A Thought from the Rector

“O Come let us adore him…”

It’s “the most wonderful time of year” again, and if you’re anything like me, you probably still get excited when you think about Christmas. But then something changes… All of the things that have to be done between now and then crowd in, and perhaps that initial sense is replaced by one of feeling overwhelmed. There are cards to send, presents to buy, family gatherings to plan and navigate, and just not enough time in general.

In life, we begin as children, receiving so many gifts and bringing a sense of wonder to the season of Christmas. We think of presents and snow, and of old St. Nick. But as we grow, the emphasis shifts (as it should) from getting, to the true meaning of the season, which is giving. Christmas brings us back to the deepest emphases of what it means to be a Christian: we look to the gift of Jesus, and then, in turn, give of ourselves.

Sure, it’s taxing, but the alternative is far less pleasant. I remember a Christmas card that arrived at my parents’ house many years ago. It contained a photo from a neighbor up the street, standing alone between a Bentley and a Porsche in front of his large house. It was a sad portrait of Christmas, a sort of pre-converted Scrooge archetype. We never did get to meet him in person before we moved away 10 years later.

For better or for worse, there will never be a form of love that does not bring with it some element of self-sacrifice. Of course, there are a million things to do between now and then, but, when we finally arrive at the manger on Christmas Eve, remember that the magic of God’s greatest gift to the world will once again be palpable. It will have been worth it, and it will all ultimately have been for the sake of love.

Let me leave you with an image from 1945 at St. Matthew’s. It comes from Eloise Luquer, who was the first little girl to grow up in the Rectory.

“I was a very small child (four years old), but this Festival made a great impression on me. When Christmas Eve came I was taken out in the dark – and it seemed very dark indeed, for I had never been out at night before – and when I entered the church I was enchanted by the blaze of light. I did not understand why there was so much light, for we only had lamps and candles then. The bright ornaments on the tree, the scent of balsam and fir, and the candles – it was like fairyland! … We all went home very happy, and I can still hear the sleigh bells and see the sparkling snow. We had more snow in those days, and everybody came to church in sleighs.” (From: The Key, January 1945)

Once again, everything at St. Matthew’s will be exactly the same as she described it all those years ago. Apart from the sleighs, that is… May you have a blessed (and appropriately overwhelming) Advent.

Grace & Peace,

John J.,

Christmas at St. Matthew’s

The Advent season at St. Matthew’s is filled with many wonderful and warm activities that fill our parish with joy. It is a delightful time for us to share the spirit, so mark your calendars and join in!

Holiday Pop-Up Boutique – Dec. 3: A perfect time to get Christmas presents for your loved ones and have some of the proceeds benefit St. Matthew’s. 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. in the Fellowship Room.

Wreath Making – Dec. 6: Come to Phillis Warden’s house, Fri., Dec. 6, at 10 a.m. to make the beautiful wreaths that will be sold at the Brunch that Sunday.

Christmas Tree Sale – Sat., Dec. 7 and Sun., Dec. 8: Beautiful freshly harvested Frasier and Douglas firs of all sizes will be available for sale in the back parking lot from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. These trees are incredibly fresh – come early!

Advent Lessons & Carols, Sun., Dec. 8: Enjoy the traditional readings that tell of the coming of Christ and sing the lovely carols of the season.

Christmas Brunch, Sun., Dec. 8: There is no better way to get into the Christmas spirit than by coming to the annual St. Matthew’s Christmas Brunch after the 10 a.m. service. The Women of St. Matthew’s will fill the Fellowship Room with beautiful poinsettias, magnificently decorated wreaths, plants, gifts, and a delightful brunch.

Wish Tree, Sun., Dec. 8: Take a star from the St. Matthew’s Wish Tree and brighten the Christmas of someone from Hope’s Door, A-Home, or a child whose mother is incarcerated at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility.

Bedford Chamber Christmas Concert, Wed., Dec. 11: The Bedford Chamber Concert will present its popular annual Holiday Concert featuring the JS Bach Brandenburg Concertos. Ticket: $45.

Christmas Pageant, Sun., Dec. 15: At the 10 a.m. service, come enjoy the Christmas story performed by our Church School children as they fill the parts of the Holy Family, friendly beasts, angels and wise men.

Men’s Fellowship Breakfast, Sat., Dec 21: Not only is the fellowship and conversation great, but the food is super too. Starts at 7:30 a.m. and out by 9…. Join in!

