



5289 McKinley Pkwy
Hamburg, NY 14075
716-649-1532
stmattucc@verizon.net
Website: stmattsucc.org

GOD for Us

If the calendar says it's January, then Jenny Craig, Planet Fitness, or some other foretaste of purgatory is occupying every commercial break on television. Just as the diet-and-exercise-industrial-complex is after you to lose those extra pounds, so too is the Bible-thumper-industrial-complex going to be after you to drop those sins and excess bad habits.

For the record, and speaking on behalf of the Establishment, we are indeed opposed to sin and we would also appreciate an earnest effort to drop at least a couple bad habits in the new year (you know which ones; no need for us to embarrass you in the church newsletter). There.

No kidding, sin is not a laughing matter and if the new year inspires you to self-improvement, I am all for it. Lord knows, I have some self-improvement projects that have been delayed for far too long myself.

But having said that, it isn't sin or bad habits that destroy Christians. Rather, it's despair. To be without hope, to fall into cynicism and despair, reveals that you have lost confidence in God – that you no longer trust God – that you are literally faithless.

Hope is not optimism. Sometimes the situation is genuinely bleak and only fools pretend otherwise. Hope is not pretending the plant will not close. Hope is not clinging to the belief that a lost love will suddenly be regained. Hope is not a refusal to believe the results of the biopsy.

Hope is the belief that in spite of all this, God's goodness is not thwarted.

Hope is not denying reality. Hope is not the pretense that war and injustice are due to be eradicated any minute. Hope is not a fairy tale in which nothing bad happens or that evil doesn't exist. Hope doesn't mean we simply close our eyes to racism and prejudicial fears of all kinds. Hope doesn't mean we have to pretend any of these things is getting better at the moment. Hope means that nevertheless, we don't give up. Hope means that we must love mercy, act justly, and walk humbly with God – especially when evil is advancing.

Hope is the trust that God has not been defeated by the power of sin and darkness and therefore neither are we. Circumstances may not be always be in our favor in the year to come. At the end of 2019, there will still be vast areas for improvement in our lives and in the world at large. In the year ahead, we will still be sinners, but we will not lose hope because God is not defeated by our sin or by all the world's evil. Hope keeps us striving even when everything seems arrayed against us, because we know that God is for us.

See you in church!

-Pastor Lynn

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WEEKLY WORSHIP SCHEDULE AT ST. MATTHEW'S

Saturday Service of Word & Sacrament * - 4:00pm

Sunday morning worship service - 10:30am; Children's Sunday School begins after Children's Time

Altar Guild

Robin Federmann

Lay Readers

1/6 Brenda Carver
1/13 Bill Hamm
1/20 Perry Kaupa
1/27 Jeff Rich

Ushers

Team 2

David/Pamela Kaznica
Bill Hamm
Perry Kaupa
Steve Jankowski
Chris Goetz

Coffee Hour Hosts

1/6 LaDonna Painter
1/13 Dawn & Chris Goetz
1/20 Brenda Carver and
Barbara Middaugh
1/27 Devon Rich



The January-February issue is now available on the table in the Narthex.

* Saturday Services of Word and Sacrament

In about 40 minutes you will hear the Word of God and a homily from the pastor, share in prayer, and have the opportunity to receive Holy Communion. Please avail yourself of the Saturday liturgy if it fits your schedule and invite others who may wish to experience a welcoming church with open hearts and open minds that celebrates a traditional liturgy.



Sunday, January 6 — Installation of Officers

Paul spoke of the Church as a body, composed of many members with different roles to play based on their abilities and calling (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). No one among us has all the gifts needed to serve the Church or to share Christ's healing love with the world. Together, we are well-equipped and empowered by the Spirit to carry out the mission of Christ to which we are called.

On January 6, we will celebrate God's gracious call to the newly appointed officers and current committee members as servants and the Spirit's power to enable them for the service to which they have been called.

-Pastor Lynn



Thank you to our coffee hour hosts and greeters for December: Robyn & Jeff Rich, Joy & David Burger, and Dawn & Tom Chmielowiec for also hosting a birthday party for Jesus.

I am always looking for people to be a coffee hour host and/or greeter. You don't have to be a baker...every coffee hour is different...whatever you would like to bring to the table would be appreciated. If everyone would consider doing 1 coffee hour/greeter a year, we would have the schedule filled in no time. Please consider doing 1 coffee hour/greeter...see me at church or call me at 715-7310. Many dates are open. If you have never done a coffee hour, I will be glad to answer any questions you might have.

Thanks,

LaDonna Painter

Family of David Hector
 Jack Bartlett (Steve & Nancy Jankowski's friend)
 Bambi Beckley (Robin Federmann's sister)
 Jessica Cameron
 Dee Drew & Family (Beth Stormer's friend)
 CJ & Emily Errington
 Nancy & Steve Jankowski



Karen Kaitanowski
 Paul Marx, Dennis McKay (Errington's Friends)
 Mel, Ona and Sandy (Shirley Haberman's brother, wife and niece)
 Marilyn Mergenhagen
 Family & friends of James Walsh
 Gayle & Denise Woodruff

*If you would like prayers publicized here, please contact the church office or fill out a Prayer Request Form.
 If you have a more immediate prayer concern, text Michelle Kemp at 245-1692 or call Dolly Errington at 823-6210 to begin the prayer chain.*

Happy Birthday!

