

## St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church 2017 Annual Report

It is with a sense of joy in the service of our Lord that we share this report of the many areas of ministry taking place at St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church. These many reports detail the types of events, service and ministry which are lived out through our congregation, all in service to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **Annual Congregational Meeting: Consideration of a Quorum and Voting**

Our Constitution of the church provides in Article VII, Section 4: "Fifty active members shall constitute a quorum."

Our Constitution of the church provides in Article V, Section 2d and 2e: "Active members are confirmed members who have received Holy Communion or made a contribution of record to the congregation within the two preceding years. Those confirmed members who have neither received Holy Communion nor made a contribution within the two preceding years shall be classified as inactive." Also, "A voting member is any active member."

### **Election of Officers**

Council representatives whose terms expire at this time:

Curt Brewer - Kristin Hanson - Marion Heinz - Vince Prantil

Those who have one year remaining of their terms:

Edward Bross - Andrew Cherney - Dan Herrell - Michele Wolaver

Those who have two years remaining of their terms:

Ryan Engelhardt - Darla Hium - Karen Freiberg - Jennifer Wills

Four representatives are to be elected for three-year terms each.

Chris Kent - Lynne Thomas - Katrina Ubell - Erin Weileder

Other nominations may be made from the floor of the assembly.

## 2017 Statistics

Infants and children baptized	22
Infants and children received by transfer & member affirmation	19
Infants and children lost by death	0
Infants and children lost by transfer	0
Infants and children lost as inactive	5
Adults received by baptism	1
Children received by affirmation of faith (Confirmation)	31
Children received by reinstatement	0
Adults received by transfer & member affirmation	53
Adults received by reinstatement	6
Adults lost by death	12
Adults lost by transfer	0
Adults removed as inactive	17
Baptized members as of December 31, 2017	1,785
Confirmed members as of December 31, 2017	1,364
Communing members as of December 31, 2017	1,468

## Average Attendance at Sunday Morning Services

Regular Services: Total = 533

7:30 31      8:30 274      11:00 197

Summer Sundays: Total = 319

7:30 23      8:30 150      10:15 146

### **In Memoriam - Deaths in 2017**

Carol Beecher	July 5, 2017
Robert Beecher	March 21, 2017
Carol Berholtz	November 3, 2017
Elaine Cary	May 18, 2017
Grant Timothy Dolan	September 27, 2017
Karen Eisemann	June 29, 2017
Greta Gintoft	October 9, 2017
Larry Gjenvick	August 19, 2017
Shirley Koenitzer	September 1, 2017
James Moore	November 2, 2017
Dolores Reed	October 13, 2017
Ruth Zarse	February 2, 2017

### **Pastor's Report from Pastor Christopher Manke**

*Psalm 136:1 "O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good, God's steadfast love endures forever."*

In the many areas of ministry, reflecting on my own particular involvement, I realize that most often the work was accomplished through the partnership that we have developed together. Many of the things I did, could and would not have gotten done without your involvement and help. Thank you! Following is a list of areas that I have served and helped to foster and grow.

In many ways this year has brought conclusions to work we began years ago, and in other ways it is a time of new beginnings. Here are a variety of ways I have been active over the past year, not in any order.

**DEBT REDUCTION APPEAL** - In 2014, we finished Phase I's first two parts. Part one (HVAC) and part two (Lower Commons renovation and Kitchen installation). In 2015, we finished the third and final part of phase I (old kitchen and office renovation) and put finishing touches on the everything else.

With the completion of the entire Phase I objectives, the remaining balance of the renovation was converted into a mortgage which at the beginning of 2016 was just under \$650,000, leaving roughly 30% of the total renovation cost to pay. A great accomplishment paying off such a large amount (\$1.5 Million given) with our first three year appeal.

To retire the remaining balance, we hired the James Company to run another three year fundraising appeal to commence in May (2016) with the primary purpose of retiring the debt and a secondary purpose of accomplishing building improvements to large maintenance projects such as roof replacement, main parking lot refurbishing, fire door replacements, video system installation, and other possible projects. Through it all, we have developed a beautiful and functional home for our ministry.

To date, we have received pledges of approximately \$900,000 towards these new goals. We continue to pay down our Mortgage, which is at a very low rate of around 2.5%, and use cash on hand to pay for the larger projects (without taking on new debt).

This year we completed the roof replacement work (a project costing \$200,000), we are finishing up the fire door upgrades and fixes, which also has tied into our security system (all costing approx. \$75,000). We implemented a new video streaming service with new cameras and sound system, and we replaced our wifi system with new wifi hubs, while also replacing our old broken phone system. The last major renovation item left to do is the parking lot. We anticipate this costing us approximately \$100,000. Since this isn't an emergency situation, we feel the most prudent choice would be to do this work at the tail end of the three year appeal. So, probably not this next summer, but the summer of 2019, when we have completed the mortgage as well.

All and all, these fund raising efforts have had a big effect on our space and improving and maintaining the strong foundation that we have at our home ministry location. Thanks to you for your generous support in helping us accomplish these huge goals! It's a wonderful reminder to me of the power of working together towards accomplishing big projects. THANKS!

**CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICES** – Working with our insurance company, we continued to review the ways we can ensure the safety of our children. This has meant a number of new steps, such as background checks for people who work directly with our kids. It also has meant the addition of a staffed nursery attendant. Having a staff member always in the nursery has meant having someone who is consistently present - getting to know who the kids are, guiding the other volunteers in good child care practices, and making our Sunday morning nursery a fun and safe place for our children. We continue to look at new ways to ensure our children's safety. A big thank you to Emily Chesea who served in this role last year, and a hearty welcome to Kate Searing who has moved into this position naturally and is doing a great job!

**AV WORSHIP IMPROVEMENTS** - Throughout the year, we have continued to explore ways for our audio visual tech needs could be improved. Working with Metro Sound and video, we have identified some major ways to improve our worship AV. These improvements include: 1) A new sound system mixing board that is controllable through internet iPad connections, 2) a new fully controllable high resolution camera that can pan/tilt/zoom on different aspects of our service so that the video produced captures all aspects of our services, 3) A new online system that allowed us to begin streaming this new video to the internet (Youtube) in a higher definition for better viewing, 4) recording capabilities of this video so that we can record special parts of our worship services and have them online for people to watch at later times, 5) Video streaming throughout the building so that our worship services can be viewed from different rooms such as the Nursery, Fellowship Hall and the Upper Room, which would allow these rooms to become overflow or "cry rooms" for people who want to step out of worship for any reason. A big THANKS to Ed Bross for his tireless work on this project (and so much more). These goals were all implemented just before Easter this year and have had rave reviews about how it has helped us connect with people not able to attend worship.

**LIBRARY UPDATE** - After wishing a heart felt thank you to Bev Etzelmueller last year, who served our library needs for 38 years – we gave special attention to the library space and updated it with new furniture and various tech devices (Large TV, Wifi, DVD, computer) to support its possible purposes. It's been great to see how this space is being used more and more this year. Also, Linda Wunderlich and her team have stepped up and added many improvements such as cataloging the entire library and putting that catalog up on a web site: [www.librarycat.org/lib/StMattsTosa](http://www.librarycat.org/lib/StMattsTosa). The library really has become a great place to get away and read in a very comfortable space. Thanks to the many volunteers who tirelessly continue to serve through our library.

**GREEN PROJECTS** - With the donations that were received in honor of Pastor Margaret's retirement, we used the monies to reduce our electric foot print. Through the tireless work of people such as Ed Bross, Tom 'Flash' Gordon, Mike Kolupar, Dave Fagerberg, and Karrie Villa, we have replaced essentially all of our older light bulbs (over 750) with new efficient LED bulbs. This has reduced our lighting energy consumption by more than half. The cost of these new bulbs is believed to deliver about a two year pay back in energy savings, meaning that we should see this cost return to us in savings on our energy bill within approximately two years. WOW!

**STEWARDSHIP** - Working with the stewardship committee, not only did we work on the normal pledge drive that happens each fall, but also discussed how to emphasize stewardship throughout the year. Along with general stewardship emphasis discussion, our committee also has been working to bring alternative payment options to St. Matthew's givers. Methods such as text-to-give, online donations, and a special app that allows for giving through credit card donations. We continue to examine how these additions can assist us in our giving.

**CONTINUING EDUCATION** - I attended a three day retreat on racism this past fall. The retreat was led by Cross Roads ministries and really opened my eyes to the great problem that persists in our world. In our further discussions on the topic of racism, we have raised the idea of a monthly discussion group to talk, learn, share and understand more about this problem and how we can make a personal difference in our world. I look forward to bringing this opportunity to St. Matthew's in the near future.

**SAME GENDER MARRIAGES** – In 2015 we saw a transition for St. Matthew's with respect to how we sought to welcome the LGBT community. We began discussions on the issue early in the year with the Church Council. After the Supreme Court declared it legal to marry in June 2015, we as pastors announced we would like to offer this service to couples who requested it, and began a one-on-one dialogue with the congregation about this offer. After many conversations, letters, emails and correspondence from both sides of the matter, it was agreed that we would begin offering marriage services to same gender couples starting in September 2015.

To this date (January 2018), we still have not had any same-gender couples ask us to marry them, although we were thrilled to celebrate with staff members John Paradowski and Jeff Reeves who were married in December 2015 at Fourth Presbyterian Church by Pastor Gary Erickson. We hope this inclusiveness to couples who are same gender resembles the love that God has for them as well in how we welcome and include those in same gender relationships here at St. Matthew's.