Festival of Music Service, Sun., Dec. 22: This 10 a.m. Holy Eucharist service will prepare us for Christmas with pieces from Handel’s Messiah.

St. Mary’s Traditional Christmas Service, Mon., Dec. 23: Christmas story and carol service at 5:30 p.m., with Antioch Pastor Merle McJunkin and members of the Antioch Choir.

Christmas Eve Services, Tues., Dec. 24:

4 & 6 p.m. Manger Services
9:20 p.m. Pieces from Handel’s Messiah and Christmas music.
10 p.m. Festival Holy Eucharist

Christmas Day, Wed., Dec. 25:

10 a.m. Holy Eucharist
Holiday Concert Dec. 11 – Brandenburg Concertos

On Wed., Dec. 11, the Bedford Chamber Concert will present its annual Holiday Concert, this year featuring J.S. Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos. The Holiday concert is always the most popular of the year, and this year with the Brandenburgs being featured, we expect a full house, so make sure and get your tickets early.

The Brandenburgs – as our own Tony Newman, director and keyboardist of the Bedford Chamber Concerts, has said: “Just as Beethoven’s symphonies are the backbone of the Classical Period, Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos are the backbone of the Baroque.” And in case you didn’t know, Tony is not only one of the finest interpreters of Bach’s music but a world-renowned Bach scholar as well, called by Winston Marsalis “the high priest of Bach.”

The six concerti grossi, today known collectively as the Brandenburg Concertos, were composed by Bach and presented to the Margrave of Brandenburg in 1721. He never paid for them, or even thanked Bach for the work, and most likely never had them performed. How was he to know that 300 years later they would be perhaps the most admired and cherished collection of Baroque orchestral music?

The Brandenburgs sat forgotten after the Margrave’s death and were not discovered until 1849 and first published in 1850. During WWII, an original manuscript was being carried to Prussia by a librarian for safekeeping when the train he was on was bombed. Fortunately for the world of music (and the librarian) he managed to flee into the woods with the manuscript under his coat.

Each of the six concertos requires a different combination of instruments and expert soloists. This gives each concerto a sense of freshness while relating to its brethren and convey a sense of ebullience and joy.

The Dec. 11 concert is presented in the Fellowship Room at 8 p.m. Tickets may be purchased online here or reserved at (914) 522-5150. As usual, intermission will feature a splendid assortment of refreshing food and drink. Also at 5:30 p.m., the day of the performance, there will be a free open rehearsal in the Fellowship Room.

Again a last reminder, this concert will be the most popular of the year so don’t wait to get your tickets.

High School Youth Group

A New Sunday morning class: Grace in Christmas

(Every Sunday morning until Christmas, at 9 a.m. in the Vestry Room)

Getting into the Christmas spirit can sometimes prove difficult. There is so much going on, so many presents to wrap, and so much to plan... St. Matthew’s is here to help. After all, Advent is meant to be a time of preparation (for Christmas). Toward that end, John Zahl will be offering a new series: Grace in Christmas, every Sunday morning leading up to the big day. In this class, we’ll survey some of the great portraits of Christmas found in movies, hymnody, and television. Of course we’ll visit Mr. Scrooge, O Little Town of Bethlehem, and a few other classics (e.g., A Charlie Brown Christmas), but also, we’ll look into some less familiar gems (A Midnight Clear, Call the Midwife, Home Alone, Children of Men, and even a TED Talk). Join us each Sunday at 9 a.m. in the Vestry Room. We’ll help to get you into the spirit. Note: the nursery will be open for those with small children who would like to attend.

Church School

Huge thanks to everyone for participating in our Thanksgiving Ingathering. You responded brilliantly to the request for Thanksgiving treats and they were distributed around the local area to spread a little holiday cheer to our neighbors most in need. During December, the Church School will be thinking about Advent, getting excited about the world changing events of that first Christmas, and of course, practicing for our traditional St. Matthew’s Pageant which will take place on Sun., Dec. 15. All children are invited to participate. We have roles and costumes for all!

Please do stop in the conference room and browse the wonderful selection of children’s books which tell the Christmas story and share the meaning of the holiday – we would love for you to borrow some to take home and enjoy with your children. Advent is a time of preparation, and a wonderful way to prepare the children is to snuggle up with them and share a good book!

