



THE KEY

ST. MATTHEW'S PARISH

BEDFORD N.Y.



December

PARISH NEWS

2025

“O Come let us adore him...”

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

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

And so the meaning Christmas grows in depth and significance as we ourselves grow. The gifts become immaterial, and Santa is displaced by this holy child in a manger.

Do you remember that precious scene in Home Alone, when Kevin, on the run from home invaders, hides out in a church? It's there, sitting in a pew, that he first connects with his neighbor from across the street, an elderly man who has become estranged from his adult son and has no family to spend Christmas with. Kevin, likewise, is missing his family and confesses that he hasn't been all that "good" this year. To the boy's surprise, the old man responds: "Well then, this is the place you want to be if you're feeling bad about yourself." Christmas at its core is not just for good little boys and girls, it's for the naughty and disappointed sides of ourselves too. It's the time of year when God comes to us in all humility, with love in his heart (a.k.a., "good will toward men") and a special place for every single one of us, be we Tiny Tim, Scrooge, or somewhere in-between.

May God bless us all, every one! Merry Advent,

St. Matthew's Christmas Wish Tree

TAKE A STAR FROM THE WISH TREE AND BRIGHTEN CHRISTMAS FOR A CHILD AT HOPE'S DOOR OR AN ADULT AT BEDFORD CORRECTIONAL FACILITY OR A-HOME.
PLEASE RETURN STARS WITH YOUR GIFT CARD OR GIFT
BY SUNDAY, DEC. 14

‘Tis the Christmas Season at St. Matthew’s

First Sun. of Advent, Nov. 30

8 a.m.	Holy Eucharist, Rite II
10 a.m.	Holy Eucharist, Rite I
5 p.m.	Evening Prayer
Mon., Dec. 1	9:30 a.m. Women's Bible Study
Wed., Dec. 3	10:15 a.m. Holy Eucharist 11 a.m. Bible Study
Thurs., Dec. 4	6-8 p.m. Wreath Making Workshop
Fri., Dec. 5	5 - 6:30 p.m. Family Tree and Wreath Pre-sale Cider and Cocoa
Sat., Dec. 6	9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Tree and Wreath Sale

Second Sun. of Advent, Dec. 7

8 a.m.	Holy Eucharist, Rite II
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Tree and Wreath Sale
10 a.m.	Lessons & Carols
11:15 a.m.	Christmas Brunch
5 p.m.	Evening Prayer
Mon., Dec. 8	9:30 a.m. Women's Bible Study
Wed., Dec. 11	10:15 a.m. Holy Eucharist 11 a.m. Bible Study

Third Sun. of Advent, Dec. 14

8 a.m.	Holy Eucharist, Rite II
10 a.m.	Christmas Pageant
11:15 a.m.	Children's Christmas Coffee Hour
4-5 p.m.	Youth Group Christmas Party
5 p.m.	Evening Prayer
Mon., Dec. 15	9:30 a.m. Women's Bible Study
Wed., Dec. 17	10:15 a.m. Holy Eucharist 11 a.m. Bible Study
Sat., Dec. 20	7:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast

Fourth Sun. of Advent, Dec. 21

8 a.m.	Holy Eucharist
10 a.m.	Morning Prayer & Messiah Excerpts
5 p.m.	Evening Prayer
5:30 p.m.	St. Mary's Christmas Service

Christmas Eve, Dec. 24

4 p.m.	Manger Service with Children's Homily
6 p.m.	Manger Service with Sermon
9:30 p.m.	Preservice Music Concert
10 p.m.	Festival Holy Eucharist

Christmas Day, Dec. 25

10 a.m.	Holy Eucharist
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Preschool

The holidays are a joyous time at St. Matthew's Preschool. In preparation for Thanksgiving, classrooms were abuzz with "turkey" projects. The children turned everything from handprints to paper towel holders, to paper bags into adorable turkey crafts. From the two's to the four's, children practiced their scissor skills as they steadily "chomp, chomped" through bright colored paper creating piles of turkey feathers. In one classroom, the children used both fine and gross motor skills as they maneuvered around, spying bright colored pieces of tape to fill in the feathers on their giant classroom turkey. When you visit SMP, you will quickly discover that small children know a plethora of Thanksgiving songs and poems, "In Albuquerque there's a turkey, and he's feathered and he's fine..."



In the beginning of December, holiday joy will be shifting to Christmas. The children will be turning from turkeys to sparkly trees, wreathes, Santa Clauses and stockings. Each classroom will be full of secrets and surprises, with creations of special holiday gifts. Holiday songs will be heard throughout the school as the children get ready for their December Family Chapel and their performance.

The Preschool children and teachers wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year when we all come back full of joy and anticipation for new adventures in learning and play.

