



St. Matthew's Lutheran Church Around the Church December 21, 2025

Merry Christmas



SIGNS

There are signs everywhere that it is Christmas time. Lights, decorations, crowded stores, crowded roads. Even snow on the ground! It's been a while since

we've had this much snow in December. Signs! Mary and Joseph had their share of signs before Jesus' birth. Mary had nine months of signs! A changing body, changing hormones... I've seen what that looks like three times in my wife. What did Joseph think? When she "was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:18) he didn't believe it. It took an angel appearing in a dream in the middle of the night to tell him that yes, "the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (vs. 20).

For centuries, Mary has been a model of Christian discipleship. When the Angel Gabriel's word brought the Holy Spirit, she said Yes to that word. When the Word grew within her, changing her, she bore the Word and "gave it birth." She couldn't hide it; it was visible for everyone to see. And what did other people think?

When *you* hear God's word—a gracious word of the Spirit's visitation, unasked, undeserved, unmerited—how does it make *you* feel? What are the signs *in you* that the Spirit wants to change you... A queasy feeling in the stomach? That could be a sign. A sense of joy and peace, assurance? That could be a sign too. And how do you *say* yes to the Spirit that works through God's Word? Discipleship is all about following Christ and his Word, "bringing to birth" the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

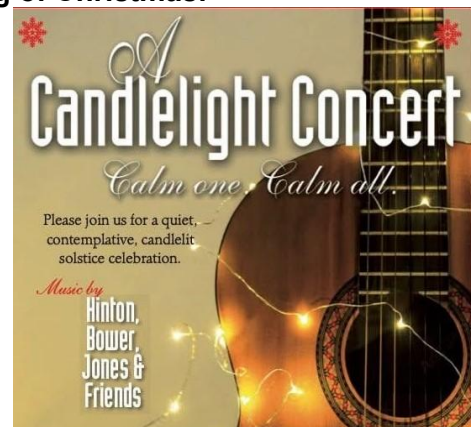
What are the signs? Can you recognize them? I hear and see a lot of signs that don't point to God's love in Christ—worry, anxiety, aimlessness, busyness, distraction, and a restless seeking. I see signs of need, and I worry about the reflex to find easy solutions to that "discomfort." Mary's discomfort—and Joseph's—wasn't all bad; it meant the Spirit was at work within them.

Christmas reminds us that God's Word is a *pregnant Word*, growing inside, somewhat hidden, somewhat not—*The Word* that God in Christ saves us, makes us whole, declares us loved.

Peace,
Pr. Christian



CHRISTMAS CONGREGATIONAL BREAKFAST, DEC. 21: Please join us for our Christmas Congregational Breakfast in the CLC TODAY, Sunday, December 21, immediately following the 9:30am Worship Service. Share some Fellowship with us as we prepare for the coming of Christmas!



CANDLELIGHT CONCERT, DEC. 21: Calm one. Calm all. Please join us for a quiet, contemplative, candlelit solstice celebration TONIGHT December 21 at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary. Hinton, Bower, Jones & Friends will host this Candlelight Concert. Music will include original works, ancient folk songs, and perhaps a quiet Christmas classic or two. All are welcome and entry is free!



BABY SHOWER FOR JESUS: The Chester County Hospital OB/GYN Clinic is grateful for any donations. Their essential needs include: **diapers, new or gently used onesies, new or gently used newborn and 3 mo. clothing, wipes and baby blankets (new or gently used).**

The labor and delivery department is collecting new supplies for antepartum patients. Needs include: **Chapstick, adult blankets, adult pjs, body wash, lotion, fuzzy socks, nail supplies, water bottles, non-perishable snacks, refillable water bottles.** We are also collecting new or gently used items to occupy these patients: puzzle books, board games, playing cards, coloring books, colored pencils, books, etc.

Please bring any donations to the church office (Monday-Friday 9:00am-1:00pm), or drop off to the office porch bin after hours, through December 24. For any questions, please text or email Karen Astheimer at 610-212-6065 or email: karenlally79@gmail.com.



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES: Please join us to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus during our Worship services on **Christmas Eve: Wednesday, December 24.** There will be three services: **3:00pm, 5:00pm and 7:00pm.** *All are welcome!* ***We need your help, especially for the 5:00pm and 7:00pm services! Please check this week's Christmas Update or the Friday online ATC for the signup link!***

Holiday Hours...



HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

Our School office will be closed from **December 19-January 2.**
School resumes on **Monday, January 5.**

Church Office Hours:

Monday & Tuesday December 22 & 23:
9:00am-1:00pm

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day
December 24 & 25: CLOSED

Friday, December 26: 9:00am-11:00am
Monday, December 29: 9:00am-11:00am
Tuesday, December 30: 9:00am-12:00pm

New Year's Eve & New Year's Day
December 31 & January 1: CLOSED

Friday, January 2: 9:00am-1:00pm



YOUTH NEWS

OUR HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH CHRISTMAS PARTY will be **TONIGHT, Sunday, December 21** from 6:00-8:00pm at Pastor Stuart's house. Spend an evening with friends having fun, playing games, and of course taking part in our annual gift exchange! (Bring an inexpensive, WRAPPED gag gift for the exchange.) All 9th-12th graders are invited, including friends. **Sign up in the online ATC.**

COLLEGE PANEL FOR HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH AND PARENTS - On Sunday, January 4 from 4:00-5:30pm, we will provide another opportunity for older high school youth to sit with current college students and learn from their experiences. This year, we will also offer a chance for high school parents to talk to college parents to get *their* advice

on how to navigate the process of preparing for college with their student. **Sign up is in the online ATC to participate.**

THE WINTER-SPRING YOUTH EVENT SCHEDULE is now posted and available on the church website's youth page; be sure to check it out and block out dates for upcoming activities!