**BENEVOLENCE** - In the area of benevolence, we did exceptionally well again supporting other ministry organizations financially. Out of the contributions we received this year, we continue to give away to other worthy ministries and causes in giving levels of over 37% (possibly an all time high!). This is something to be extremely proud of, as it is among the highest Lutheran church giving levels in our synod and in the country. Special collections were made for our synod, matching up to \$20,000 of congregational gifts to synod matched by our reserves and kingdom account (totaling \$60,000). Also, a special drive was held for Hurricane relief, which raised over \$40,000 for Lutheran Disaster Response efforts in helping people get their lives back. Thanks be to God for such generosity!

**PARTNERSHIP MINISTRY** - Another group that I worked with was our Partnership committee. Over the past year we met regularly to discuss how we could improve our local, national and international partnerships in a variety of ways. Listed next are those ministries...

EL SALVADOR - To support the poor in El Salvador, we gathered generous donations to ship meals for the hungry of El Salvador. Because of these donations, we have shipped a full shipping container to El Salvador this year and hope to continue this valuable ministry. This food ministry is of crucial importance to the people of El Salvador who live on barely a meal a day. We also continue to support the important ministry of Casa Esperanza, which is a daily food program for people who are homeless in El Salvador. Also, we supported 20 youth in their education, helping them to learn and grow and become successful members of their society. Thank you to everyone who has supported our El Salvador ministries. As I write this we are preparing to travel there with 11 of us to further discuss our partnership and how we can continue to support our brothers and sisters in this needy country.

TANZANIA - We also continue to seek ways to partner with our brothers and sisters in Tanzania. This partnership continues to support over 20 secondary education scholarships, and give general ministry support. We persist in conversation about ways to partner.

Last January, 6 of us from St. Matthew's and nearly 20 from the Milwaukee area, went to Tanzania for the installation of their new Bishop. Pastor Elias Kitoi, who served on staff at St. Matthew's nearly 10 years ago, was elected by a 77% first vote to become their new bishop. He became their second bishop in their nearly 25 year history. The celebration was monumental with thousands of people attending. We were thrilled to be with him on during this special time and enjoyed seeing our partners at Sing'isi Lutheran once again for a continued deepening of our relationship together.

CROSS LUTHERAN & REFORMATION LUTHERAN - Our other two partnerships are inner city partnerships. Reformation Lutheran has been a long time partnership with St. Matthew's and involves weekly food ministry support, donations of clothing and household items for their neighborhood store, and financial support. Cross Lutheran's partnership involves supporting their medical and dental facilities, their food pantry, and their Monthly community meal to the homeless. Both of these partnerships bring life to St. Matthew's, reminding us that we are all one church and not complete with out each other.

A special thanks to Gordon Moehling, Pastor Ed Weiskotten, Larry Jurss, Tim Greene, Jill Hughes and Mark Young for their contributions to Reformation, helping it to continue to survive. We pray for God's blessings upon Reformation in this transitional time.

CONFIRMATION - In the area of Confirmation, classes for the 7th & 8th grades continue to go well with nearly 70 kids attending. In a combination of large and small groups, we focus on teaching, service and fellowship. This all is possible through the help of adult guides who lead the small groups after I have finished the main lesson for the evening. I am satisfied that our youth are learning the catechism and scriptures to enhance their understanding for their faith. A big thank you goes out to our group guides for their continued weekly efforts in this area: Barb Price, Chris Lange, Allison and Dan Byrne, Andrea Karras and Paul Kramer, Kelly Kirtley, Joe Chiesa, Donna Gifford, Jennifer Catalano, Mary Collins, Matt and Tressa Bruggink, John Charlson, Tom Wanezek, Colleen Volland, Rebecca Millenbach, Tracy Loechler, Vicky Holton, Jeff Kobinsky, Kristin Olson, and Carri Brewer.

CHURCH COUNCIL - Our Church Council continued to work together very well under the leadership of Curt Brewer as our president. This has been a very thoughtful, ministry-focused group. Even with a challenging budgets, we have soundly kept the congregation in a strong financial position. Thanks to all of them for continuing their work in discerning God's direction and purposes for St. Matthew's. Our upcoming Council Retreat in February will continue to bring new direction to our ministry as we look at new ventures that our congregation is moving towards based on the MET report directives that we began nearly six years ago. Thanks to our Church Council!

**WORSHIP** - In the area of worship, we continued to be blessed with the leadership of John Paradowski (30 years of ministry), our Music Director, organist and bell choir director who constantly is bringing newness to our worship. Also, Dave Mohr (29 years of ministry) director of our exceptional Senior Choir and Jeff Reeves (11 years of ministry) working with the Children's choirs. All of them share their gifts of music to help us glorify God's goodness even more. We also have Heide Hughes and Amy Dankwardt assisting with the children's choirs who share their love and a sense of welcome to these young children. Through our staff's many gifts we have had so many wonderful opportunities to praise and proclaim God's goodness in worship. We continue to look for new ways to praise God in worship and music, while remaining faithful to our tradition.

On a special note, John Paradowski celebrated his 30th year at St. Matthew's in October. As a special thank you to John, the council voted unanimously to grant John a paid sabbatical for next year. We look forward to seeing what John will do with his time away. A well deserved break focused on renewal!

**MEN'S MINISTRY** – Throughout the year I have worked with the Men's ministry planning committee to develop events, studies and activities where the men of St. Matthew's could come to together connect, grow and learn from each other about God. My thanks to the committee. Through the committee's work we have had several wonderful events together and look forward to more this next year as well.

**FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP** – This past year the Finance committee chaired by Karen Freiberg and headed by Treasurer Rob Wedel, worked hard to discuss the future of St. Matthew's financially, especially with the growing cost of staff benefits and the financial challenges these rising costs bring. We are truly blessed to have such gifted and talented people leading both the Finance committee and our Stewardship committee which was chaired by Ryan Engelhardt. When all was said and done, we ended the year with a little surplus, which in reality was a huge win! A big thanks to everyone who served on these two committees so faithfully!

**CHRISTMAS PROGRAM** - This year was our biannual Christmas program year where the Sunday School children presented the Christmas story in worship. A big thank you to everyone who helped make it such a moving retelling of God's birth narrative and sharing the power of the incarnation through the voices of our children, and a huge thanks to Gretchen Hauge, our Sunday School coordinator, for writing the new script, coordinating all of the classes, making it all come to life, and also a big thanks for Jennifer Dugan and Julia Murphy for making it all happen.

**YOUTH & CHILDREN'S MINISTRY** - In Youth and Family Ministry, as we offer ministry events for the Junior and Senior High Youth, we continue to be blessed with our full time Youth and Family Minister, Gretchen Hauge. Gretchen continues to challenge and help the youth grow in their faith and feel connected to St. Matthew's. This we celebrated her 12th year of ministry at St. Matthew's in this role. This is the longest time that a Youth Minister has ever served at St. Matthew's.

Together, she and I led 85 people to the New Jersey / New York area, working with the Saint Bernard Project, which served needy people by helping them rebuild their home from Hurricane Sandy. It was a powerful experience of service while enjoying getting to know one another better and reflect on our faith in the cultural diversity of New York and New Jersey.

Gretchen also serves to enrich the faith lives of our children in the Sunday School ministry. She has done a wonderful job leading the Sunday School program with its many diverse age groups and styles of teaching. We are very fortunate to have her working with our kids and teachers. She personally writes the curriculum for all age groups, and gives a large part of her time to crafting strong theological content teaching our children about God and God's love.

Also in Children's Ministry, Donna Gardner-Manke (21 years in ministry at St. Matthew's) has continued doing a great job of leading our Children's ministry with the KFC (1st -3rd graders) and the DOC (4th-5th graders) groups and also once again did a superb job of planning, preparing, and implementing our Vacation Bible School program this past summer. This year about 300 kids participated and over 100 youth and adults helped to make it a great success. VBS is one of our great yearly successes, and its success is in great part to Donna, but also to the many people who work very hard to make it successful. Thanks to all for their time and talent teaching our children about their loving God.

**FIRST COMMUNION** – Another Children's ministry event I lead is the First Communion class. 35 of our fifth graders and their parents learned about God's Grace in Holy Communion in January, and on the first Sunday in February we communed them for their first time.

This year, we also brought a change in that we began offering communion to anyone who wished to receive it. In order to be more in line with our Lutheran theology of what a sacrament is, we opened up communion to anyone who wishes to receive. If some one does want to begin receiving communion, we invite them to attend the normal retreat or to meet personally with a pastor.

In order to move towards a younger overall age, we held three more special classes for younger grades. One class/communion service for fourth graders in May, one class/service for third graders in July, and one class and service for this year's third graders in October. This January we will meet with our current second graders and their parents to instruct them and then have a special afternoon first communion service as well. Overall, this change has been welcomed by parents and kids alike, and we feel good about the inclusive message it shares.

These have been some of the adventures that I have participated in beyond the normal preaching, teaching, home bound and hospital visiting, and day-to-day administrative functions of the church. It has been a good year marked with God's loving hand and led by His Holy Spirit. Some new things to St. Matthew's that I encouraged, but didn't lead were...

**STEPHEN MINISTRIES** – Several years ago, when we were completing the MET report, we were reflecting on what else we could bring to St. Matthew's ministries to further fill it out. The answer came back - care for people more intentionally. Because of this goal, we began moving towards bringing a national program, Stephen Ministries, to St. Matthew's. Stephen Ministries is an in-depth training and education model which equips the laity to walk alongside other individuals in their own personal struggles. To date, we have had four people trained in a week long training course to lead the ministry. Sue Swing, Pastor Ann, and Ginny Cleppe have all been incredibly instrumental as our main leaders in this area. And now they have recruited and begun training 15 Stephen Ministers at St. Matthew's to care for others. This is a powerful ministry, and I am excited to see how this will continue to help St. Matthew's grow in our caring and love for one another.

