

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church



First Sunday of Christmas December 28, 2025

As we celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas, our gospel today confronts us with the death of innocent children at the hands of Herod. The birth of Christ does not remove the power of evil from our world, but its light gives us hope as we walk *with* all the “holy innocents” of past generations and today who have suffered unjustly. In our gathering around word and meal, God continues to redeem us, lift us up, and carry us as in days of old.

† *Congregation stands as able*

GATHERING

Prelude

Sandra Nearhoof



P: In the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbors.

P: Most merciful God,

C: **we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

P: In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you, the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn

“In a Lowly Manger Born”

ELW #718

Kyrie

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Prayer of the Day:

P. Let us pray,

O Lord God, you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers. As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all the needy from harm and adversity, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C. **Amen.**

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

Children's Message

Rose Johnson

First Reading

Isaiah 63:7-9

⁷ I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, because of all that the LORD has done for us and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, ⁸ according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For he said, “Surely they are

my people, children who will not act deceitfully," and he became their savior
⁹ in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

L: The word of the Lord

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 148

Tone 9

¹ Hallelujah! Praise the **LORD** ¹ from the heavens;
 praise God ¹ in the heights.
² **Praise the **LORD**, ¹ all you angels;**
 sing praise, all you ¹ hosts of heaven.
³ Praise the **LORD**, ¹ sun and moon;
 sing praise, all you ¹ shining stars.
⁴ **Praise the **LORD**, heav- ¹ en of heavens,**
 and you waters a- ¹ bove the heavens.
⁵ Let them praise the name ¹ of the **LORD**,
 who commanded, and they ¹ were created,
⁶ **who made them stand fast forev- ¹ er and ever,**
 giving them a law that shall not ¹ pass away.
⁷ Praise the **LORD** ¹ from the earth,
 you sea monsters ¹ and all deeps;
⁸ **fire and hail, ¹ snow and fog,**
 tempestuous wind, do- ¹ ing God's will;
⁹ mountains ¹ and all hills,
 fruit trees ¹ and all cedars;
¹⁰ **wild beasts ¹ and all cattle,**
 creeping things and ¹ flying birds;
¹¹ sovereigns of the earth ¹ and all peoples,
 princes and all rulers ¹ of the world;
¹² **young ¹ men and maidens,**
 old and ¹ young together.
¹³ Let them praise the name ¹ of the **LORD**,
 whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over ¹ earth and heaven.
¹⁴ **The **LORD** has raised up strength for the people and praise for all ¹**
 faithful servants,
 the children of Israel, a people who are near the **LORD.** ¹ Hallelujah!

Second Reading

Hebrews 2:10-18

¹⁰ It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹² saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you." ¹³ And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Here am I and the children whom God has given me."

¹⁴ Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives

were held in slavery by the fear of death. ¹⁶ For it is clear that he did not come to help angels but the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

L: The word of the Lord

C: **Thanks be to God.**

 Gospel Acclamation

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Gospel

Matthew 2:13-18

P: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹³ Now after [the magi] had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt. ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.” ¹⁶ When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. ¹⁷ Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

Reverend Cynthia Cox Garrard

 Hymn of the Day

“What Child Is This”

ELW #296

Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,**

**of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation**

he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the
dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

You may sit, stand or kneel for the prayers.

Prayers of Intercession

A: Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

A: God of grace, you show us mercy not according to our worthiness, but according to the abundance of your steadfast love. Grant us the courage to go into the world and do likewise. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of abundance, the sun and moon praise you and the shining stars sing of your love. Where we have desecrated your creation, make us into a healing balm for what we have broken. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of righteousness, when leaders fail to fulfill their calls to enact justice, you suffer alongside us. Propel those in power to see you reflected in the faces of all they serve. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Table Blessing

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion

A: Incarnate God, you are among us at this table. May we treasure this gift and ponder in our hearts the mystery of your presence. Move us to discover the wonders of your love in the everyday moments of our lives, through Christ born in us.

C: **Amen.**

SENDING

Blessing

Sending Hymn

“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”

ELW #288

Dismissal

A: Go in peace. Keep awake.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

The Memorial Book is open today to the Glory of God

In Memory of:

Joyce Garver-Messenger, 2022



The Rev. Cindy Cox Garrard is the daughter and great-granddaughter of Methodist pastors and is married to Dr. Spencer Garrard. They have two adult daughters which they enjoy spending time with now that they are retired. Cindy's degrees are from

Birmingham-Southern College and Candler School of Theology at Emory University. She and Spencer worship at St. Thomas Episcopal, where Spencer is a member and Cindy is a utility alto in the choir. She enjoys teaching a weekly lectionary Bible study and playing with her grandchildren.

