



THE KEY

ST. MATTHEW'S PARISH

BEDFORD N.Y.



September

P A R I S H N E W S

2025

Dear St. Matthew's,

I'm back after a wonderful three-month sabbatical. We visited 20 cities in Europe and Asia, and Johnny (at 9 months old) has now been to 15 countries. Sara Beth and I will offer a presentation about our time away with lots of photos at Coffee Hour on Sept. 14.

The time was not without its curve-balls as Sara Beth's mom, Fran, died in the middle of our trip. I preached her funeral on June 27 at First Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa. Many of you knew her, and she loved St. Matthew's.

The vestry and staff, plus Matt Ross, Pierce Klemmt and my father, Paul Zahl, did a fantastic job of holding down the fort in my absence, and I'm most grateful for their efforts. It was a comfort to know that St. Matthew's was in such capable hands while I was away. I know that Matt Rossi has already gotten to know many of you, but I speak for many of us in sharing my excitement for his ministry among us as he spreads his wings in the coming years.

And, likewise, I hope that you heard the news already about our fabulous new Director of Music, Jacob Gruss. His first Sunday at the organ will be Sept. 7. I believe that music can create a bridge between heaven and earth. I look forward to experiencing his immense musical gifts as he grows our music program. Please welcome him warmly as I know you will.

As I enter my seventh year, and following three-months of rejuvenation, I'm excited for this new chapter at St. Matthew's with Matt and Jacob. We have lots of good things in store as this issue of The Key makes clear. Please try to join us as much as you can this fall. I promise it will be worth your while. May God bless us and keep us in his loving care always.

Grace & Peace,



Welcome to Our New Music Director

Sun. Sept 7 will be a very special day for St. Matthew's. Not only does our Church School year start, but the parish will get their first chance to meet and hear our new Music Director and organist Jacob Gruss! Heralded as a rising star in the world of organ performance, Gruss is a recent graduate of The Julliard School and Master's degree candidate at Yale University and Yale Divinity School in organ performance.

In announcing Gruss's appointment, John Zahl said, "The resounding impression from the committee is that God blessed their search and clearly guided us to call Jacob Gruss to be the next Director of Music. He will certainly build upon our strong tradition of lifting souls heavenward in worship."

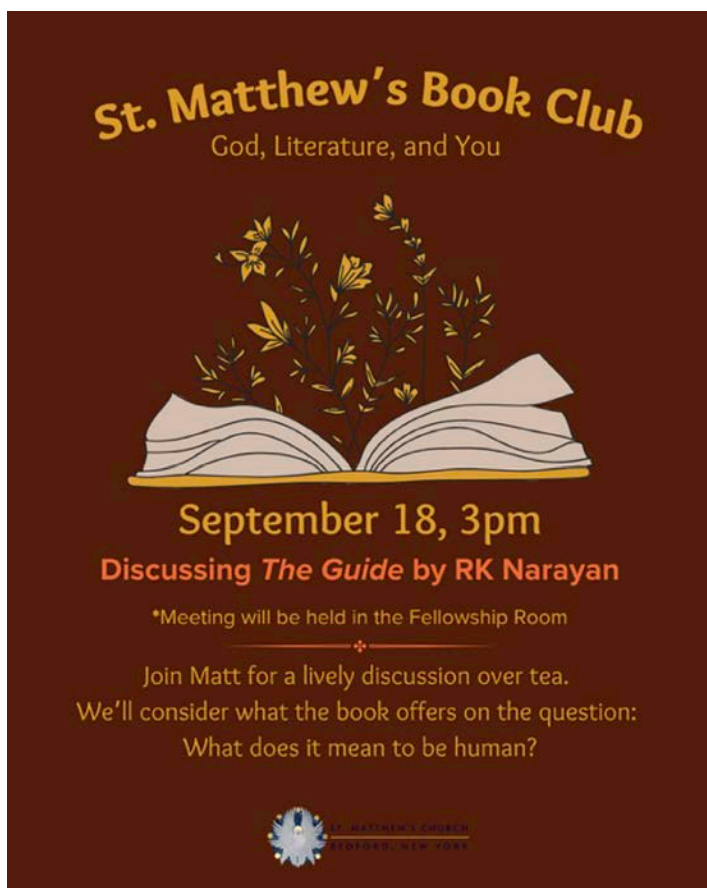
Most recently, Gruss served as the Organ Scholar at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, regularly performing with world-class orchestras and choirs. During his time in New York, Jacob boasted an impressive performance schedule in many of the city's renowned venues, including Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and David Geffen Hall.

He won the prestigious First Prize and Audience Choice in the 27th Annual Albert Schweitzer Young Professionals Competition (see note below). He also placed first in the Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra's Young Artist Competition, first in the Cassel Competition (Harrisburg, PA), and was a winner in the 2023 AGO Quimby Northeast Regional Organ Competition.