**SAINTS** – Jane Sandstrom (18 years of ministry), continued through May to support our Older Adults as the Ministries Coordinator and we celebrated her retirement at that time. After reflecting on who would be right for the position, Julia Murphy, a long time member of St. Matthew's and capable leader, was chosen unanimously for the position. Julia began her time with us, immediately bringing a committee together to evaluate what we have done over the many years Jane served, and what the future is calling us to do. Julia is doing a great job leading and shaping this ministry into something special for seniors, with large groups regularly coming out to attend education, meal, and fellowship events. Welcome Julia!

STAFF – As a whole, our staff works together very well. Other staff members I haven't mentioned yet, who are an important part of the ministry here are; Sonja Mohr (26 years of ministry) – our Communications Secretary who does an excellent job creating the VOICE newsletter and weekly bulletin as well as every other way we communicate to the world such as the Web site; Sue Swing (16 years of ministry) –Volunteer coordinator, Small Group and Adult Education Ministries Coordinator, and now Stephen Ministries - Sue does so much to help people connect, learn and serve here and beyond St. Matthew's; Jill Due (14 years of ministry) – Jill serves through supporting the many needs of our administrative office with grace and a willing smile; Emily Wanezek (6 years of ministry)–who supported our youth and partnership ministries moved to take another position in November. This position was filled by Jennifer Dugan. As much as we will miss Emily and her capable leadership, Jen has been on staff for two months now, but already feels like a great fit - blessings Emily and welcome Jennifer!; and Marsha Olson (1 year of ministry) started last January and has made a huge improvement in the day to day cleanliness of our building. She brings 31 years of cleaning expertise to our facility and it shows. Bob Gardner (17 years of ministry) – on Janitorial Staff continues to support the many floor needs keeping our floors in tip top shape. In addition, Dave Fagerberg was brought on this fall to help with day to day set-up needs for the many ministries that take place. Dave, brings a willing heart and a helper's attitude which makes him highly appreciated amongst the staff. Jennifer Kramer (1 year) has served in our financial administrator position and to also the scheduling side of our ministry. Jennifer brings a strong accounting background with her, and a heart for serving others. These have been big shoes for Jen to fill, and she is giving it her all!

A special thank you to all of them for the extra work needed in such a busy ministry. All together our staff, which as you can see, has a strong history of helping the ministry to run smoothly. The gifts they all bring are extremely valuable! Thanks!

Pastor Ann Williams (1 year), has been spending half of her time visiting our home bound members and leading our new Stephen Ministries (see a paragraph earlier), and focusing the rest of her time on Women's ministries, preaching and worship, and caring ministries. I continue to be moved by the ways that she brings a sense of care and compassion to the personal needs of our members and our staff.

Pastor Matthew Schlake-Kruse – 2017 has been the third full year of ministry together with Pastor Matt, who began in September of 2014. Pastor Matt is a gifted teacher and preacher and has been a valuable asset to St. Matthew's ministry. I realize that good pastoral working relations are not always the norm in pastoral partnerships. For our growing partnership serving together, I continue to be thankful or these two colleagues!

On a more personal note, God continues to bless my family; my children – Averie (21), Noah (19), and Lilly (17) continue to grow, develop and learn and make me proud every day. Donna and I give thanks to God for the privilege of raising them to know God's love. Averie was born the day after St. Matthew's voted to welcome me as your new associate pastor 21 years ago, and her age always reminds me of how long I've been at St. Matthew's. Celebrating 21 years in ministry at St. Matthew's has been a joy and I continue to look forward to more years together.

In everything we've been through this year, we become more and more aware of God's presence and love in our lives. As we begin a new year, we look forward to a new journey and new beginnings through this place of ministry called St. Matthew's. May God's Spirit continue to lead us and may our hearts be open to God's voice.

In Christ's Service,  
Pastor Chris Manke

## Pastor's Report from Pastor Matthew Schlake-Kruse

### 9.5 Theses about our Lives and Ministries as St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

Given 2017 was a year of numerous opportunities to celebrate Martin Luther and the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, I thought my reflections on this year could benefit from a Thesis-ification. Thus, as I give thanks and reflect upon my areas of ministry (Social Ministry, Worship and Preaching, Pastoral Care, Outreach/Evangelism, and Fellowship), I offer the following 9.5 Theses on my life and ministry together with you all.

**Thesis 1: There was great interest and great learning about the practice of Islam.**

One of the highlights of the year was the continued growth of our summer series of social issues education and reflection. We had close to 50 people and 35 regulars join us for an in-depth study of Islam and a visit to our community's mosque in Elm Grove/Brookfield. I was amazed at the commitment of our learners and the great questions people brought to our weekly films and discussions. As one member shared with me, what began as great fear and unknowing was transformed into understanding and compassion for those who practice a different, yet deeply connected religion.

**Thesis 2: Our congregation is committed as the church to wrestling with issues of faith, politics, and moving forward despite discord.**

The 2016 election cycle brought out many emotions among the nation, and within our congregation. I have been deeply impressed and feel called to continue to have us, as a "big tent" community of faith learn about our core values as Christians and how we might be agreeable even when we don't agree on everything. St. Matthew's was fortunate to receive a Grant from the Greater Milwaukee Synod and Siebert Lutheran Foundation to reflect and listen to the political opinions, feelings, and ideas about how faith and politics intersect in our church's life. We had an amazing turnout for our November Taboo Talk, and I expect our reports from Zeidler to further inform how we can work together and identify social issues we can agree are important regardless of our affiliations and ideologies. We had another great letter writing campaign for Bread for the World this fall as well, with more than 70 letters advocating for hunger support globally and locally.

**Thesis 3: St. Matthew's is a congregation committed to service of neighbors in need.**

One highlight of the summer was our concurrent "Week of Service" inspired by the Mission Trip Participants. We had more than 55 individuals commit to meal preparation, yard/clean-up work, serving meals, and were able to find new connections with the Marquette Noon Run and Street Angels Ministries. A big thanks to Nancy Bowen, who led a majority of the weekday meal preparation sessions and stepped outside her comfort zone to reach the homeless. Whether diapers, undies, cereal, school supplies, household items, or Giving Tree Gifts, the ability to ask and receive such necessities for our social ministry partners is another way we serve. I hope that each family at St. Matthew's finds at least one church-supported place to serve in 2018, whether at JOMM, Cross, Reformation, Tosa Interfaith, or another one of our connections through the wider ELCA and Greater Milwaukee Synod.

**Thesis 4: St. Matthew's offers people of all ages places to wrestle with, share, and communicate their experiences of faith in Jesus Christ.**

One of the less-structured parts of my job includes coordinating efforts in evangelism, faith sharing, and helping empower others to share their faith stories. We began a small group study of how to build and share faith experiences with others, which was enlightening to the ways socialization and culture make it feel daunting to talk about faith, church, and belief. I hope we can create more of these groups in the near future. My assisting with 9th Grade Confirmation allows me to help our young adults and youth reflect on what God means to them and how to talk about God—and the metaphors reveal the need and

desire to continue to shape and share our God-stories with each other. It is a surprising, but helpful way for us to be church together.

**Thesis 5: St. Matthew's is a place for those seeking community, fellowship, and fun.**

When I first visited Holden Village, a retreat community in Washington State, I was shocked to learn a church-based group had "Hilarity" as one of their core values. This year has been a year where our Fellowship Team, ably and creatively led by Jennifer Wills and supported by Heather Deaton have offered us and our community multiple and various ways to encounter one another in hilarity, in fun, in fellowship, and in silly ways. Thanks to them for their creative ideas (i.e. Photo Scavenger Hunt) and their commitment to try anything!

**Thesis 6: St. Matthew's is a congregation whose generosity is outwardly focused and whose benevolence is tangible always!**

At every Church Council meeting in 2017, Karen Freiberg, our Treasurer, noted that our Benevolence expenditures were over budget. In lay terms, this means we received more donations to be shared outwardly than we could have ever imagined and did actually budget to receive. Synod Matching gifts to ensure we didn't lower our support of the ELCA. Gifts to fund new partnership initiatives in Tanzania. Strong support of the Synod's Outreach for Hope Initiative. Disaster Response that earned us not one, not two, but three personal letters of gratitude from the Director of ELCA World Hunger. Hunger baskets overflowing on Sunday mornings. Over and above offerings and stewardship gifts to the General and Building Funds, beyond a good year of financial success, nothing makes me as proud as naming our giving of over 32% of dollars received away from ourselves and our ministries. Thank you for your radical and extreme generosity.

**Thesis 7: St. Matthew's is a congregation with an always-developing Biblical Fluency.**

The highlight of my week during the program year is the relationships, conversations, and questions that arise at Wednesday Bible Study. I am grateful for the more than 35 regular members and their intellect, inquisitive nature, and willingness to learn about the Old Testament. As I've learned and grown in my own biblical understandings over the three years we've been reading together (thanks, Pr. Margaret), not only are we learning, but we have a core group of people who have learned how to read the bible with both devotional and critical eyes. St. Matthew's is blessed to have these biblical scholars in our midst, and it is my hope that we can continue to share our love of reading the bible and "Eating the Word" with one another and throughout the congregation.

**Thesis 8: I have found great support through my participation in the Marquette University Pastoral Support Program.**

This year began a two-year commitment to my own professional development through the Eli Lilly Foundation funded, Marquette Administered cohort program, Pastoral Leadership in a Cultural Context. Each quarter, I meet with 11 other pastors in our first 5-10 years of ministry, where we explore social issues, share in mutual conversation and support, practice Ignatian Spirituality, and share in time away from the humdrum of regular congregational life. More than anything, I have been grateful for the affirmation the program has given me in my work with Social Ministry, the support and colleague support I have found from my friends in the group, and for the sense of spirituality that it has awakened in me. I am grateful for the opportunity to take time away for study leave, and find this program is bearing fruit in my ministry regularly.