READINGS AND PSALM SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 2026

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Psalm 147:12-20

Ephesians 1:3-14

John 1:10-18



"The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me." —Martin Luther

December 21, 2025 Fourth Sunday of Advent

ATTENDANCE — 64

(IN-PERSON — 50, YOUTUBE — 14)

2025 BUDGET-\$177,962

OFFERING

Benevolence	\$	2,223.00
Building	\$	100.00
Memorial	\$.00
Other	\$	297.00
Total	\$	2,620.00

December 17, 2025 Midweek Advent Service

ATTENDANCE — 11

OFFERING

Benevolence	\$	160.00
Memorial	\$	100.00
Total	\$	260.00

St. Matthew Lutheran Church (ELCA) will not engage in any act or public statements to endorse or oppose any candidate for public office.

Serving December 28, 2025

Opener/Closer	Allena Sperry
Worship Assistant	Shannon Gardner
Communion Assistant	Raymond Lawton
Lector	Toni Mion
Ushers	Bill Wallace
Altar Guild	Ron Ullman
	Debby Ullman
	Martha Vargas
	Catherine Sayers
Live Streaming	Cecil McGouirk

Serving January 4, 2026

Opener/Closer	Allena Sperry
Worship Assistant	David Bonaker/Raymond Lawton
Communion Assistant	Lisa Pettit
Lector	Shannon Gardner
Ushers	Jim Sperry
Altar Guild	Bill Wallace
	Rose Johnson
	Debby Ullman
	Catherine Sayers
Live Streaming	Jaxson Gardner

Pray Without Ceasing



"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

5:16-18

—1 Thessalonians

The Armed Forces, their families, and victims of war	Sandy Gibbs	Gaza
	Moses Glidden	Palestinian People
	Estrella Gonzales	Israel
	Doris Grier	Ukraine
	Grigsby Family	People of Russia
The ministries of St. Matthew	Laura Jett	Jamaica
Bishop Yehiel Curry	Norma Kilby	Philippines
Bishop Kevin Strickland	Ken Korn	Hong Kong
Southeastern Synod Staff	Emma Kump	Thailand
Pastor Taylor Burton Edwards	Robert Lowe	Indonesia
Pastor Rachel Zarnke	David & John Lucas	Philippines
St Matthew Congregational Council	Michelle Matthias	Somali Refugees
Laura Alexander	Brady Meeks	Flood victims in Washington
Carol Bingemann	Tim Moore	Brown University
Isabelle Clark	Debi Nelson	Jewish community in Australia
Randy Craven	Vincent Pawlowski	
Myrna & Ken Hoag	Terry Pendergraff	Days Inn
Marga Miller	Beth Price	Enterprise
Charlotte Moore	Mark Purushotham	The Cell Plug
Traudel Moseley	Tiffany Richardson	Octapharma Plasma
Debby Owen	Dayna Ryan	Kamoree's Beauty Salon
Dorothy Redden	Shirley Scott	Broken Tarot Tattoo & Piercing
Gary Anderson	Dou Shizhen	
Eric & Tinisha Bryant	Ricky Skinner	
Jean Clemons	Amanda Steinagel	
Nancy Edmundson	Sara Steinagel Sturgis	
Lynne Funck	Fred Turpin	
Brandy Garnett	Charlie VanHousen	
	Dawn VanHousen	
	Martha Zimmerman	

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to St. Matthew: Jesus Christ offers himself to all. All baptized Christians are invited to feast with us at the Lord's Table.

We invite you to join our congregation if you have not yet found a church home. We are people of God that share a living, daring, confidence in God's grace. Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person, questions, complexities and all. Join us, as we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world.

Nursery: St. Matthew provides nursery service for children ages 6 and younger. All children are welcome to attend worship with their families. If a child needs a break during the service, they may sit with a parent/guardian in the Narthex.

Mission Outreach Opportunities:

- All unused all occasion and holiday cards
- Lion's Club: Glasses, sunglasses and old cell phones
- Family House of West GA: Pop tabs
- Flags to Retire: Used flags to dispose of properly
- St. Anne's: Feminine hygiene products, Personal hygiene products (travel size)
- SafeHouse/St. Benedict's Sealed plastic utensils (take-out meals)

Leave donations in the labeled containers in the Narthex.

Bible Study: Please join us on Tuesdays at 10:15 in the Church House to review and discuss the scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday.

