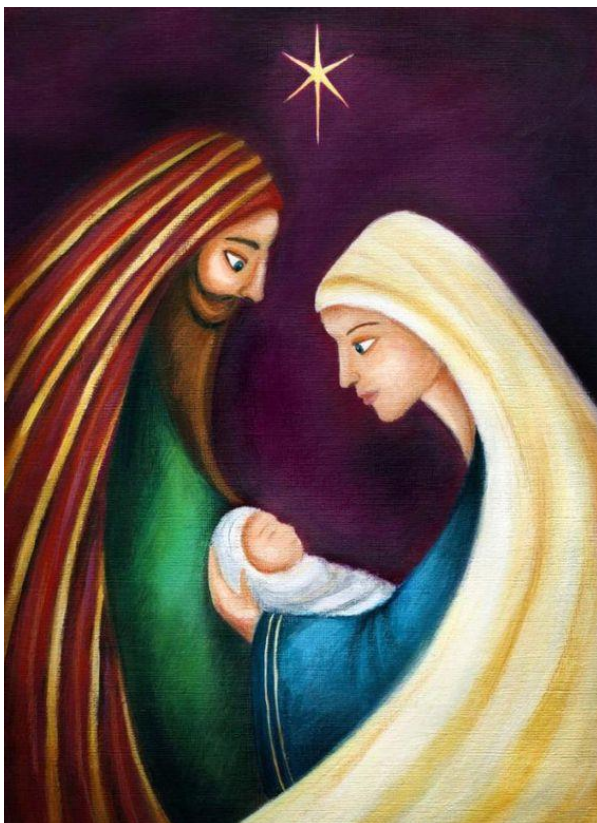
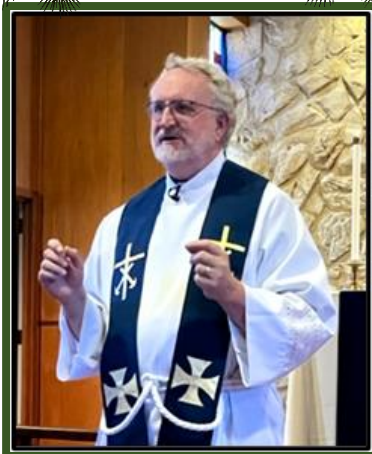


December 2023



The Messenger

*St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
9349 E. 65th Street
Raytown, Missouri 64133*



Dear church family,

It's hard to believe it's already the Advent season! I was just enjoying the warm and slightly chilly Fall days and suddenly Thanksgiving was barreling in upon us. We all know how quickly our world prepares for the seasons based on what things can be sold. Halloween decoration come down and soon we see the adornment for Christmas replacing them. In the Christian worldview these shifts are also a call for us to look at our lives and the mission of our church to one another and the greater community. We minister to the Lord and to one another in expectation of extending God's love to a spiritually hungry world.

As we prepare for Advent, we are called anew to take seriously the call to be ready for the Second Coming of Christ. The shift backward from the Christmas theme of incarnation is intentional. I consider comparable to the expectancy of all those who longed for the coming of a Savior. We consider Simeon and Anna in the temple who had waited their entire lives to catch a glimpse of that One who would be the Messiah. When we read the very end of the Book of Revelation in chapter 22 verse 20; "Surely I come quickly, Amen, Even so Come Lord Jesus." Here I am reminded of all those in the world praying this prayer who are suffering untold agonies because they are Christians who long for the appearance of Christ and the culmination of all things. But now we are called to live in this exciting but often intense time between the seasonal themes of the First and Second Coming of Jesus Christ. May our hearts long to welcome Jesus' return at any moment in our lives. Let us also travel to Bethlehem to see the babe in a manger!

Blessings on all of you,

Father Jeff Hurst



St. Matthew's Staff

The Rev. William Jeff Hurst
Rector

Sherry Minzey
Admin. Assistant

Patti McGill
Music Director

Officers

Judy Taylor
Senior Warden

Carl Turlin
Junior Warden

David Macey
Treasurer

Linda Gerding
Secretary

Service Times

Sunday Worship
Holy Eucharist Rite II
10:00 a.m.
Christmas Eve Service
2:00 p.m.

*Come let us
adore Him
Christ the Lord*

CHRISTMAS EVE and CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE

The Worship Committee, and Fr Jeff met this past October to discuss and plan the upcoming Advent and Christmas season services. Due to the unusual occasion of Christmas Eve (which is Advent number 4) occurring on Sunday December 24 followed by Christmas Day on Monday the 25th, we decided to observe a blended service for **both** holidays. **We will gather on Sunday, Christmas Eve at 2 pm.** We felt it was unrealistic to observe both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services considering that some couldn't attend both services. **Please remember that this blended service replaces the Sunday service we usually observe at 10 am.** This gives us some time to have a few meals of day and perhaps time with family before we gather for worship on Sunday, Christmas Eve. The service will begin with lessons from Advent 4 with appropriate hymns. The Christmas gospel story from Luke will be read to signal a shift to hymns like "O Come all ye Faithful" and other joyful hymns. After observing the Holy Eucharist, we will gather downstairs for some refreshments, sing some Christmas Carols and play a game or two. We hope this gives us a time to celebrate while also getting us home before dark.