**Thesis 9: Doing Ministry Together is filled with great joy and great grief.**

Now three years your pastor, I am ever aware of the great joy of doing and being in ministry together, and also more aware of the sadness, tragedy, and grief we hold together as a community within the Body of Christ. The death of many beloved members and friends, the death of two infants in our community this fall, and the new life paths of others are a reminder of how fast and how fleeting our time together

can feel, yet also a reminder of the blessings of God's grace and love shared together. The joy of weddings, baptisms, of good news and transformations is also present. A part of me is deeply grateful that we are church together through the good and the bad, through the desolate places and consolation-filled places, on Good Friday and Easter Morning. Blessings to you wherever you find yourself on that continuum.

**Thesis 9.5: The people (volunteers, too) with whom I work care a whole lot about what they do.**

No amount of gratitude can give thanks for the support and partnership we share among our staff and volunteers. I do sense a ever-deepening partnership among the pastors, program staff, administrators, and volunteers. I am so grateful for the leadership of our Church Council, committee chairs, and ever-present crew of helpers. I will not name you all, for fear of omission, but know I am grateful for our work together in the Kin\_dom of God.

Blessings in 2018 and beyond.

Pastor Matthew Schlake-Kruse

### Pastor's Report from Pastor Ann Williams

I have now been a pastor at Saint Matthew's for one and a half years. I am still moved by and grateful for the things that first drew me here: generosity of spirit, wonderful colleagues and a deep sense of faith within the congregation.

I would like to thank the staff for their patience. Specifically, Sonja, Jen, and Jill put up with a lot and do it with ease and grace.

This year, a large chunk of my time has been spent preparing Saint Matthew's to be a Stephen Ministry congregation. Sue Swing, Ginny Cleppe and I have been meeting together regularly in order to implement a strong, caring, lay- ministry in this place and it has been very rewarding. What started as a week long training last year turned into a vision for a strengthened community. From there, fifteen people felt called to commit to forty hours of training. As we near the end of our training sessions, it is clear that God has been with us on this journey. In February, those fifteen people will be commissioned to begin caring, Christ-centered relationships with members who are suffering losses or in the midst of transition. What a gift! Sue's commitment and leadership has been inspiring and Ginny brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our first class of Stephen Ministers. I am blessed beyond reason to work with them. I can't wait to see what God will do through Stephen Ministry.

Pastors Chris and Matt continue to be steady, thoughtful, and faithful colleagues. I wish all of the people of Saint Matthew's could experience their dedication and good humor on a daily basis like I do.

In addition to visits with homebound and hospitalized members I preach, teach, preside at worship and take part in the Healing Prayer Team and Women's Ministry. Plans for a Women's Retreat in March are already taking shape.

Above all, thank you to the people of St. Matthew's for allowing me to be a co-worker in the gospel with you. May we grow in faith and love for each other and for the world in 2018.

Pastor Ann Williams

## President's Report

2017 was another year of progress and positive change at St. Matthew's. We began the year by adopting our updated Constitution helping us to coordinate our governance and growth with the ELCA as it has evolved over the decades. Thanks to Pastor Matt and his committee of advisors in completing this large task.

Pastor Chris continues to be a leader in technology with significant upgrades made to our AV system allowing for live streaming of Sunday services and other events reaching out to those unable to attend in person. We are truly fortunate to have a lead pastor with a background in computer science.

Pastor Ann's work with the healing, homebound and sick as well as her involvement in numerous ministries confirms the good decision it was to add her to the pastoral team last year.

Some other highlights and celebrations from 2017:

- The Sacrament of First Communion was expanded to allow our younger members to begin participating at an age when they are ready.
- Stephen Ministry has seen much progress which will allow us to reach out to even more people in a meaningful way.
- We celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.
- Our Music Minister John Paradowski celebrated his milestone 30th anniversary at St. Matthew's.

Our lay staff and Council committees helped to coordinate hundreds of volunteers and guests to our missions and events, too numerous to mention here but found throughout this report.

We continue to be blessed by the gifts and generosity from our members. The year saw many natural disasters both home and abroad and St. Matthew's members responded with nearly \$40,000 in donations to the Lutheran Disaster Relief Fund. The new Synod Matching Campaign was a success and total benevolence was 32% of budget.

As I close out my year as president and complete my term on Council, I can say that from this experience I have gained a much better understanding and a true appreciation for the special place that St. Matthew's is. We are truly blessed to have the pastoral and lay staff that we do, as well as a congregation that is so giving of their time and talents as well as their gifts.

I'm looking forward to 2018 being another good year with a great slate of new members joining the Council and a solid leadership team in place. I also look forward to seeing some new faces on our committees as our new members find areas to get involved and help continue our work. It has been a pleasure to serve.

Curt Brewer  
Church Council President

## Communications Committee

Through the written word, electronic resources, and face-to-face encounters, we strive to spread the Good News of God's love as it is manifested at St. Matthew's and in the wider community. The Communications Committee is established under the leadership of the Pastoral Council to connect both members and non-members to the St. Matthew's community. Our Communications Committee exists to help support and enhance existing communication tools (social, website, bulletin, e-mail, blogging, etc.) and content. The purpose of the committee is to inform, invite and celebrate events about our church in a way that brings people closer to God through our shared principles and passions.

We have sought to strengthen our engagement in social media to connect through a medium that three out of four online users are already engaged in. Our increased involvement in Facebook has given us a platform to closely connect with members of our congregation and extended community. By informing, inviting and celebrating events at our church through posts and photo-tagging, we've been able to reach an average of 232 people per post, an increase of over 50 people per post from last year.

### **Major Events Covered in 2017:**

- Share ELCA position on social issues
- Confirmation Service Night at Hunger Task Force
- Adult Education Conversation with Charlie Sykes and Daniel Bice
- Largest St. Matthew's Youth Mission Trip Ever
- Publicizing Outreach for Hope Foundation
- Increasing awareness of Live Worship of all St. Matthew's services
- Following St. Matthew's Men's Softball playoff run
- St. Matthew's First Annual Milwaukee Mission Trip
- New Fellowship Activities
- Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria Disaster Relief
- 'Forward in Faith' Stewardship Drive
- St. Matthew's Building Update Progress

Heartfelt thanks to Sonja Mohr, John Paradowski, Brian Smith, Michelle Burmeister, Pastor Matt, Pastor Chris, and Pastor Ann for their cooperative efforts in spreading the Word. And thank you, members of St. Matthew's for increased engagement and sharing in all the ways you witness God's love for the world each day.

Andrew Cherney  
Communications Chair

## Education Committee

Members of the 2017 Education Committee are: Michele Wolaver, Carol Heim, Renee Mabie, Jennifer Dugan, Laura Murray, Megan Reuter, Carrie Jo Cherney, Beth Brown, Emily Wanezek and Gretchen Haugse.

### ***Sunday School***

About 300 students participate in our Sunday School program, which meets each Sunday from September to May. Nearly 40 volunteer teachers, shepherds, and assistants lead the classes.

Preschool and kindergarten classes continue to use a child friendly curriculum published by Augsburg Fortress, the publishing arm of the ELCA, that corresponds to the lectionary we use in worship service so that our younger Sunday School children are talking about what we hear in church each Sunday. We are in our 12th year of Rotational Model Sunday School for 1st – 5th graders. In this model, students experience Bible teachings through art, drama, games, music, and reflection in a way that encourages student interaction, and each unit is introduced by a big group event in Fellowship Hall. We create our own lessons for 1st - 5th graders. We also produce our own materials for sixth through eighth grade classes, exploring a combination of biblical, liturgical, and contemporary themes and issues through discussion, games, and film clips. The lessons are enriched by monthly art/service projects for the middle school students led by Renee Mabie. Many of these projects are tied to seasons of the church year and enhance our stairways. Other projects are delivered by the pastors to those who aren't able to make it to church very often.

In December, most of our Sunday School students were involved in the Sunday School Christmas Program that was presented during worship services. Experiencing the Christmas story through the words and actions of children is especially meaningful.

We are grateful to the many volunteers who make our Sunday School program possible, from those who arrange snacks for Sunday School events to those who take care of administrative duties every week. We are especially appreciative of our Sunday School teachers, shepherds, and assistants, who mentor, affirm, and love spending time with our children! We also thank the Education Committee for being a committed, hands-on group of volunteers who always say 'yes'!

#### ***Vacation Bible School***

We had another fantastic week at VBS. Three hundred and thirty children joined us for this exciting and Spirit-filled week. Over 90 adult and teen volunteers worked to make it a success.

#### ***Children's Ministry***

Kids for Christ (KFC) is the program offered to children in grades 1st -3rd. Disciples of Christ (DOC) is our 4th and 5th grade ministry. Each group meets nine times throughout the year building fellowship through, meals, games, prayer and devotion. DOC held its annual sleepover and KFC held its annual Late Night Gathering. Many teen volunteers help to make this a successful program and I am grateful for their willingness to serve.

#### ***Lenten Family Times***

Wednesdays during Lent families with younger children gather in the education wing to do crafts and participate in worship. We saw many new faces this year and hope the families continue to join us for this meaningful experience!

#### ***7th and 8th Grade Confirmation***

Classes for the 7th & 8th grades continue to go well with nearly 70 kids attending. In a combination of large and small groups, we focus on teaching, service and fellowship. This all is possible through the help of adult guides who lead the small groups after Pr. Chris has finished the main lesson for the evening. Our youth are learning the catechism and scriptures to enhance their understanding for their faith. A big thank you goes out to our group guides for their continued weekly efforts in this area: Barb Price, Chris Lange, Allison and Dan Byrne, Andrea Karras and Paul Kramer, Kelly Kirtley, Joe Chiesa, Donna Gifford, Jennifer Catalano, Mary Collins, Matt and Tressa Bruggink, John Charlson, Tom Wanezek, Colleen Volland, Rebecca Millenbach, Tracy Loechler, Vicky Holton, Jeff Kobinsky, Kristin Olson, and Carri Brewer.