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1/4 Brook'Lynn Clausell | 1/20 Sharon Mooney |
| 1/4 Clayton Errington | 1/21 Gail Burdick |
| 1/4 Donn Mergenhagen | 1/26 Barbara Middaugh |
| 1/14 Kim Hamm | 1/30 Lisa Schulz |
| 1/17 Jane Duewiger | |

Happy Anniversary

Tracy Meyers &
 Rev. Marna Pritchard
 January 22, 1985

Address Change

Jean Roth
 Eden Heights
 4071 Hardt Road
 Apt. 403
 Eden, NY 14057



On Saturday, December 1st, a memorial service was held for my mother, Jane Cotton. The decorating committee worked very hard that morning in order to finish in time for our afternoon service. Their efforts were very much appreciated - the church looked so beautiful.

Thank You to the wonderful people who set up the fellowship hall, and who arranged and served the refreshments. And a very special Thank You to Pastor Morgan for the compassion he showed to my mom and to us, and for performing her meaningful memorial service.

On behalf of Jane Cotton's family, we are extremely grateful to all of you for all you did.

Sincerely,

Linda (and Bob) Ferraro, Jeffrey Cotton, Caitlin (and Justin) Kahabka



Many thanks to the Council and Congregation of St. Matthew's for your generous Christmas gift. I truly appreciate your generosity, but most of all I appreciate your kindness and the friendship we share as partners in Christ's ministry.
 -Pastor Lynn & Sandy

We wish to thank the Council and Congregation for their gift to us. We hope everyone enjoyed their Christmas and New Years. Thank you again and peace and good health to everybody in 2019.
 -David & Pamela Kaznica

A big thank you to the Council and Congregation for your generous gift. I feel blessed to have been able to work and serve the Lord and the church in this position for the past year. I wish for you abundant blessings in the new year.
 -Michelle



Shepherds &
littlest angel

We three kings of Orient are...



Christmas Pageant 2018

Sunday, December 23

A Traditional House Blessing for Epiphany

There is an old tradition of blessing one's house on Epiphany in honor of the Wise Men who came to honor the baby Jesus on this day. The custom of an Epiphany house blessing is practiced in some Methodist, Lutheran and Episcopal traditions, but it is more commonly practiced by Roman Catholics. It is a practice that was in place long before our churches divided in the Reformation. The house blessing is especially appealing to children (marking the lintel of the house with chalk!) and it is a great opportunity to remind them that we seek God's blessing in our homes and our hearts on Epiphany and all through the year.



In the Chalking of the Door, we mark our homes with symbols to intentionally set them apart as places of Christian hospitality, as safe and peaceful outposts of the Kingdom of God. Through them we invite God's blessing on all who live and visit our homes. The chalk marks fade, but hopefully the blessing remains indelible throughout the year.

What is traditionally inscribed is this: **20+C+M+B+19**. There are two traditional meanings associated with the initials CMB. One relates them to the three Wise Men who are traditionally identified as **C**aspar, **M**elchior, and **B**althasar. Another possible origin to the initials is from the Latin phrase: *Christus mansionem benedicat*, which means "May Christ bless this house." The 20 and 19, of course are for the year.

How to conduct the blessing ceremony:

(You may want to read Matthew 2:1-12 before you conduct the blessing, or relate the story to children who may be present in your own words.)

Leader: Peace be to this house and all who enter here.

All: Amen.

*Take chalk (any color) and write on the lintel: **20+C+M+B+19** (Note: The church has white chalk. If you need one, contact the church office.)*



Leader: The Magi, **C** Caspar, **M** Melchior, and **B** Balthasar ...came from the east to Bethlehem to adore the Lord **20** two thousand **19** and nineteen years ago. "They went into the house, and when they saw the child with His mother Mary, they knelt down and worshiped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to Him." [Matthew 2:11] May all who come to our home this year rejoice to find Christ living among us; and may we seek and serve Christ in all we meet.

All: Amen.

Activity Group 2018 Christmas Luncheon

Thirty-three people gathered in the beautifully decorated Fellowship Hall for the annual Christmas luncheon on Thursday, December 20. There were lots of laughs, carols, food and fun!



Thanks to Ken Haberman for his program about some of our favorite Christmas carols from historic & religious perspective.

Join the fun at the next gathering—St. Patrick's Day Party on March 21st!

Kathleen Mary House

...a place of new beginnings

To The Entire Church Family:

On behalf of the Kathleen Mary House and the women and children it serves, I would like to extend our deep gratitude for your generous donation of \$212 from the proceeds of your "Thank Offering". You can't imagine how welcome this was at this time. Because of your generosity, we are able to continue our goal of providing a safe refuge to women and children affected by domestic violence.

Please know that we will be sure to use this donation wisely and in a way to best honor your generosity.

Saying "thank you" almost seems not enough to express our sincere gratitude. But please know that even if the words seem lacking, the feeling behind them is not. It confirms my faith that there are angels among us every day.