In December we are also encouraging the children to get involved with some meaningful Christmas giving. We have two outreach opportunities for you to consider:

• A toy drive for Hour Children – this allows mothers in the local prison to actually give something to their children – imagine how meaningful this is for the children as they rarely get to see/touch or talk to their mothers – the act of giving strengthens those vital family bonds ... please leave (unwrapped) gifts in the box in the Parish House.

• There are Christmas wish stars on the Fellowship Room Christmas tree. Make a wish come true this Christmas for young people in the local community who may not be receiving any other gifts.

As always, thank you to the St. Matthew’s family for your thoughtful generosity and we wish you a very Merry Christmas from everyone in the Children’s Ministry!

Tara Deeks

Lunch at the Blazer

It is always a fun lunch when the St. Matthew’s group gathers at the Blazer. Join them next time!

High School Youth Group, which is off to a great start, next meets for faith, fellowship, and food on Dec. 8 from 6 to 7:30 p.m.
Mark Your Calendars!
Art Show: Bedford Spans Two Weekends;
Jan. 24-26 & Jan. 31-Feb. 2, 2020

The 47th Annual Art Show: Bedford will begin with the Preview Party on Fri., Jan 24, followed by the Exhibition and Sale on Sat. and Sun., Jan. 25 and 26. The show will reopen on Fri., Jan. 31, and continue through Sun., Feb. 2. The hours each day are from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Art Show: Bedford is a juried show that features collector-quality artwork and crafts created by artists from this region. The proceeds of the show support many local nonprofits that benefit needy and marginalized persons throughout Westchester.

Tara Deeks and Susannah Leighton are co-chairing the 2020 event, assisted by a committee of able volunteers. Christopher Brescia of CB Gallery of Katonah will assist with curation and attract new artists to the venue. Happiness Is will cater the Friday night Preview Party, to be held in the Fellowship Room from 6:30 to 9 p.m. Mark Weigel & Friends’ fabulous band, DogBone, is providing music for the lively party.

Over forty artists will participate in this year’s show, selling paintings, photographs and sculpture, as well as hand-made jewelry, glass items and pottery. Works run the gamut from contemporary to traditional styles, and there is something to appeal to everyone. Parish participation is important for the Art Show since it is the major annual outreach fundraiser organized by the Women of St. Matthew’s, and all proceeds directly benefit local charities.

Please mark both Art Show weekends on your calendars, and don’t miss the Preview Party that is sure to be better than ever this year. Tickets are $125 in advance; $150 at the door. Look for the invitations in early December, and please RSVP as soon as possible. In the meantime, visit our newly updated website at www.artshowbedford.com to view artists’ works and bios and to obtain more information about this exciting show.

Caroline Walker

We Give Thanks for St. Matthew’s

We are all grateful for this community called St. Matthew’s church. Here we worship together, celebrate together, and sometimes cry together. It is a safe space to commune with God and each other to better understand God’s mission for us individually and our church. We are blessed to have some energetic ministers in John Zahl and Drew Courtright who are eager to keep the mission of “know Christ and make him known” locked in our sight. And of course, we need pledges to fund our goals here.

The pledging season kicked off in full gear in November as 10 parishioners volunteered to speak about their gratitude to St. Matthew’s; the Stewardship letters and pledge cards were distributed and already our pledges are coming in 50% faster than the previous year! Currently 59% of our parishioners pledge but we are counting on our entire congregation to fund the budget. The church’s goal is to be able to say we have 100% pledge participation; only you can make this happen. Kindly go online or mail in your pledge before Christmas. See you in church!

Blessings, Stewardship Committee,
Lorraine Reeder, Doug Kim, Paul Sturz

A Few Of Our Newcomers

A wonderful group of new St. Matthew’s parishioners came to our Newcomers’ Party in early November. Thank you to Janet Schloat and the Welcome Commission for all their hard work.

Suzanne Bowers, Craig Moncho and Allyson Moncho

Philip Lee, Kelly Lee, with Paul Sturz

Mary Farley, Jenny Convery, Jennifer Buschman, and Brendan Buschman.
Diocesan Convention

On Fri. and Sat., Nov. 8 and 9, John Zahl and Drew Courtright, as voting Clergy Delegates, and John Walker, Alison Gregory, June Blanc and Lorraine Reeder, as voting Lay Delegates, attended the 243rd Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. The Right Reverend Andrew Dietsche presided. Various Diocesan business matters were addressed, and elections for Diocesan offices were held. Peter Keller, President of the Board of Episcopal Charities, made a report to the Convention. On Friday, Holy Eucharist was celebrated.