### ***9th Grade Confirmation***

Ninth grade students met weekly throughout the fall to explore what it means to live as a person of faith. We talked about how we apply the biblical and theological foundations learned in 7th and 8th grade to our daily lives. We explored various Bible passages to experience how to take meaning and message from familiar stories. And we talked about living out our faith in community and through serving others. Sessions were led by Gretchen Haugse and Pastor Matt. Christopher Due and Hillary Gardner Noll assisted as small group leaders. The ninth grade class was confirmed on November 12th.

### ***Adult Education & Small Groups***

St. Matthew's Adult Education Ministry & Small Groups Ministry

Adult Education continues to be a vital element in the faith growth of the people at St. Matthew's. The goals of our adult education program are to:

- Increase Biblical Literacy
- Educate people on religious matters
- Provide practical advice on daily Christian life

The members of the Adult Education Planning Team are: Sue Swing, Pastor Matt Schlake-Kruse, Dan Bice, Pastor Ed Weiskotten, Petey Lund, Conor Williams, Vince Prantil, Rob and Michelle Burmeister.

Planning and scheduling is facilitated with the St. Matthew's Mission statement in mind; "Called to Fulfill the Great Commission, St. Matthew's WELCOMES all to faith in Jesus Christ, NURTURES our faith journey, EQUIPS us to serve others and SENDS us into the world to make a difference in Jesus' name."

### ***Sunday Morning Adult Forum***

The weekly Sunday morning adult education hour is from 9:45-10:45. This list of classes is a reflection of Biblical education, spiritual formation and social ministry/outreach.

Topics covered in 2017:

#### *St. Matthew's Members & Guests*

Dan Bice w/ Charlie Sykes

Conor Williams: Project Return, WAVE, Milwaukee 53206 DVD & Discussion, ProTrade, Table of the Saints, Cathedral Center

Pastor Matt Kruse: Baptism, The Trinity, Lutheran Social Services, The Small Catechism, Bread for the World, The Incarnation, Racism, Rick Steves Video in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation

Sue Swing: Dr. Matt Jandrazevits/Lee Beitzel on Teens & Mental Health, Mindfulness & Contemplative Prayer with Linda Frey & Dan Magnusson

Pastor Chris & Tanzania Trip participants

Tim Jorgenson w/ Scott Karstenson; missionary to Djibouti

Sharon Thiel & Caregiver Support Ministry

John Paradowski on the Music of the Reformation

Attendance at Sunday morning Adult Education continues to be about 40-60 participants each Sunday. Our adult education program continues to benefit from the consistent and reliable assistance provided by Brian Smith and the technology team. We have been able to better support our speakers, enhance the quality of presentations and make our sessions available to the wider community via the St. Matthew's You Tube link. Our congregation is full of passionate and gifted speakers and we are thankful to have had many different members of St. Matthew's and a large number of guests speak in our adult education program in 2017.

***Wednesday Evening Adult Education Lent 2017***

Sue Swing facilitated small group discussion on the topic of Grace, our Lenten theme.

***Quilt Ministry***

In 2017, Stitches of Love Quilt Ministry completed their 14th year. Many helping hands completed projects which include: 150 quilts completed which were donated to various charities, 30 receiving blankets for babies baptized at St. Matthew's (new project), Thrivent Action Team Project shipped 20+ blankets to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation with Thrivent providing funds for the shipping costs, 20 NEW bed pillows with custom made pillowcases to The Joy House, 25 teddy bears with jacket and prayer card donated to Milwaukee Police Department for children in crisis situations, and 10 blankets and infant baby care items for Hephatha's Strong Baby Sanctuary Ministry.

The mission of the ministry is to spread the love of our Lord worldwide through the warm bedding and comfort to those in need. The Mother's Day Blessing in 2017 offered a blessing for all the completed projects before distribution. Our thanks to Bev Etzelmueller for her faithful leadership of the ministry.

***The Church Library***

Our Church Library supports the ministries of the church by offering materials that help adults and children grow in their understanding of the Christian Faith. Special attention this year was given to updating the Martin Luther, Spiritual Life, and Social Issues sections. A Stephen Ministry section was added. An inventory was completed this year of both adult and children's sections. There are 3700 books and DVDs in the Library. The Library has a committee of volunteers that met in September. The committee assists with several projects and staffs the Library on Sundays during the education hour. On Sundays the Library is a popular spot to gather in education or fellowship. It is also a comfortable meeting, relaxing or work place during the week. The window displays have an updated look with not only seasonal items but highlighting ministries of the church. The WiFi was also improved in the Library and the doors are always open.

Special thanks to Dee Birschel (processes new books), Judy Holmes (displays), Jill Due (office assistance) and Vernell Schlienger; and to Linda Wunderlich for her leadership of the library ministry.

This is a summary of the diverse activities which make up St. Matthew's Education Ministry.

Michele Wolaver, Council Representative  
Gretchen Haugse, Children's Educ. Coord.

A collaboration of reports by leaders in ministry areas

## Evangelism Committee

One of the guiding principles of St. Matthew's is our attempt to be a welcoming congregation to those who are new to our community; this year, the evangelism team, comprised of Conor Williams, Lisa Williams, Petey Lund, Katie Karls, Andy Cherney, Marge Johnson (of Reformation), Vince Prantil and Pastor Matt extended the concept of welcome and sought to explore and unpack what evangelism looks like. Through book study of Martha Grace Reese's *Unbinding the Gospel*, this group began to discover what faith-sharing looks like and how evangelism is more than attracting people to regular worship.

A big thank you to all who do help with welcome on a regular basis—our Welcome Center Attendants, Greeters, Ushers, Coffee Hosts and other volunteers. We are especially grateful for the staff leadership of Sue Swing, who helps coordinate and lead our new member classes. Close to 50 new members became a part of our church community this year, and we continue to see many looking for new church homes visit on a regular basis.

Evangelism is the work of all of us. Please remember to share what you love about St. Matthew's not only with us, but in other interactions with friends, family, school groups, co-curricular families, etc. We are grateful for your work on this, and look forward to another year of exploring how we can all share our faith together!

Vince Prantil, Council Representative  
Pr. Matt Schlake-Kruse

## Fellowship Committee

Fellowship events provide an opportunity for people of all ages to gather and get to know one another. As a committee, we carried out new events such as a photography scavenger hunt in The Village, Bingo and Wheelchair Bowling at Luther Manor, and a curator-directed tour of exhibits at Milwaukee Art Museum (MAM) and Museum of Wisconsin Art (MOWA) in West Bend. We also organized a disc golf, mini golf and foot golf league and, in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we partnered with the SAINTS to show the film Martin Luther: The Idea That Changed the World. Fellowship also hosted favorite activities such as a Brewers game with tailgating; meeting on Wednesday nights in August at The Landing at Hoyt Park; Family Movie Night; and hosting the annual Thanksgiving pie social.

Thank you for your support of Fellowship at St. Matthew's. We look forward to another year of creating fun memories together.

Jennifer Wills  
Fellowship Committee Chairperson

## St. Matthew's Ev. Lutheran Church Foundation

The Foundation gave a total of \$38,590 in benevolence disbursements to six ministry support areas during 2017. The recipients were as follows:

- (1) \$6,590 for EPIC (Educational Partnerships in Covenant) Scholarships to members of St. Matthew's attending ELCA universities. The EPIC scholarships are matching scholarships, with the university attended matching the amount given by the student's congregation.
- (2) \$8,000 to Reformation Lutheran Church, one of St. Matthew's four designated partner ministries.
- (3) \$8,000 to Cross Lutheran Church, also one of St. Matthew's four designated partner ministries.
- (4) \$8,000 to Casa Esperanza, our Partnership Congregation in El Salvador.
- (5) \$8,000 to Sing 'Isi Lutheran Church, our Partnership Congregation in Tanzania.

The Foundation's assets, as well as the assets of The Rev. Gary & Susan Erickson Scholarship Fund

("Erickson Fund"), continue to be fully invested with Robert W. Baird. Scholarship award recipients are determined annually based on the recommendations of a scholarship committee (following the guidelines as outlined by Gary Erickson). The committee is comprised of one representative of the Foundation Board, Nancy Herrell, and Pastor Chris Manke. During 2017 the Erickson Fund provided \$7,131 for scholarship support. Through the generous donations of various members of St. Matthew's, the fund balance of the Erickson Fund was \$152,830 as of 12-31-2017. This balance will continue to be tracked as a fund separate from the Foundation general fund.

Total Foundation assets (including the Erickson Scholarship Fund) as of 12-31-2017 are \$1,163,203 of which \$1,010,373 is available for general Foundation purposes.

Foundation Board members: David Laatsch (President), Paul Nickel (Vice President), Erin Margerie (Secretary), Jim Karls (Treasurer), Emily Baseheart, Chuck Crook, Nancy Herrell, Curt Brewer (Church Council representative), Chris Daniels and Julia Murphy.

The Foundation Board would like to express its sincere gratitude to Julia Murphy for her years of service on the Foundation Board.

The Foundation Board is pleased to welcome its newest member, Martha Moore.

David Laatsch  
Foundation Board President

## Healing Prayer Ministry

The Healing Prayer Ministry group is called to serve God and others through prayer, anointing and the laying on of hands to all who seek healing in body, mind and spirit. This ministry is grounded in the belief that:

- All healing comes from God.
- We are all eternally healed through the waters of our baptism, made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus.
- Medical knowledge is a gift of God, and He works through our doctors, nurses, and medicines to bring us healing.
- This is a ministry of the whole faith community, even though certain individuals are called to carry it out. Anointing and laying on of hands is a traditional practice, found both in Scripture and throughout the history of the church.