THE FIRST HIGH SCHOOL OASIS BIBLE DIVE will be on Sunday, January 11 from 6:30-8:00pm at St. Matthew's. Spend an evening unwinding from the stress of everyday life while finding rest in God's Word to us. Advance sign-up isn't necessary; just show up!



ST. MARY'S MEAL DELIVERY
NEXT MEAL, DEC. 28

You can choose one of these options when you sign up to provide a meal:

-Provide groceries for their kitchen team to prepare dinner. Plan a meal for 15 people, including a main dish, a vegetable or salad and a dessert. Groceries can be dropped off the day before or by 2:30 pm on the day of the meal.

-Deliver a ready-to-eat meal (frozen or fresh) from a grocery store or pizza parlor.

More information is on our Church website, and the sign up for the next meal on December 28 is in the online ATC.



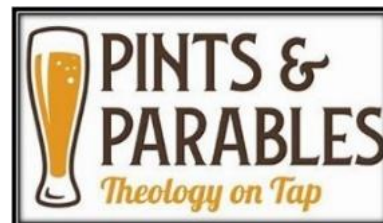
YOUTH MINISTRY ALUMNI
OPEN HOUSE, JAN. 4

WE WILL HAVE A SPECIAL YOUTH MINISTRY 'ALUMNI' OPEN HOUSE on Sunday, January 4 from 6:00-8:00pm at St. Paul's! College students home on break and other young adults from St. Matthew's and St. Paul's are invited to come for an informal opportunity to reconnect and catch up with your faith friends from high school, and to put your mark on our new youth room. Food and drinks will be provided **Please RSVP on the online ATC if you would like to attend!**



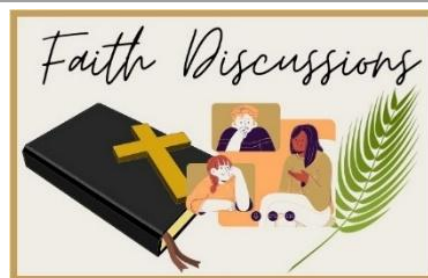
COFFEE & CHRIST, JAN. 3

Join us for coffee and good conversation at our next session of Coffee & Christ, **Saturday, January 3 at 8:30am at Starbucks in Chester Springs!**



PINTS AND PARABLES, JAN. 5
NOW AT MAGERKS!

Come join us for stimulating conversation & fellowship, in a laid-back relaxing atmosphere on **Monday, January 5, 7:00pm, We will meet at MaGerks, 174 Eagleview Blvd. in Lionville.**



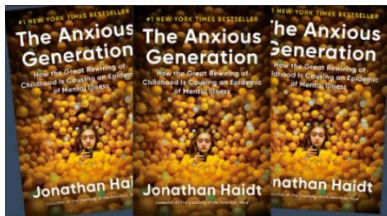
FAITH DISCUSSIONS, JAN. 6

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, January 6 at 7:00pm in the Lounge. We will be discussing Matthew 5: 43-48 and Matthew 6: 1-18. Hope to see you there!



MISSION IN: MEETING JAN. 11

Please join us for our first meeting of 2026 on Sunday, January 11 at 10:45am in the CLC.



ANXIOUS GENERATION BOOK

STUDY, JAN. 11

OUR NEXT "THE ANXIOUS GENERATION" BOOK STUDY will be on Sunday, January 11 from 3:00-4:30pm at St. Paul's. Parents with children in preschool-5th grade are welcome to join us as we talk about issues around children and social media. Even if you haven't been able to attend until now, you are still invited to participate; December's session was cancelled by the snow, so you won't have missed as much as you think! This month's conversation will focus on the third section of the book, The Great Rewiring: The Rise of the Phone-Based Childhood. For questions, contact Craig Miller at craigyouthmin@gmail.com or 484-320-0785.



DESIGNER BAG BINGO JAN. 16

Join us for Designer Bag Bingo for St. Matthew's School on Friday, January 16. Snow Date January 23, 2026. Doors open at 6:00pm, BINGO begins at 7:00pm \$35.00 per person. Reserve your tickets in advance for friends and family. There are a limited number of tickets available for this event. Email Sandy stmatts.sandy@gmail.com. **More details and info for corporate sponsors are posted on the church website on the Events page!**



MEN'S BREAKFAST, JAN. 17

Please plan on bringing something to cook and share with the group on **Saturday, January 17**. Food prep begins at 8:00am with breakfast starting at 8:30am. Please contact Tim Guyer at ttguyer@gmail.com with questions.



CALL FOR WORSHIP ASSISTANTS!

We are in need of more Worship Assistants in all areas: Audio/Visual Assistants, Greeters, Altar Assistants, Lectors, Communion Assistants, Fellowship Providers and Youth Acolytes. Now is a great opportunity to join us as the new year approaches!

If you are interested in any of the positions available, please contact Sara Richardson in the office: srichardson@stmatthews-church.org. Scheduling is flexible and training will be provided!

OUR GIFTS TOGETHER: PLEASE FILL OUT OUR SURVEY!



Please scan this QR code from your mobile device to open a survey about what gifts and skills that you would like to share with your St. Matthew's family. You can also go to the link below to

access the survey. Additionally, it will be posted in the *Around the Church* email newsletter and around campus.

<https://forms.gle/PC66D8dp7Qpnus4t8>



ADVENT COLLECTION: DELIVERY TO GRACE CROSSING

Thank you for supporting this collection! We collected enough sides for 60 Christmas meals. They were happy to receive our donations and were very grateful for St. Matthew's support!

Please check out our Facebook group or the church website to see more photos!