

What are your traditions at this time of year? Do you travel to see loved ones? Or do they travel to see you? Do you gather with friends? This is a time to remember how important our memories are and to realize that there are those who aren't able to travel, or don't have anyone traveling to see them. Who might you visit this year to share the joy of Christ's birth? Whose tradition, memories, might you help come alive again?

Merry Christmas from the Office of the Bishop
+Bp Collins, Pastor Shock, Sue Ellen, Pastor Kratz & Michelle

Talk-O Tuesday



Fellowship, Food, & Faith Conversation
Tuesday, January 28th at 6PM
La Fiesta at the Airport
RSVP to the office by Noon