Healing Prayer Services are offered monthly. Everyone is welcome to come forward for healing, either for themselves, or to ask for healing prayers for another person. Loved ones are welcome to accompany you and to participate in the laying on of hands. We also welcome special requests for Healing Prayer and laying on of hands, which can be arranged at your convenience, at church, in your home, or in a hospital.

All who feel called to serve as a conduit of God's healing love are welcome to join this ministry. We meet monthly with Pastor Ann during the Education Hour for group discussions to deepen our faith and understanding.

Deb Endean  
Healing Prayer Minister

## Human Resources Committee

The HR committee overviews all aspects of paid employees including job descriptions, pay, benefits and compliance with liability insurance and government mandates. The quality of employees' work is evaluated and changes made if concerns arise. New employees are evaluated and hired and job descriptions are adjusted as needed. We currently have 18 employees. Proposed changes in personnel, compensation and job descriptions are presented to the church council for approval.

This last year has been a busy year. We have 4 employees in new positions. Dave Fagerberg is now responsible for set up and as a backup cleaner, Kate Searing is our nursery assistant and Jennifer Dugan assists in Youth Ministry and Sunday School. We also hired Julia Murphy as Older Adult Ministries Coordinator aka SAINTS. She works closely with the Older Adult Ministry Coordinating Team in areas of discipleship building and relationship building. Finally we continue to readjust the job description of our Finance Secretary in view of changes of our business needs.

I am very thankful for all the work that Pastors Chris and Matt did as well as the work of Paul Kramer, Sherryl Wedel, Erin Margerie, Jim Daul and Karie Clement, our highly experienced professionals that make up the committee.

Daniel Herrell  
Human Resources Committee Chairperson

## Men's Ministry

Throughout the year I have worked with the Men's Ministry planning committee to develop events, studies and activities where the men of St. Matthew's could come to together connect, grow and learn from each other about God. My thanks to the committee. Through the committee's work we have had several wonderful events together and look forward to more this next year as well.

Pastor Chris Manke

## Property Committee

2017 was a very busy year for the Property Committee. We completed the upgrade of all the fluorescent lamps throughout the building with LED replacements which are saving energy and lowering electricity costs. We also completed a sound and video system upgrade in the sanctuary with a new sound controller and the ability to live stream our services on the internet which enables people to watch the service at home as it is happening or view it later on YouTube.

We finally solved the water problem we were having in Fellowship Hall and the office during heavy rain events. The city contractors working on Milwaukee Avenue on the north side of the building, failed to reconnect our large down spout drain to the storm sewer in the middle of the street. The city fixed the problem, and we have filed a claim with the city of Wauwatosa for the clean up and repair expenses that resulted from the water damage.

The shingles on all of the sloped portions of our roof, some of which were over 50 years old, were replaced. The flat rubber roof over the Commons was also replaced to solve nagging leakage problems in that area. Ten external and internal doors were replaced and several others were equipped with electric hold-open closers to improve safety and security and give us better handicapped entry. As the year ends, we are in the middle of a complete telephone and internet upgrade within the building to improve performance and reliability. New sun tunnels are also scheduled to be installed in the library and chapel area.

The Garden Crew, under the direction of Bob Zwaska, did an outstanding job keeping the outside of our building looking beautiful with all of the flowers and plantings. I wish to thank all of the members of the Property Committee and Garden Crew who worked so diligently during 2017 to make it such an outstanding year.

Ed Bross  
Property Committee Chairperson

### SAINTS Older Adult Ministry

“To develop a sense of community among senior adults by establishing a cohesive group of people who demonstrate true care for one another as they explore the relationship between their spiritual and human needs.”

In August of 2017 Julia Murphy was hired to assume the role of Older Adult Ministry Coordinator previously held by Jane Sandstrom who had retired. Jane was instrumental in preparing Julia for the new role, meeting with her multiple times and passing along the details of the job.

The SAINTS Steering Committee has remained an active component of the SAINTS ministry. They have convened to plan meetings and fill key volunteer positions at each meeting. An important decision that resulted from those meetings was establishing the third Wednesday of the month as the regular meeting day with no meetings during Lent (Feb. & March). In addition, the committee determined that of the ten annual meetings, three would be outings – spring, summer, fall.

Meetings that took place since September are as follows:

September: “What’s Happening In the village in Wauwatosa?” – Speakers: Melissa Weiss & Paulette Enders from the City of Wauwatosa

October: “Remembering Martin Luther in 2017: Promise and Problems” – Speaker: Mickey Mattox

November: “Stars and Stripes Honor Flight” – Speaker: Kent Rice

December: Annual Christmas Potluck – Entertainment provided by Annette Olson portraying Katherine Luther and the Barcel Suzuki String Academy

Average monthly attendance was approximately 55 persons.

The SAINTS also collaborated with the Fellowship Committee to screen the movie “Martin Luther: The Idea That Changed the World” on a Sunday afternoon. Attendance was approximately 60 persons.

For the January 2018 meeting, we welcomed St. Matthew’s member Dennis McBride who gave a presentation entitled “The Irish in Wauwatosa and Milwaukee.” The Steering Committee also met in January to select the topics and outings for the remainder of 2018.

Julia Murphy  
Older Adult Ministry Coordinator

## Social Ministry Committee

*“Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comforts we ourselves receive from God.” 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4*

During 2017, the Social Ministry Team hosted a number of events to build understanding and compassion with our neighbors.

The Social Ministry Team began the year by hosting an issues night to identify social justice issues and efforts for 2017. This resulted in the following actions:

In January, members of the Social Ministry team participated in an Interfaith press conference held at the Milwaukee Muslim Women’s Coalition to speak out against the immigrant ban. This ban trapped several immigrants who were waiting to be resettled by Lutheran Social Services.

In the spring, we held a showing of the film “53206.” This film brought us a greater understanding of the physical, mental and emotional struggles faced daily by our neighbors in Milwaukee’s poorest areas. We explored the high level of incarceration of young men of color from these neighborhoods. As a result, the members of the team met with Mark Thompson, pastor of Breaking the Chains to strengthen St. Matthew’s involvement in the prison ministry. Several members of St. Matthew’s have already completed the application to participate in the Saturday worship services.

During the summer, we held a six-week study of Islam. Over 50 members participated in this study. The study concluded with a visit to the Islamic Society of Milwaukee West Mosque in Brookfield. This study brought a new understanding and appreciation of our Muslim neighbors.

This fall, several St. Matthew’s members attended the Milwaukee Rep’s performance of “The Who and The What,” which explored the struggles faced by our Muslim neighbors as they adjust to life in the United States.

Finally, St. Matthew’s received a grant from the Zeidler Foundation to explore the church’s role in a society unsettled by political divisiveness. The first two listening sessions were held in November and January and the third will be held in February. These listening sessions will help guide both the Social Ministry team and Council in discerning the church’s role in society.

In June, we held our first “In Town Adult Mission Trip” to coincide with the Youth Mission Trip. We used this week to participate in a variety of service opportunities, including food sorting for Tosa Cares, an evening work session at Just One More Meal ministry and preparing and packing hot meals for the homeless in Milwaukee, to be delivered by Street Angels. The service week concluded with a joint picnic with members from Reformation.

Further, Tom Geib continued to head our biweekly Repairers of the Breach sandwich preparation and monthly Cross meals.

Our Care for Creation efforts included:

Matching funds for Alice’s Garden. This helped Alice’s Garden to secure funding from the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District for surface water reclamation. As Alice’s works to implement the water reclamation program, volunteers will be requested to help.

Once again, we held a Better Earth clothing recycling drive. We filled 3 bins with items to be recycled.

The film “A Farmer’s Road” was shown during Adult Education in April. It followed farmers involved in sustainable agriculture.

St. Matthew’s, with the help of Thrivent, bought and planted four fruit trees at the Cross garden plot.

Finally, the members of St. Matthew’s once again showed that we are an amazing, generous and compassionate congregation. Our Undie Sunday and Giving Tree drives were very successful, with over 800 pieces of men’s and women’s underwear and 400 gifts for Cross, Reformation, Tosa Interfaith and Meta House donated. We provided funds for the Greater Milwaukee Synod’s Outreach for Hope, through our Lenten offerings and targeted fundraising. We provided funds for medical equipment for a Tanzania hospital and scholarships for students in both Tanzania and El Salvador. But most importantly, our members responded to the overwhelming number of natural disasters this year, by donating close to \$30,000 to Lutheran Disaster Relief. We are deeply blessed by our capacity to help our neighbors.

As we begin 2018, I would like to thank Pr. Matt Kruse-Schlake for his insight, passion and guidance. He is truly a blessing to us all. I would like to close with the words from 1 Peter 4:8:  
*“Finally all of you, be like minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.”*

Darla M. Hium  
Social Ministry Chairperson

### **MICAH (Milwaukee Innercity Congregations Allied for Hope)**

*“But those who wait (hope) for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount upon wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”  
Holy Bible, Isaiah 40:31*

*“...After a difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief.” The Holy Quran, 65:7*

*“The secret of our success is that we never, never give up.” Wilma Mankiller*

*“...History has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own.” Michelle Obama*

*“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Hope is necessary.

These words of hope and encouragement come from our faith journeys and from amazing activists who have worked, and continue to work, to change the world into a place where all are respected, cared for, and well. But the words coming from our radios, televisions, computers, and other news feeds today are too often deeply despairing and discouraging. Many times it feels as though we are in a bad dream, hoping to wake up. One has to become protective of one’s body, mind, spirit, and being in these turbulent and challenging times. I encourage you to keep some words of hope handy when you need to refuel for the struggle.