Liz Peck, Director

Family Pre-Sale Kickoff
Fri., Dec. 5: 5-6:30 p.m.
With festive drinks, cocoa, and
first dibs on trees



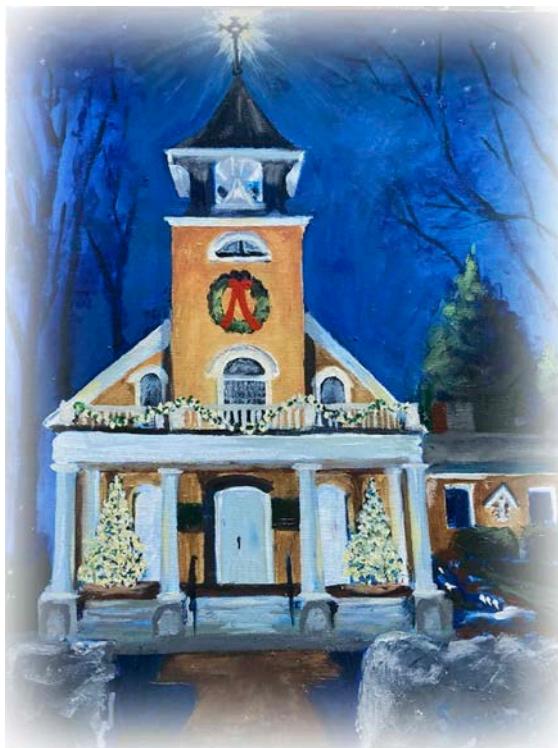
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE & WREATH SALE

Tree Sale
Sat., Dec. 6: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Sun., Dec. 7: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Stewardship

Just a reminder that we are in the midst of Stewardship Season. Thank you to all who have made a 2026 Pledge-we are so grateful for your continued support of our beloved St. Matthew's. We hope that those who have not yet pledged will join fellow parishioners in making their pledge before year's end. Your contribution, no matter the size, supports the cherished mission of St. Matthew's "to know Christ and make him known", our beautiful church, its grounds, our inspiring clergy, dedicated staff, our outreach and committee work and fabulous events.

Link to Stewardship Video: <https://vimeo.com/1039674083?fl=tl&fe=ec>



A Joyous Time at Church School

Saints of God!

On Nov. 1, the children paraded through the church, led by Rev. Rossi in a tradition of waving flags of the saints during "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God." This year, the singing was led by our brand-new Children's Choir. The children also got an opportunity to sharpen their skills as saints of God by contributing Thanksgiving cards to the Ingathering bags which are filled with Thanksgiving dinner makings for those in need. November was a month to be thankful for our blessings and for God's love.



Christmastime is here!

The annual Children's Christmas Pageant is right around the corner. On Dec. 14, the story of Christmas will come alive before our eyes, as told by readers and Christmas carols. Angels, animals of the fields and barn are joined by shepherds and the wise men to come adore that mother and babe in the manger. We hope all children will come and be part of this joyous story. See the weekly Youth & Families Newsletter for more info! A big Thank You to Tara Deeks for taking the lead on organizing this beloved event. Following the Pageant, come to the Fellowship Room for a special Children's Christmas Coffee Hour.

The Christmas Eve Manger Service (with children's homily) is at 4 p.m. All families are invited and encouraged to attend! Services are also held at 6 p.m. (Manger Service with Sermon) and at 10 p.m., with a pre-service musical concert at 9:30 p.m.

Please reach out to me with any questions!

Melissa Torres, Children's Ministry Coordinator



St. Mary's Traditional Service

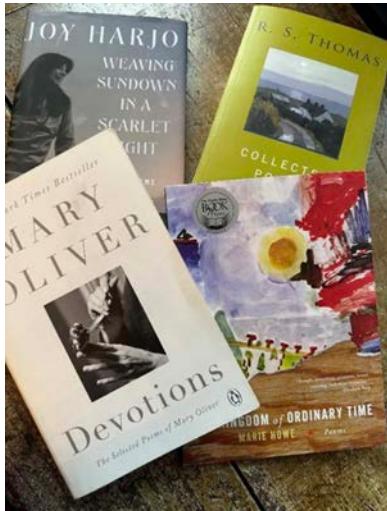
Please join us at St. Mary's Church on Tues, Dec. 23 at 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.. for our annual joyous Christmas service with Rev. Merle McJunkin of Antioch Baptist Church presiding. Festive music will be performed by James Farley, Antioch Director of Music, and members of Antioch's glorious choir.



