

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.

Holy Communion

Evangelical Lutheran Worship

(ELW Setting 5, page 156)

† 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, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. ⁸ For he said, "Surely they are

my people, children who will not act deceitfully,” and he became their savior⁹ 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 LORD¹ from the heavens;
praise God¹ in the heights.
² **Praise the LORD,¹ all you angels;
sing praise, all you¹ hosts of heaven.**
³ Praise the LORD,¹ sun and moon;
sing praise, all you¹ shining stars.
⁴ **Praise the LORD, heav-¹ en of heavens,
and you waters a-¹ bove the heavens.**
⁵ Let them praise the name¹ of the LORD,
who commanded, and they¹ were created,
⁶ **who made them stand fast forev-¹ er and ever,
giving them a law that shall not¹ pass away.**
⁷ Praise the LORD¹ from the earth,
you sea monsters¹ and all deeps;
⁸ **fire and hail,¹ snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, do-¹ ing God's will;**
⁹ mountains¹ and all hills,
fruit trees¹ and all cedars;
¹⁰ **wild beasts¹ and all cattle,
creeping things and¹ flying birds;**
¹¹ sovereigns of the earth¹ and all peoples,
princes and all rulers¹ of the world;
¹² **young¹ men and maidens,
old and¹ young together.**
¹³ Let them praise the name¹ of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over¹ earth and heaven.
¹⁴ **The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all¹
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.

A: God of life, you claim us as your own and care for us as Christ's siblings. Pour out your compassion in every place your people suffer, and protect them in the palm of your hand. Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

A: God of compassion, you nurture children as the apple of your eye. As you sheltered your son Jesus from Herod's grasp, shelter all children in danger. As you comforted Rachel, comfort all who have lost children to violence. Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

A: For all those who have asked us to pray for them....Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

A: God of love, you console those who weep for lost beloved ones. Even as we mourn, we offer thanks for those who have gone before us, trusting in your comfort and protection. Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

P: With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

C: **Amen.**

MEAL

Solo

"I Wonder as I Wander"

Shannon Gardner

The gifts may be brought forward.

Offering Prayer

A: God of glory, great are your wonders among us and many are the blessings you bestow. Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world, that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace, through Christ our Savior.

C: **Amen.**

† Great Thanksgiving Page 161

Holy, Holy, Holy Page 162

Lord's Prayer "Our Father, who..." Page 163

Lamb of God Page 164

Communion

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Each person may respond, Amen.

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 Ron Ullman
Altar Guild	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 Bill Wallace
Altar Guild	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

The ministries of
St. Matthew

Bishop Yehiel Curry

Bishop Kevin
Strickland

Southeastern Synod
Staff

Pastor Taylor Burton
Edwards

Pastor Rachel Zarnke
St Matthew

Congregational
Council

Laura Alexander

Carol Bingemann

Isabelle Clark

Randy Craven

Myrna & Ken Hoag

Marga Miller

Charlotte Moore

Traudel Mosely

Debby Owen

Dorothy Redden

Gary Anderson

Eric & Tinisha Bryant

Jean Clemmons

Nancy Edmundson

Lynne Funck

Brandy Garnett

Sandy Gibbs

Moses Glidden

Estrella Gonzales

Doris Grier

Grigsby Family

Laura Jett

Norma Kilby

Ken Korn

Emma Kump

Robert Lowe

David & John Lucas

Michelle Matthias

Brady Meeks

Tim Moore

Debi Nelson

Vincent Pawlowski

Terry Pendergraff

Beth Price

Mark Purushotham

Tiffany Richardson

Dayna Ryan

Shirley Scott

Dou Shizhen

Ricky Skinner

Amanda Steinagel

Sara Steinagel Sturgis

Fred Turpin

Charlie VanHousen

Dawn VanHousen

Martha Zimmerman

Gaza

Palestinian People

Israel

Ukraine

People of Russia

Jamaica

Philippines

Hong Kong

Thailand

Indonesia

Philippines

Somali Refugees

Flood victims in

Washington

Brown University

Jewish community in

Australia

Days Inn

Enterprise

The Cell Plug

Octapharma Plasma

Kamoree's Beauty Salon

Broken Tarot Tattoo &

Piercing

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.

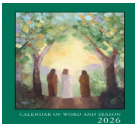
Bible Study: Please join us on Tuesdays at 10:15 in the Church House to review and discuss the scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday.

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



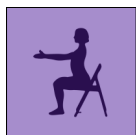
2026 Calendar of Word and Season is now on sale thru the end of the year. Please see Allena Sperry if you want to purchase a calendar for \$13. Please make checks payable to St. Matthew.



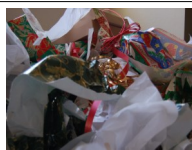
We need your help on Tuesday, January 6th at 11:30 am to take down the beautiful Christmas decorations that we have enjoyed. The more help we can get, the quicker we can get it all done!



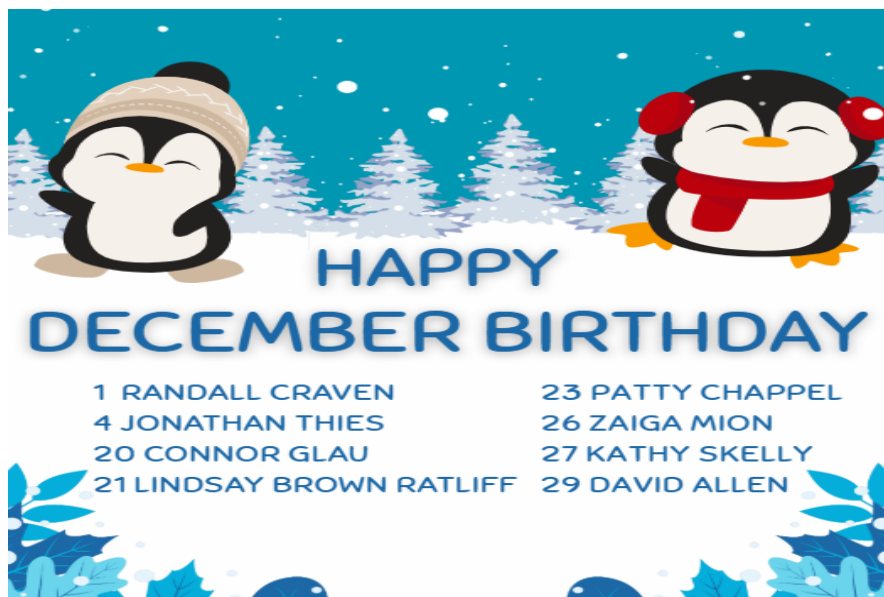
Interfaith Bible Study on King David begins January 14th at 6 PM in Luther Hall led by Rabbi Beth Schwartz and Reverend Taylor Burton Edwards.



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.



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](https://www.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

4026 Macon Road, Columbus, Georgia 31907

(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.matthewlutheranchurch4457/streams>

The Rev. Taylor Burton Edwards, Pastor

Sonja Metcalf, Parish Administrator

Lisa Pettit, Sexton

Sandra Nearhoof, Minister of Music

Penny Davis, Nursery Director