Within these words of hope is the acceptance that difficulty, bad experiences, and hard times are a part of life. What is also here is that one must be active in the process of going through the difficulty, and taking responsibility for the change to come. That is what we do through our work together in MICAH. It is not perfect work. Organizing is often messy, much like the work within our faith journeys. Many times we don't get it "right," but most work for transformation and transition is like this. I want to encourage everyone not to get stuck on expectations that can cause us to lose sight of our goals and tear down the Beloved Community. Instead, build it up.

Often times when we come together, people say we are preaching to the choir, but the choir needs to practice words of hope. Then, when we hit times like these, we can speak hope into the desolation that many may be feeling and experiencing today. After the election, many people were stunned and some even went into depression and anxiety. I think this was a wake-up call for many people.

Many have just gone along with the status quo as long as they had what they needed or wanted. They forgot about all the people who were suffering, or angry, or who could be influenced to do something drastically different because they, too, have been marginalized. The depth of our broken relationships has been revealed. The question is: Are we willing to continue standing up, hope and working for justice even in the face of adversity? I hope you say, along with us, a resounding "Yes!" - because hope is necessary to change the world.

Rev. Marilyn Miller, Pastor  
Lutheran Church of the Reformation  
President of the Board, MICAH

## Social Ministry - Mission Partnership Committee

### **Partnership Report—Cross Lutheran Church**

2017 marked another strong year of service, partnership, and advocacy between members of St. Matthew's and Cross Lutheran Church in Milwaukee.

I am grateful for the many volunteers who make and donate monthly lunch items, serve lunch each 4th Wednesday, volunteer in the Bread of Healing Clinic, and participate in cross-partner activities. Special thanks to Tom and Nancy Wilke, who are our primary couriers, Tom Geib and Larry Jurss, who coordinate the monthly meals, and the number of regular lunch servers who commit each month to serving.

2017's activities included a good turnout for the Cross Mardi Gras Fundraiser, with great line dancing and a delicious meal, a successful picnic with all of the suburban partners in August, and a desire to schedule more social events between members of both churches in the near future. Watch the Voice for more information.

One of this year's highlights was the mutual day of Tree planting we shared in October. Wyatt Meyer, the new Food Justice Intern, was of great help in procuring 4 fruit trees to grow alongside raised garden beds adjacent to the church parking lot.

2018 looks to be a busy year, with the completion of a mural outside Cross, continued attempts to re-vamp and re-organize the tutoring program, increased health work through the clinic, and fundraising to purchase a new handicap-accessible van for the congregation. The need for food pantry funding and items continues to be supportive, but always is a challenge!

We will also join together for an afternoon at the Rep in April for a play about the Ferguson, MO, crisis between citizens and police, and look for other ways to connect through worship and ministries.

### **Partnership Report—Reformation Lutheran Church, Milwaukee**

Reformation continues to do ministry from a storefront at 3806 W. Lisbon Avenue that they have rented from United Methodist Children's Services of WI, Inc. Their Neighborhood Store serves the needs of the surrounding neighborhood, particularly with items for the home and items for children. Under the leadership of Thaurra Stallings, Reformation puts on "Baby Fairs" several times a year to support young parents. These events are anchored by the presentation of safe-sleep information. St. Matthew's supports these events through donation of items for gift bags and prizes, and this year, a group of women from St. Matthew's attended the fair.

The SALT (Serving And Learning Together) program for neighborhood youth has been a foundation of Reformation's neighborhood ministry for years, and it continued last summer at Reformation's new location, led by Pastor Marilyn Miller and Thaurra Stallings.

Last summer, Thaurra Stallings, youth director and neighborhood minister at Reformation, made her 8th mission trip with us, bringing three youth from Reformation. This tradition has been a gift to both congregations and will continue this summer when Thaurra will be accompanied by four Reformation students on our mission trip to New Jersey.

A special thanks to Gordon Moehling, Pastor Ed Weiskotten, Jill Hughes, Larry Jurss, Tim Greene and Mark Young from St. Matthew's for their time contributions to Reformation.

### **Partnership Report—El Salvador**

Our relationship with the Lutheran church in El Salvador, which began almost 10 years ago, continues to evolve. The church in El Salvador tirelessly serves as the hands and voice of Jesus in the world, working with the poor, advocating for peace, establishing economic development initiatives for struggling communities. The church is passionate about walking with the poor, intentionally planting itself in poor communities and working on initiatives to alleviate hunger, promote education, and advocate change. It is a small, but active church, and it is a blessing to serve with them.

We work with the church in various capacities, supporting shipments of nutritionally fortified food for distribution to poor communities and supporting their children's education programs through teacher trainings.

Through the Kingdom Account, St. Matthew's also supports a children's home, Fundación Exodo, which we visit during our annual trips to El Salvador.

As a congregation, we also look to meet the needs of Salvadorans who find it necessary to leave their home because of violence or lack of economic activity. We are designated a Welcoming Congregation of the ELCA, which means that we offer our prayers and spiritual support as well as a church home to recent immigrants who might be introduced to us by a letter from Bishop Gomez, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in El Salvador.

Because of the congregational trip to Tanzania in January to celebrate the installation of Pastor Elias Kitoi as bishop, there was no trip to El Salvador in January. The 2018 trip is taking place January 9-18, with 11 St. Matthew's members traveling to San Salvador.

### **Partnership Report - Tanzania**

We continue to seek ways to partner with our brothers and sisters in Tanzania. This partnership continues to support over 20 secondary education scholarships. Education has been a cornerstone of our ministry together. These scholarships are supporting smart kids who normally wouldn't have the opportunity to further their education due to family financial problems.

Also, through our financial gifts towards their general ministry support, Sing'isi used this money to construct a new internet cafe on the church's property. This new cafe will function as a good place for the community to congregate as well as an income stream for the church through renting time on the church's internet lines, and by paying for food that will be sold there. We persist in our mutual conversation about ways to partner together and support the ministry that we share in together.

In January (2017), 6 of us from St. Matthew's and nearly 20 people from the Milwaukee area, went to Tanzania for the installation of their new Bishop. Pastor Elias Kitoi, who served on staff at St. Matthew's nearly 10 years ago, was elected by a 77% first vote to become their new bishop. He became the second bishop in their nearly 25 year history. The celebration was monumental with thousands of people attending. We were thrilled to be with him on during this special time and enjoyed seeing our partners at Sing'isi Lutheran once again for a continued deepening of our relationship together.

Our partnership with Sing'isi Lutheran in the Meru Diocese continues to be strong, with regular email communications and exchange of information and concerns. The new communication tool this year has become Facebook. For some reason, Facebook has taken off with a vengeance in Tanzania and our communicating back and forth has never been more active, often with daily greetings and sharing of ministry successes and sorrows. This has been a great tool to add to our communications methods.

St. Matthew's also continues to host the monthly Greater Milwaukee Synod Meru Committee meeting on the 2nd Saturday of each month, which meets to discuss the many partner relationships that Milwaukee congregations have with churches in the Meru diocese. These meetings are always well attended with often 30 people or more from Milwaukee sharing news about their congregational partnerships and various projects they are supporting.

With regular prayer, we continue to think about our partners and walk with them in ministry as they reach out to those who struggle with poverty. We also continue to send financial support to Sing'isi to help them with their work. This partnership is something that continues to grow and flourish with God's support. Thanks for your support as well in the valuable work we are doing together. Asante sana, Yesu! (Thank you very much, Jesus)

Gretchen Haugse  
Pastor Chris Manke, Pastor Matt Schlake-Kruse

## Stewardship Committee

I would like to thank the members of St Matthew's for their participation in this year's campaign process and their ongoing support of the various ministries and activities at St. Matthew's. We are very lucky to have such a generous and engaged congregation.

The 2017 Fall Stewardship Campaign used the theme, 'Forward in Faith,' where the support, resources, and participation in our ministries enables us to grow as disciples and to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in the world.

As of December 31, 2017, the church office has received packets from 283 of the 680 giving units (42%). Of the 283 giving units that have returned packets, 96% have pledged a commitment to the General Fund for 2018. The pledged commitments to the General Fund for 2018 total \$635,921.

In addition to the annual Stewardship Campaign, we continue to make progress on the Debt Retirement Fund, paying down our existing note, provide for maintenance and capital improvements, and provide for future ministries. This is a 3 year appeal. It began on June 1, 2016 and will run through May 31, 2019. To date 273 giving units have pledged to the Debt Retirement Appeal.

Participation in the Simply Giving program continues to increase. Simply Giving is the automatic payment plan administered through Vanco Payment Solutions. 225 giving units are now enrolled in the Simply Giving program. This is significant in that increased utilization of Simply Giving helps to manage the budgeting and payment of church expenses, particularly during periods of the year when attendance is lower.

The success of the stewardship campaign relies on the effort of the route captains, volunteers and the members of the Stewardship Committee, comprised of Andy Cherney, Don Heinz, Peggy Heuler and myself (and continued partnership and assistance of Curt Brewer, Jen Kramer and Sonja Mohr). I would like to thank all of these individuals for their efforts in making this critical undertaking a success for St. Matthew's!

Ryan Engelhardt  
Stewardship Committee Chairperson

## Women's Ministry

Activities and events sponsored by St Matthew's Women's Ministry seek to encourage women in their faith walk and grow closer to one another through study of the word, fellowship with one another and service that proclaims the love of Christ working in and through us.

St. Matthew's Women's Ministry is vibrant and life-giving because of all the women who share their time, ideas and many gifts throughout the year.