Craf-Tea: This group will meet December 19th at 10:00AM-12:00 PM in Luther Hall. If you enjoy crafts and tea, this group is for you! Please see Linnea Grosse for more information.

Chair Yoga: We will resume meeting on Monday, January 5th at 11:00 AM in Luther Hall. Wear comfortable clothing and sneakers.

Save the Date

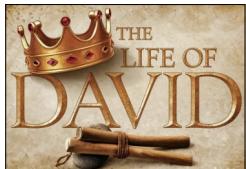
- December 30th-10:15 - Bible Study - Church House
- January 5th - 11:00 am - Chair Yoga - Luther Hall
- January 6th - 11:30 am - Take down Christmas Decorations
- January 14th - 6:00 - Interfaith Bible Study - Luther Hall



2026 Calendar of Word and Season is now on sale thru the end of the year. Please see Allena Sperry if you want to purchase a calendar for \$13. Please make checks payable to St. Matthew.



We need your help on Tuesday, January 6th at 11:30 am to take down the beautiful Christmas decorations that we have enjoyed. The more help we can get, the quicker we can get it all done!



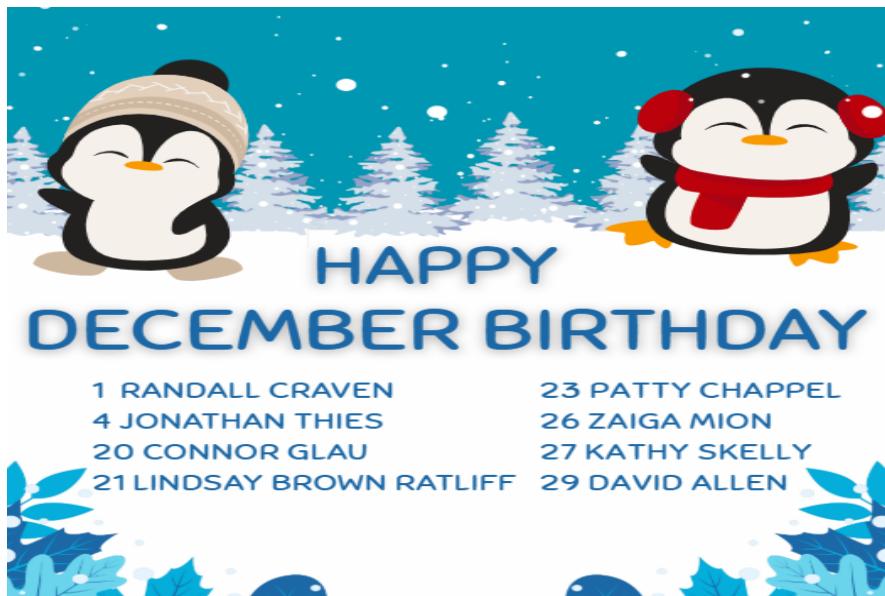
Interfaith Bible Study on King David begins January 14th at 6 PM in Luther Hall led by Rabbi Beth Schwartz and Reverend Taylor Burton Edwards.



Chair Yoga resumes on January 5th at 11:00 am in Luther Hall.



Ever wonder what to do with leftover holiday wrappings? We will be collecting holiday wrappings, paper, ribbon, gift bags and bows. Please place those in the basket in the Narthex.



1 RANDALL CRAVEN

4 JONATHAN THIES

20 CONNOR GLAU

21 LINDSAY BROWN RATLIFF

23 PATTY CHAPPEL

26 ZAIGA MION

27 KATHY SKELLY

29 DAVID ALLEN

St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church Mission Statement



Reach in to grow in Christ

Reach up to worship God

Reach out to welcome and witness



To give online, please scan the QR code to the left to be taken to the give.tithe.ly website form. You can just fill out the form and click the Give button. You can also go to our website and click on the **ONLINE GIVING** button.

ST. MATTHEW EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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(706) 561-3406 - Office Hours - Tues & Thurs 2:00-5:00 PM, Friday 9:00-1:00 PM

Pastor Taylor Burton Edwards Email: twbe@liturgyfolks.com
Phone: (765) 602-1426

Office email : office@stmatthewcolumbusga.com

A member congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,

Southeastern Synod

www.stmatthewcolumbusga.com

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@st.matthewlutheranchurch4457streams>

The Rev. Taylor Burton Edwards, Pastor
Sonja Metcalf, Parish Administrator
Lisa Pettit, Sexton

Sandra Nearhoof, Minister of Music
Penny Davis, Nursery Director