History may well view this as an historic Convention as it approved a group of anti-slavery resolutions that had been presented by St. Matthew’s parishioner and Warden John Jay II in 1860 and were tabled for 159 years. Perhaps surprising to Episcopalians today, New York remained a major center of slave trade in 1860, and the Episcopal Church in New York benefited from such trade. The 1860 resolution, which was unanimously approved at the 243rd Convention, provided, among other provisions, that the “Convention do utterly reject the doctrine that men may be lawfully kidnapped and held in slavery by any other person, and do utterly condemn the said practice as a great sin against God and man.” The 1860 resolution also asked that “the Right Reverend Bishop of the Diocese … address a pastoral letter to the people of the Diocese, in reference to the African Slave-trade as now prosecuted from the port of New York…. ” In the spirit of this provision, Bishop Dietsche will address a pastoral letter to the parishes in the Diocese of New York in the near term regarding the adopted anti-slavery resolutions and how parishes may give effect to the letter and spirit of the 1860 resolutions.

The Convention also adopted a resolution under which $1,100,000 of the endowment of the Diocese will, subject to recommendations of a new task force, be made available to the Bishop of New York to fund measures by which the Diocese may make reparation “for its part in the American slave trade and in the legacy of injustice which has continued in this our Diocese to our own day.”

Another resolution provides that the parishes of the Diocese be mandated to conduct environmental studies of their buildings “necessary to setting reasonable processes by which they may meet the goal of a 30% reduction in their carbon footprint” by 2030.

If you would like further information about the Convention or to discuss these adopted resolutions, please speak with any of the attendees from St. Matthew’s.

Join the Pilgrimage to Greece and Turkey in the Footsteps of St. Paul!

There are still spaces available for our pilgrimage to Greece and Turkey this spring. From March 15 to 28, we will have the unique opportunity to travel in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul as we visit and worship at sites where Paul ministered in the first century, many of which he immortalized in his famous epistles.

The trip will be led by John Zahl who will serve as our Chaplain and by his father, Paul Zahl, a retired Episcopalian minister and a New Testament scholar and classicist with deep knowledge of the history of the area. In addition, we will be accompanied by local Greek and Turkish tour guides. During the course of the trip we will visit Thessaloniki, Philippi, Meteora, Athens, Corinth, Izmir, Ephesus, Aphrodisias, Pamukkale, Colossae, and other Pauline locations. We will ferry by private boat to the island of Patmos to visit the Monastery of St. John and the Cave of the Apocalypse where John had the visions that he described in his Book of Revelations. We will also visit eleven UNESCO World Heritage sites, almost one a day. We will even have a chance to swim in the thermal pool that Anthony gave to Cleopatra!

The trip is open to parishioners and non-parishioners alike, so please spread the word far and wide. Young adults are most welcome to join the group. The cost of the trip is $5,498 including overseas airfare, or $4798 for a land-only rate. The trip is all-inclusive, and covers hotels, meals, drinks, transportation, guides, entrance fees and tips. To download the brochure and the registration form, please click here.

Confirmation Class

The 2020 Confirmation Class has 14 8th graders and is off to a great start! Save the date of May 17 for Confirmation with Bishop Dietsche.

Poinsettias

Our church will be filled with poinsettias at Christmas – remembrances of our loved ones no longer with us. Please return the donation envelope with their names by Wed., Dec. 12.
Episcopal Charities Annual Tribute Dinner

Tues., Nov. 12 over 550 people, including 28 from St. Matthew’s, gathered at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine as Episcopal Charities honored Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and Secretary James Baker and Susan Baker. It was a magnificent evening at the Cathedral.

The program speaker, Eldredge Blalock, was released from prison 5 months ago after 21 years of incarceration. He got his GED in prison then earned 2 college degrees through Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison, one of the 99 programs supported by Episcopal Charities. Eldredge’s remarks were powerful – a real statement on the possibility of redemption and on the good works of Sean Pica and everyone at Hudson Link whose programs have resulted in college degrees for over 650 people incarcerated at five prisons in New York State.