Events in 2017 included:

*February*

"Finding I AM" Women's Bible Study

Women's Wellness Morning with keynote, Donna Schumell and breakout speakers Katrina Ubell, Lydia Johnson, Sheri Bauer and Eva Wiegman

*Ongoing*

Creative Spirit Crafting Group (Spring 2017 only)

Quilting Ministry led by Bev Etzelmueller

*April*

Women Together in Prayer continued its ministry of matching women and prayer partners and hosting an annual celebration breakfast. Our guest speaker was Sandy Cristan; St. Matthew's member and avid quilter.

Children's Clothing Swap coordinated by Sarah Scheiber.

*October*

"Uninvited" Women's Bible Study

*November*

Apple Pie Making, coordinated by Heather Deaton and her family, made over 100 apple pies to support women's ministry.

The Toy Swap, coordinated by Linda Wunderlich, took place in November, promoting sustainability through donation and trading of children's toys.

Sue Swing/Pastor Ann Williams  
Coordinator of Women's Ministries

## Worship & Music Ministry

We are truly a blessed congregation with many diverse people with diverse talents working together for a common goal of praising our Lord. Through our focused worship, based on the 3-year Lectionary cycle, our services, with music and word, reflect the saving grace so freely given by our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Our graded choir program is an excellent way to grow in faith and spirit through God's gift of music with singers, ringers, and instrumentalists all sharing their talents.

Creating an atmosphere of praise the Worship and Music team decorated the Sanctuary, Commons, entrances, and more for Easter, Christmas, and other occasions. The large decorating events provide a multi-generational serving experience for St. Matthew's members and friends. In total, approximately 50 volunteers helped with these tasks throughout the year. The focus of decorating is to deepen the worship experience through visual symbols of Christ's grace and light. The Sunday School children's participation by providing various visual art projects also enhance the seasons and provides them the opportunity to participate in the "life" of the congregation in a meaningful way.

Special thanks to the many members and friends who give their time and talents to create an atmosphere of joyful worship at St. Matthew's! A very sincere thanks to John Paradowski, Minister of Music, and the music staff of David Mohr, Jeff Reeves, Heide Hughes, and Amy Dankwardt along with all the music volunteers for all their continued leadership and guidance, and their dedication to the worship and music experience at St. Matthew's.

### ***Music Ministry***

Praise Kids! continues to be a great musical start for our youngest singers. Jeff Reeves and Amy Dankwardt direct. We thank Maya Smith and John Paradowski for their volunteer assistance every week with this choir, as well as the many parents who help the young ones find their place. Praise Kids! is a program that continues to be an excellent beginning for religious and musical training for our very young ones. Praise Kids! is divided into two groups; 4-5 year olds and 1st - 2nd graders. Each group meets separately and engages in age appropriate music and activities. Praise Kids! nurtures musical growth, spiritual growth, an understanding of self and others, and a relationship with God.

The New Creation Choir is always a welcome addition to our worship services. The New Creation choir is guided by Jeff Reeves and John Paradowski as co-directors with Heide Hughes at the Piano and Dara Greene as volunteer helper. Each year we welcome the addition of a biblical story musical the choir presents to the congregation. Last April the choir shared the story of Jesus being “lost” in the temple. This year the choir will participate in the Passion Scenes and the Christmas Pageant.

The New Generation Choir is directed by John Paradowski. This youth group of about 20 singers is for 7th through 12 grade. They rehearse, talk, sing, laugh, and have fun learning music to share in worship during the school year. They sing in worship about once a month. This choir will serve as the main cast for the Passion Scenes and the Christmas Pageant in 2018.

The Senior Choir continues to be a strong foundation of our program, directed by David Mohr. The choir is blessed with many talented and devoted singers in the group, which sings for about 45 Sundays during the year, alternating between the 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. services. They also sing for other church services including Thanksgiving Eve, Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday and Holy Week. The choir currently numbers around 45 members, and is always looking for other interested singers to join them. We thank them for their dedication and commitment to the Music Ministry at St. Matthew’s.

The Handbell Choir program continues to be a strong draw this year involving over 55 youth and adults that regularly play for worship services. The choirs include: Godsbells, (a group of 4th through 6th grade children ringing Chimes) Righteous Ringers, (Middle and High School age youth) Bells Angels, (Adult group) A Cabella Ringers, (4 ringers using special ringing techniques and ringing advanced music) and The EmbELLishments (daytime handbell choir). The Handbell program has grown to be a strong part of our music ministry and is a beautiful addition to the music ministry. The various groups are directed by John Paradowski (Adults) and Jeff Reeves (Children & Youth).

This congregation also has many individuals who have shared their musical talent, vocal and instrumental, with the congregation in an ongoing basis all year. We thank them all for sharing their God given talents with all of us. The notes and words we share are an integral part of the worshipping community, proclaiming God’s message through music.

St. Matthew’s has always been known for sharing its gifts of music with the community and is a great place to invite people in and let them hear God’s glorious gift of music. We will look forward in the new year to being a strong leader in helping proclaim the message of God’s love to the community through our events. We thank you for your support and encouragement to proclaim to Word.

### ***Additional Musical Events:***

2017 marked the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and St. Matthew’s participated in the musical celebration of this historical event in several ways. On October 1st St. Matthew’s was one of four Wauwatosa churches to host a variety of musical groups that performed simultaneously during the afternoon and early evening hours. The event was sponsored by the American Guild of Organists but St. Matthew’s served as the host congregation.

On October 31st many members of the St. Matthew's Senior Choir participated in a mass choir for a historic joint Reformation Service sponsored by the Greater Milwaukee Synod and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. The event was held at Ascension Lutheran Church with bishops from the two church bodies participating. John Paradowski participated as one of the guest organists for this standing room only event.

Marion Heinz  
Council Liaison for Worship and Music  
John Paradowski, Dave Mohr, Jeff Reeves,  
Amy Dankwardt, Heide Hughes; Music Staff

## Youth Ministry

Our goal is to make youth feel welcome and comfortable at St. Matthew's in the hope that they develop a sense of community and support from within our congregation and carry that sense of caring out into the world beyond our walls.

During the past year, our middle school youth enjoyed fellowship activities such as Capture the Flag night, ping pong tournaments, a kayaking outing, pumpkin carving and a visit to a corn maze and pumpkin farm. Additionally, students gather together on Wednesday evenings prior to confirmation for dinner and fellowship. About 30 students participated in the second annual middle school mission experience in March. The focus this year was inclusion and through meaningful activities and discussion, it provided students with a rich learning experience. The 2018 Mission experience will take place in the spring and explore the importance of caring for creation.

High school and middle school students jointly participated in the annual ski trip in February. The new destination of Granite Peak was a success and provided the group with fun and fellowship.

Drama Group provides another opportunity for middle and high school youth to work together. The group meets intermittently throughout the year to prepare and deliver skits during worship and other events about once every other month.

Several middle and high school students participated in service related events this past year. A few of the organizations benefitting from their assistance include Tosa Cares Food Pantry, Hunger Task Force, Cross Tutoring program and JOMM.

A record number of high school youth (65) participated in the summer mission trip to New Jersey. The trip was aimed at continued clean-up and rebuilding following the damage caused by Super Storm Sandy several years ago.

Youth Forum, held on Sunday mornings during the Education hour, provides an outlet for the high school youth to express and further develop their faith. The middle school youth meet with their grade level groups to continue their faith development through education, fellowship and service on Sunday mornings.

We are grateful for the Youth Committee members who have helped to plan and chaperone events this year: Kristin Hanson, Carri Brewer, Kristen Charlson, Carly Crave, Laura Crave, Erin Fassbender, Brad Foley, Tara Laatsch, Ethan Wooster and Gretchen Haugse. We are always open to new ideas to build

and strengthen our youth program and encourage anyone interested in serving our youth to join our committee or chaperone events.

We thank Kristin Hanson for her leadership on this committee and for serving as the Youth Ministry representative on church council.

Finally, we'd like to thank the congregation for all of their support of the youth of St. Matthew's. Without all of your care, prayers, and financial support we would not be able to do the many things we do for and with our youth! Thank you!

Kristin Hanson, Youth Committee  
Gretchen Hauge, Director of Youth Ministry

## Comments on 2017 Financial Statements

St. Matthews members provided strong financial support, ending 2017 in a solid financial position. Total contributions were \$1,205,267, total expenses and benevolence disbursements were \$1,204,019 leaving a surplus of \$1248.

### 2017 Financial Highlights:

#### Benevolences

Designated benevolence disbursements totaled \$289,966 in 2017. Benevolence contributions were used to fund meal outreach programs; support partnership congregations in Milwaukee, El Salvador, and Tanzania; provide support to the Synod; and support the social ministry. In addition, due to unprecedented destruction from hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, the congregation generously contributed more than \$38,000 to Lutheran Disaster Relief.

#### Ministry and Operations

General contributions for ministry and operations were lower than budget by approximately \$26,000. Despite the lower level of contributions, Sunday worship, Sunday school, the music ministry, youth ministry, adult forums, small groups, women's and men's ministries, Saints, VBS, mission trips, technology were not negatively impacted thanks to budget management by St. Matthew's pastors and staff.

#### Property Fund

For 2017, building appeal contributions totaled \$295,966. Total expenses for principal and interest payments, roof replacement, door replacements and other improvements were \$466,434. Although expenses exceeded contributions, no borrowing was needed due to building fund reserves; all capital replacements were paid by cash. The year-end balance in the building appeal fund account is \$77,267. The mortgage liability at 2017 year-end was \$396,446.

#### Finance Committee

Many thanks to the dedicated Finance Committee members: Curt Brewer, Dan Byrne, Andrew Cherney, Kelly Kirtley, Thad Murrach, Al Van Lith. Special thanks to the pastors and staff of St Matthew's for expense reduction efforts. Financial Administrator Jen Kramer deserves recognition for timely and accurate financial reporting. And, a special thank you to St. Matthew's Treasurer, Rob Wedel.

Karen Freiberg  
Chairperson, Finance Committee