Wishing you all a blessed holiday season.

Very truly yours,

Sharon E. Wroblewski, Executive Director

St. Matthew's Time Capsule 2018-2019 Year in Review

If I didn't catch you on Sunday, December 30, to give you a "Year in Review" page, I have left one in your mailbox at church. Please take a few minutes to complete the page and return to me or leave in my mailbox (#67). The Anniversary Committee will review these in 2019, and add the pages to the church historical documents. I am sure people in the future will enjoy reading our comments as we enjoyed the historical items displayed during the 150th Anniversary luncheon.

There were some good things that happened in 2018 ...the 150th Anniversary luncheon and with the unanimous vote for Rev. Lynn Morgan, we are all looking forward to his leadership for many years to come. So you can see some of the good things that happened at St. Matthew's in 2018 and everyone is looking forward to 2019.

Thank you for taking the time to complete the page. Please feel free to make copies for your entire family, including your children.

Thanks,

LaDonna Painter

Cornerstone Giving Tree

Thank you to all who participated in this year's Cornerstone Giving Tree. Forty bibles and many other generous gifts were delivered to Cornerstone Manor for Christmas. -Joann Ertel

Senior Wishes sent a nice thank you letter to the church members for the Wendy's fundraiser. -LaDonna Painter

Thank Offering Boxes

Reminder to pick up a new box and start collecting your coins throughout this new year. As you can see from the note on this page from Kathleen Mary House, your donations make a difference.

The boxes can be found in the rack by the accordion door in the Narthex.



What Does the UCC Logo Symbolize?

The symbol of the United Church of Christ comprises a crown, cross and orb enclosed within a double oval bearing the name of the church and the prayer of Jesus, “That they may all be one” (John 17:21).

It is based on an ancient Christian symbol called the “Cross of Victory” or the “Cross Triumphant.” The crown symbolizes the sovereignty of Christ.

The cross recalls the suffering of Christ - his arms outstretched on the wood of the cross - for the salvation of humanity.

The orb, divided into three parts, symbolizes the world and reminds us of Jesus’ command to be his “witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Our mission is to be Christ’s witnesses here at St. Matthew’s and in Hamburg. Our witness and mission is extended through Western New York, our state and nation, and the whole wide world through our outreach and partnership with the wider Church.



5289 McKinley Pkwy, Hamburg, NY
716-649-1532; office@stmattsucc.org
Website: stmattsucc.org

Pastor:

Rev. Lynn R. Morgan
716-866-3085
pastor@stmattsucc.org

Director of Music:

Norman D. Wahl
716-440-5176
normwahl@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant:

Michelle Kemp
716-245-1692 (h)
716-649-1532 (o)
Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 9am-2pm, Thurs. 9-12, & Fri. 12:30-3:30pm

Custodians:

David & Pamela Kaznica
716-913-6927 (David)
716-913-7504 (Pamela)

Monthly Money Minutes

-by Amy Jo Lauber, CFP®

January

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.” 2 Peter 1:5-7

I am probably too idealistic in thinking that good financial planning can develop one’s faith, but it is the same process (of learning, choosing, and waiting) that is required to improve your finances as it is to growing in faith and love.

If you are setting any resolutions this month, you most likely have identified an area of your life that you’d like to improve, be it your health, your wealth, or your faith. All require commitment; commitment of time and – equally important – your energy; the energy of your will/motivation, which may or may not be rooted in love. Examine your motivation for achieving your goals and pray for guidance and support from the Holy Spirit.

Know that you are not beyond learning more and choosing again, you now have another opportunity to choose wisely and lovingly.



November Stats

Average Attendance: 77 (including Saturday Services)

Giving Last Month: November

	General/Building	Mission
Total Received:	\$10,564	\$334
Monthly Goal:	\$12,900	\$918

January 2019



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1  Happy New Year!	2 AA 10:30am Friends of Night People	3	4	5 Service of Word & Sacrament 4:00pm
6 Epiphany Sunday Worship & Children's SS 10:30am <i>Installation of Officers</i>	7	8 BCE 7:00pm Church Council 7:00pm	9 AA 10:30am Adult Bible Study 7:00pm	10 Praise Band 6:00pm OA 7:30pm	11	12 Service of Word & Sacrament 4:00pm
13 The Baptism of Christ Worship & Children's SS 10:30am	14	15	16 AA 10:30am Adult Bible Study 7:00pm	17 Praise Band 6:00pm OA 7:30pm	18	19 Service of Word & Sacrament 4:00pm
20 Worship & Children's SS 10:30am	21 <i>Messenger Deadline</i>	22 Quilt Group 7:30pm	23 AA 10:30am Adult Bible Study 7:00pm	24 Praise Band 6:00pm Choir 7:00pm OA 7:30pm	25	26 Service of Word & Sacrament 4:00pm
27 Worship & Children's SS 10:30am	28	29	30 AA 10:30am Adult Bible Study 7:00pm	31 Praise Band 6:00pm Choir 7:00pm OA 7:30pm		

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Our church building is fully accessible.

No matter where you are in your life's journey, you are welcome here!