For all that they have accomplished in long lives lived to the fullest, both Bakers kept saying how honored they were to be asked and to be honored alongside Bishop Curry. Bishop Curry, such a leader with the Jesus Movement and the Way of Love Movement kept repeating that he was honored to be with us and with the Bakers!


Cleaning Up!

A hardy group showed up for our annual Fall clean-up. Thank you everyone who participated and helped keep our church grounds clean.

What Saints They Are

Our Church School heads out from their chapel to participate in the All Saints’ Parade.

Preschool
An Exciting Time at St. Matthew’s Preschool

St. Matthew’s Preschool is a flurry of activity with wonderful events planned for the Christmas Season.

Cookies, crafts, and singing will fill the air!

The fun events include a Family Chapel Service and Sing-along on Thurs., Dec. 19. Our community outreach collection will be for “The Pajama Program” with each family invited to donate a new pair of pajamas and a children’s book. The children will wear a pair and bring a pair for a child less fortunate than they.

On behalf of the staff, children and families of St. Matthew’s Preschool, we wish everyone a Christmas filled with special times spent with family and friends. We are all looking forward to an exciting New Year of more fun and learning adventures. Merry Christmas!

Don’t Miss the St. Matthew’s Christmas Tree Sale
Dec. 7 & 8 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Fresh Frazer Fir and Douglas Fir 5 ft. to 12 ft.

Home delivery is available

Looking for Volunteers! If you would like to help out, please email Paul Matthews 3indians@gmail.com Will Gourd Will.gourd@gmail.com

Midnight Run

A great group of St. Matthew’s parishioners made our November Midnight Run a huge success. Here is the “thank you” note sent out to everyone by Ian MacLean and Dan Moore.

“Thank you each and all for donating your time and your resources, for your enthusiastic participation and community, for giving of yourselves and for your compassion, humility and charity to the homeless people and making the Midnight Run on November 2nd (and early on the 3rd) a success. Please extend this note of gratitude to any parishioners you know who anonymously donated clothing, food and toiletries and let me know if there is anyone not on this email to whom Dan or I can extend a personal thanks.”

And... a huge thank you to Ian and Dan for all the work they put in themselves.
Midweek Holy Eucharist and Bible Study on Wednesday at 10 a.m. through June 5

December Church Calendar

First Sunday after Christmas, December 29
8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite I
Altar Guild: Mrs. Reeder
Ushers: Mr. & Mrs. Fagan
Lay Reader: Mrs. Foster
Lector: Mr. Vincent
10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II
Altar Guild: Ms. Kernan
Ushers: Messrs. Fooshee, LaMotte, Lovering and MacLean
Lay Reader: Mr. Heath
Lector: Mrs. Ehrlich
5:00 p.m. Come As You Are Eucharist, Rite II, Children's Chapel
Altar Guild: Mrs. Meyer

Epiphany Sunday, January 5, 2019
8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite II
Altar Guild: Ms. Morella and Mrs. Reeder
Ushers: Mr. & Mrs. Reeder
Lay Reader: Mrs. Fagan
Lector: Mrs. Talty
10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist, Rite I
Altar Guild: Mesdames Borner and Brenner
Ushers: Messrs. Burdick, Eshoo, Fooshee and Keller
Lay Reader: Mrs. Thompson
Lector: Mr. Peacock
5:00 p.m. Come As You Are Eucharist, Rite II, Children's Chapel
Altar Guild: Mrs. Borner

St. Matthew’s Continues Support for Habitat for Humanity Newburgh

On Fri., Nov. 1, Lindsay Keller, Caroline Walker, Mary Farley and Bonnie Tisi, along with Katama Eastman and Daniel Trotta (Bonnie’s daughter and nephew respectively) volunteered in Newburgh. We were fortunate to be able to work at both the St. Matthew’s house and “Johnny’s House,” honoring Bonnie’s son. Bonnie, Katama and Daniel laid a tile floor and the others cemented gaps in the stone foundation.

Volunteer groups will be going up to Newburgh regularly to work on both the St. Matthew’s and Johnny’s Houses. There is plenty of work available — and it’s fun! If you have interest in participating, please contact any of Mary Farley, Lindsay Keller, Chris Robinson, Bonnie Tisi, or Roger Vincent. We would be happy to answer your questions, add your name to the volunteer list, and coordinate the scheduling of future trips. Both houses will be completed next summer.