Women of St. Matthew's

Fireside Poetry

This November marked the third year of Fireside Poetry! A group of women came together to enjoy an intimate evening by the fire of conversation with poems centered around November's theme of silence and grace. Friends were made and friendships deepened with faith-centered conversations. Poems by Mary Oliver, R.S. Thomas, Mary Howe, and a version of the St. Ignatius's Prayer by Alice Courtright were discussed



Bedford Harmony Family Concert by the Celestia Trio

On Nov. 15, the Fellowship Room was filled with the beautiful music of the Bedford Harmony Trio. The mission of the trio is to perform short classical concerts as a gift to the community on Saturday afternoons. The concert included works by Brahms, Telemann, Bach and Handel. Heymin Song, the pianist, and Jennifer Buschmann, the violinist, are both local music teachers whose love of teaching shone through, making the music dramatically approachable and engaging to the children. Deanna MacLean, a flutist, rounded out the trio. As one mother in the audience shared, "Thank you so much for the love you are giving our community with these free family concerts."



Convention of the Diocese of New York

On Sat., Nov. 15, Rector John Zahl, Senior Warden John Walker, and Clerk Bill Fagan participated as delegates to the 249th annual convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York at The Cathedral Church St. John the Divine.

In addition to voting to fill various positions and approving the budget for 2026, the convention adopted the biggest changes to the finances of the Diocese in forty years. For fifteen months, the Diocese has worked towards a revised financial plan that is fair, equitable, and sustainable across all 172 congregations. St. Matthew's Treasurer and Diocesan Trustee, Mary Farley, played a key role in this financial reform process. More than 80% of clergy and lay delegates from congregations voted to approve these reforms. The delegates also nearly unanimously voted to forgive arrearages from past apportioned shares. The new "common mission share" includes two levels—1% for congregations with expenses below \$250,000 and 5.75% for congregations with expenses of \$250,000 and above. About half of the Diocese's congregations fall into one category and half fall into the other. The reforms will help stabilize finances for congregations. With the new formula, 90% of congregations, including St. Matthew's Church, will experience financial relief, paying less to the Diocese under the new common mission share formula than under the past apportioned share formula.



Upcoming Events in December

The WSM would love for you to join us in upcoming Christmas events. To join for an evening of Wreath Making on Dec. 4, please RSVP. To help the Women of St. Matthew's host the Christmas Brunch, please sign up to volunteer!



A Note from Our Pilgrimage

With so many amazing memories of our pilgrimage to England – old, beautiful churches and majestic cathedrals (not the least of course is Canterbury Cathedral), beautiful gardens and castles, charming English towns, Cambridge University – there is a little church that particularly comes to mind's eye at this time of year. Built around 1200 in Romney Marsh, it was named after St. Thomas Becket. It still has no electricity or heat, is in the middle of a bog reachable only on foot through grazing sheep, and yet it still holds services – one Sunday a month even through the winter. Of architectural interest, it has triple decker pulpit and high box pews making it feel somewhat familiar to us at St. Matthew's. As we look forward to Christmas, it is easy to imagine how Christmas out in the country must have been celebrated so many years ago in England, and yet still be very relatable to us over a thousand years later in Bedford.

We look forward to sharing slides from our pilgrimage with the parish in the new year.



Men's Hike

The turnout could have been better for the Men's Hike, but the weather was perfect for the outing.



Christmas Memorial Poinsettias



Donation envelopes are available in Sunday bulletins and at the Parish House, or you can [give online here](#). Please make your donation by Mon., Dec. 15th to have your loved ones' names in the Christmas bulletin.



*The Women of St. Matthew's
Cordially invite you to*

The Annual Parish Christmas Brunch

Sunday, December 7th, 2025

Following the 10:00 Advent Service



Mattsgiving

The Youth Group celebrated its very first Mattsgiving together by pulling together an entire Thanksgiving meal including stuffing, mashed potatoes, green bean casserole, mac and cheese, and rotisserie chicken, in under an hour. It was a wonderful and festive time and capped off by the sharing those things for which we are grateful to God with one another. We'll gather next for a Christmas party in December!



Ushers Learn CPR and emergency procedures

It's reassuring to know that a group of our ushers have been trained to better respond to medical emergencies in church. Thank you Bill Fagan, our head usher, for organizing.



Our Giving Parish

We had a record number of Ingathering bags returned! Thank you all and many thanks to the committee and all who organized the effort.



Comings & Goings

New & Returning Parishioners:

John and Amy Keeler
52 Girdle Ridge Dr.
Katonah, NY 10536

Charles Miller & Christina van Hengel
410 Old Church Rd.
Greenwich, CT 06830

Theodore & Eddy Bunzel
117A E. 65th Street
New York, NY 10065

Chris & Katie Brouwer
288 Greenwich Rd.
Bedford, NY 10506

Matthew Andrews & Amanda Thurston
55 Chapel Road
Waccabuc, NY 10597

Holy Baptism *Received into Christ's Holy Church*

Daphne Peek Tochilin, November 2, 2005

Margaret Elliott Brouwer, November 30, 2025

Frances Ann Brouwer, November 30, 2025

Lucy Jean Brouwer, November 30, 2025