Gruss is looking forward to joining the St. Matthew's family, "I'm eager to meet everybody that's a part of the parish. I'm very excited to carry on Tony Newman's legacy and hopefully become an important part of St. Matthew's Sunday worship."



It is tradition that the winner of the Schweitzer Organ Competition comes back the following year to do a solo concert. As the winner last year, Gruss will be performing on Nov. 26 at 7:30 p.m. at the Trinity College Chapel in Hartford. The event is open to all. Circle the date, and let's go to hear Jacob!



Children's Programming Begins Sept. 7!

We are so excited for another year of Pre-Church and Church School with our children! If you haven't registered yet, please [click here](#).

We kick off our 2025-26 program at the 10 a.m. service in the church with the Blessing of the Backpacks and the annual group photo. After the children are given a backpack button and receive prayers from the parish, Pre-Church School children will walk to their classrooms in the Parish House for lessons and activities, and Church School Children will walk downstairs to the Church School classrooms for fun large group and small group time.

This year in Children's Ministry:

Nursery Care (Birth – age 3)

Loving staff and volunteers will greet your littles each week in room A-3. Drop off begins at 9:30 a.m. each week. You will sign in and grab a numbered tag that you will return for pick-up after service. Please bring any diapers, snacks or items your child may need while in our care.

Pre-Church School (ages 3 – 5 who are potty trained but not yet in Kindergarten)

With our Frolic curriculum, children will learn Bible stories through hands on play and interactive story telling. Once a month the Pre-Church School children will join the Church School children in the Children's Chapel for a worship experience to get them acclimated to that space and structure as well for when it's time for them to graduate into Church School.

Church School (Kindergarten through 5th Grade):

With our Holy Moly curriculum, we're excited to explore the Old and New Testaments this Church School year in interactive and engaging ways.

Each week children will experience the Bible story three ways:

1. An interactive Children's Chapel service including traditional worship and lessons from Rev. Matt, Ms. Torres or one of our small group leaders
2. A silent animated video, fun game and discussion together in Large Group
3. Through a scripture reading with prayer, reflection and interactive activities to reinforce the lesson in Small Group

Please reach out to me with any questions. I can't wait to see the children again on Sept. 7, Welcome Back Sunday – how much they have grown and flourished over the summer.

Melissa Torres, Children's Ministry Coordinator

Notes from Melissa and Church School:

Our teaching teams are still in need of eight shepherds! We are looking for monthly leaders, substitute leaders, youth helpers and musicians to complete our volunteer needs. If you're interested in learning more about these roles or ready to join the team for the 2025-26 school year, please let me know!

6th and 7th Graders!

We want to see you in the church service on Sundays!

Children's Chapel is a wonderful experience for the Church School children, but we are confident that our sixth and seventh graders are ready to join the congregation in our worship services on Sunday mornings. Baptized children are already full members of the church, and with Confirmation around the corner and the ability to participate in Youth Group, 6th grade is a great time to join the rest of the church and begin to learn the regular rhythms of mature Christian worship.

We think this move will be both more engaging and formative for our middle school students, and also allow us to target our teaching focus and methods on our younger Church School kids in a way that's more developmentally appropriate.

If middle schoolers want to remain connected to Church School they are welcome to continue to attend Children's Chapel as helpers with the younger kids if they are mature enough to do so. And, of course, we won't turn anyone away that really wants to attend. But we are shifting away from attempting to accommodate middle schoolers in Church School, and so parents and students should expect that, church school teaching will be below the developmental level of a middle schooler.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Matt or Melissa. We look forward to seeing middle schoolers in corporate worship on Sundays and at Youth Group on Sunday afternoons!



Getting Ready for a New Preschool Year

The month of August brings a flurry of activity with the anticipation of the start of another school year. We replaced the flooring in the three upstairs classrooms, and they are now sparkling and ready to welcome our two's and three's classes. The back stone steps were also re-pointed. On the "two's" side of the playground, we have added a firetruck structure with a slide and a wooden playhouse and picnic table for our little ones to enjoy. Teachers have been busy designing their bulletin boards, filling their classrooms with exciting materials, and meeting to work on their lessons plans for the first weeks. SMP officially opens its doors on Thurs., Sept 4.

This year, we welcome two new teachers. Maria-Elena Kieley, who will be in the Pre-K, is returning to teaching after spending a few years at home with her daughter. She comes to us with over 20 years of experience. Avery David, who will be in the 3's, graduated in 2023 from the University of Indiana with a degree in education. She has spent the past two years teaching at Sacred Heart in Greenwich. We have 53 students and are ready for a robust, fun-filled year of learning, exploring and making friends!