INSTRUCTIONAL EUCHARIST

On Sunday, November 12th, Fr Jeff led the church with a step-by-step instructional guide in how we as Anglicans worship each Sunday. This effort was requested by a few who were curious about the why and how of our worship. The colors that adorn the lectern/pulpit and altar mark the time of the church year we are remembering the life and ministry of Jesus and the early church. The acolyte and Priest wear a common white garment that covers street clothes to point to the uniqueness and holiness of our worship. The Priest wears a stole around his/her neck to signify a towel of a servant or the yoke of Christ as an ordained person who is yoked to Christ and the ministry of the church.

While we worship in similar ways as other liturgical churches, the Book of Common Prayer is one of our unique features as a church. From the Procession of the crucifer to the first hymn and introductory prayers, we see the **“Liturgy of the Word”** as our first part of the ascent in worship. The singing of the Gloria links us with the heavenly host akin to the angelic visitation to the shepherd, but also reminds us Isaiah’s recognition of the glory of God in Isaiah Chap 6. This emphasis is indicative of the worshipping church on earth and in heaven.

Some of us bow, sit, stand, kneel, sing and generally participate in the service for “liturgy” is the work of the people. We are not spectators watching others perform but those who listen to God as the lector reads and then responds in acclamation that God is speaking to us. One of the Psalms is recited with our response as this was Israel’s and the early church’s hymnal and the Book of Common Prayer contains the complete Psalter! The Gospel is brought down in the midst of the congregation as we listen and respond to the words and memories of Jesus. The sermon or homily is presented as the church discerns what the Lord is saying to us through the spoken sermon. The Nicene Creed is uplifted to testify to our devotion to the person of Jesus as really human and really divine. After the lector leads all the church in prayer to God for local, national and global needs, we pray the parish prayer that draws all the parish life in a summary statement of why we are here in Raytown, Missouri.

We now move into the **“Liturgy of the Table (Eucharist)”**. We present to God our monetary gifts as well as the bread and wine that came forth from the earth. The Eucharist is word derived from “thanksgiving” and that is the emphasis as we begin---then recognizing the holiness of the recognition of water in the wine denoting our eternal connection to the living Christ., divinity and humanity, as we re- represent that Last Supper where Christ gave all for us in the remembrance of the bread and chalice. The prayer of consecration and invocation of the Holy Spirit empowers this encounter as the real presence of Christ who meets us at the table (altar) when we consume the bread and wine. Herein is our most precious activity as we Take and Eat together. We are then recommissioned to go to the world as carriers of this living presence of Christ by deeds and words.

Fr. Jeff



*They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream. It shall
not fear when heat comes, and its leaves will
stay green; in the year of drought it is not
anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.*

Jeremiah 17:8

Parishioners at St. Matthew's – Raytown are truly blessed in every way. Most of us are blessed with good incomes, a pension, social security benefits, 401-Ks. We give generously of what we have, not just in money, but by helping others in the church and in the community. We are guided by the bible, which encourages us tithe, not just from our incomes but also from our time and from our talents. The Bible is bold in telling us how we will be rewarded:

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine. Proverbs 3:9-10 Paul gives us further guidance: ... whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:6

As you consider how you will give in the upcoming year, I encourage each of you to examine your heart and decide how you will sow and what you will reap. Is your heart telling you to sow sparingly or to sow bountifully? Let your heart be your guide. Your tithe goes to the church and flows out to provide the church with what it needs to operate, then it flows out to those we help through our community services and our service to St. Matthews. Please consider pledging the first ten percent of your income so St. Matthews can continue to operate for the benefit of parishioners and the community. Then, further examine your heart and consider how you can give of your time and talents. Go line-by-line through the time and talent sheet and consider how you, your spouse, and your children can give of yourselves. We each are the roots of abundance for St. Matthews. By sowing our seeds abundantly, we will reap abundantly.

Judy Taylor, Sr. Warden
Stewardship Chair

Commitment Sunday

**Pledge packets can be placed in the
offering plate on Sunday, December 3rd.**



St. Matthew's Thanksgiving Dinner





L-R Linda Gerding, Patti McGill, Zella Forsythe, Carl Turlin, Marci Turlin, Charles Cease(guest), Mary Cease, absent: Jim & Brenda Laney

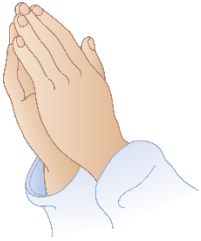
NOVEMBER CIRCLE OF CARE

The Community of Chaplains have continued to have their monthly meetings, after coffee hour, at church in the library. During COVID restriction's it was the most that could be done, and after COVID it just seemed the most convenient.

Zella Forsythe was the Host for November and brought pretty and fun decorations for the table. Everyone brought their own lunch and Zella provided a delicious pumpkin pie with whipped cream.

No parishioners have requested a visit, and fortunately there are few who need Eucharistic visits because of the kits and being able to join in on YouTube. The Chaplains are willing and continue to be prepared to visit any who are ill or unable to attend church, and would just like a visit.

Linda Gerding
COC Facilitator



PRAYER GROUP

This Group meets via phone conference-call the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:00pm. They take turns praying for anyone or anything in their minds or on their hearts. Always included are the names on the Parish Intercessory list and the names in the Parish Directory. They usually pray for about an hour. Anyone is welcome to join in and can offer a prayer and leave the group conversation at any time. To be included just let Linda Gerding know and she will call you to connect you to the prayer session.

Blessings,
Linda Gerding
Judy Taylor
Zella Forsythe



DECEMBER 27TH

MESSENGER & CALENDAR

DEADLINE



NEW TREASURER AND PAYROLL CLERK

First of all, we want to express our appreciation for the faithful and loving work of our treasurer Dave Macey these past several decades. Since my arrival as your priest and preceding that, the vestry has been praying for and searching for someone to fill Dave Macey's job as our church treasurer. Dave was rightly concerned about who would function in his place especially if an unexpected illness would incapacitate him. Providentially we feel. Zella asked her neighbor Robbie Tubbs if she would be interested in employment as the payroll manager for our church. It appeared that Robbie was retired and had worked in this line of work or has familiarity with it. Robbie met with Judy Taylor our Senior Warden and Dave Macey just recently and has now agreed to take this part of the treasurer's job. Dave will take some time to train Robbie with the software we use and other procedures concerning the job.

It gets better. Not long after this meeting with Robbie, Brenda Laney told James Laney that she felt a nudge from the Lord to assist with the treasurer's job. After being informed of this by James, I asked Dave Macey about Brenda's interest. Dave said we still needed a treasurer to do the work that Robbie would not be doing. I consulted with Brenda Laney and she has agreed to help us with the treasurer's position minus payroll and Dave will faithfully train her what he has been doing for us for so many years.

Fr. Jeff
Rector



Flying Solo

On Saturday, October 18, eight of us went to see Killers of the Flower Moon. Disturbing, but good. Beci and Linda's sister, Maxi, joined us for the movie. Then we joined Yael at the Chinese Dragon to eat. It is always good to see everyone. I always look forward to the third Saturday of the month.

Mary



GREENING OF THE CHURCH ON DECEMBER 10th

Please plan on staying after services on Sunday, December 10th to participate in decorating the church with holiday greenery. When we are finished, we will have hot cocoa, coffee and cookies to top off our labor of love.

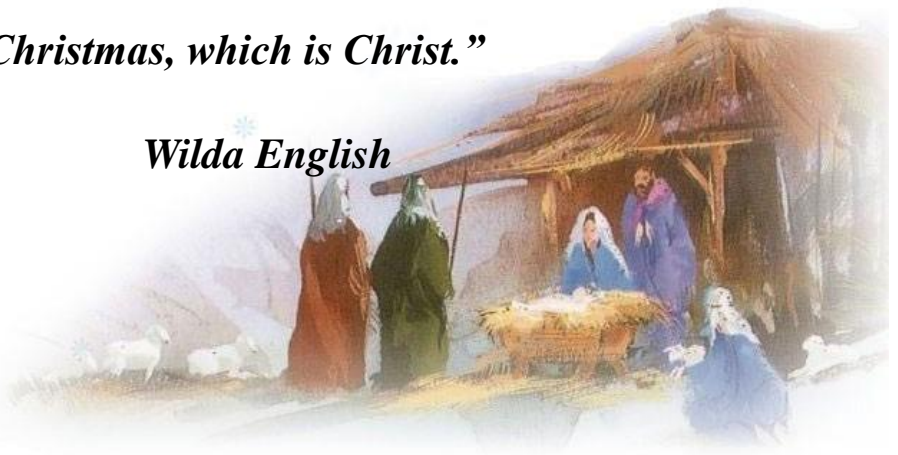


Christmas Blessings

*God grant you the light in Christmas, which is faith,
the warmth of Christmas, which is love;
the radiance of Christmas, which is purity;
the righteousness of Christmas, which is justice;
the belief in Christmas, which is truth;
the all of Christmas, which is Christ.”*

Wilda English

*Christmas Blessings,
Linda Batson
Daughters of the King*



You will find a Special Christmas Offering envelope in your bulletin, and you can also give your Christmas Offering online.

Online: Online Giving Link: <http://stmatthewsraytown.org/>



CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL FLOWERS



If you would like to make a special offering for plants and flowers for Christmas, please use the Christmas Flower Envelopes that are available on the Narthex table.

The thanksgiving or memorial designation will be printed in the Christmas Eve service leaflets, and the names of all donors will be listed in the January Messenger. Please send in your envelopes as soon as possible. **The last day to assure that names will be listed in the Dec. 24th bulletin, and Messenger, is Sunday, December 10.**



ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

The homeless animals in the kennels at Wayside Waifs need clean, used towels and blankets for bedding to keep warm in winter. Other items on their wish list include kitty litter, treats, large stuffed animals, cat and kitten toys, dog and cat treats, ball and rope toys, Kong toys, and newspapers.

Please bring these items to the Narthex Cloak- Room and place them in the appropriate boxes.

Thank you for your compassion for these animals.