Liz Peck, Preschool Director

St. Matthew's Youth Group

Fall 2025 SCHEDULE

SEPT 14	Kickoff Party
SEPT 21	Meeting @ Church
OCT 5	Meeting @ Church
OCT 19	Orchard Outing
OCT 26	Haunted Hike
NOV 9	Meeting @ Church
NOV 23	Mattsgiving
DEC 14	Christmas Party

ALL MEETINGS AT 4PM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

YOUTH GROUP KICKOFF

grill-out (AND PARENT MIXER)

SEPT 14, 4-6 PM
IN THE SOUTH FIELD

FOOD AND GAMES FOR STUDENTS
INFO AND COCKTAIL HOUR FOR PARENTS

St. Matthew's HARVEST FESTIVAL

**SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 28TH AT 5 P.M.**

FOOD, TRACTOR PULL, GAMES & MORE!

Please bring an appetizer and/or a dessert to share!

Blessing of the Backpacks

**Sunday, Sept. 7
10 a.m. Service**



Come with your backpack; leave with a button for it!



Women of St. Matthew's Hosted Garden Gathering in July

Over 30 friends gathered for a delightful afternoon tea on the veranda of the Santomero home, Rabbit Hill. Denise, Camillo and their daughter Mason made us all feel relaxed and welcome. After tea, Denise led an extensive tour of the Rabbit Hill gardens and greenhouse.

Iced tea drinks, scones, and other treats were shared with new and old friends, as we came together on the hottest July afternoon in memory! Women brought friends new to our parish, neighbors stopped by, and St. Matthew's newest minister, Rev. Matt Rossi and his wife Haley joined us as well! The unflappable Mary and the Rev. Paul Zahl (in a crisp white suit) stopped by. The conversation and beautiful garden were so consuming that absolutely no one complained about the heat!



The Board of WSM would like to thank all whose efforts made this an afternoon to remember. We would also like to take a moment to thank all of our members who support St. Matthew's Church all year long — Coffee Hour, Christmas Brunch, the Parish Easter Egg Hunt, and so much more! It takes a village and we are grateful for your warm hearts and "can do" attitudes!

As we wandered about the property enjoying the views, gentle companionship, and the gardens — we were reminded of God's Grace at work in our lives and hearts.

For more information about the WSM, please contact us at WSM@stmatthewsbedford.org

Deanna MacLean and WSM Board

Don't Miss The Blessing of the Pets Oct. 5 – Chapel-in-the-Woods



St. Matthew's September Events		
Welcome Back Sunday	10 a.m.	Sun., Sept. 7
Blessing of the Backpacks		
First Day of Church School		
Coffee Hour: Jacob Gruss	11:15 a.m.	
Sunday Evening Service Resumes	5 p.m.	
Monday Bible Study Resumes	9:30 a.m.	Mon., Sept. 8
Wednesday Service Resumes followed by Bible Study	10:15 a.m. 11 a.m.	Wed., Sept. 10
Confirmation Information Meeting (students & parents)	3-4 p.m.	Sun., Sept. 14
Youth Group Kick-Off and Parent Mixer	4-6 p.m.	
Adult Ed: Understanding the Prayer Book	9-9:45 a.m.	Sundays Sept. 14-Oct. 19
St. Matthew's Book Club Meeting	3 p.m.	Thurs., Sept. 18
Harvest Festival	5-7 p.m.	Sun., Sept. 28

Wildflowers: Thanks to the Youth Group!

Do you remember this photo, from the June Key, of the Youth Group preparing the soil and planting seeds on right side of the driveway?



Now we can enjoy the results of their hard work. The wildflowers are blooming beautifully! Thank you to all who participated.



Learn about “The Pantry” St. Mary’s, Sun., Sept. 14

Trina Ward Fontaine, Executive Director of the Mt. Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry, will be the keynote speaker at St. Mary’s on Sept. 14 at 5:30 p.m. She will give an overview of its new mission and new name: It is now called The Pantry with a tagline “Nourishing Northern Westchester.” Her speech topic will be: “Love thy neighbor as thyself - who are the hungry among us?”

St. Matthew’s has a rich history with The Pantry with several parishioners working there on a regular basis, and four times a year, the church volunteers a larger group to assist in the food distribution.

Fontaine became Executive Director in January 2023. A graduate of Brown University, Trina started her career on Wall Street, first in mergers and acquisitions and syndicate equity at Merrill Lynch, followed by NASDAQ sales trading at Lehman Brothers, after completing her MBA from Columbia Business School. She has served on the Vestry of St. Stephens Episcopal Church in Armonk, is involved in its mission and outreach committee

With a rich 33-year history, The Pantry is the only weekly choice food pantry available. Through its thrice weekly in-person and bi-weekly home delivery distributions, it nourishes over 2,000 individuals every week and fed over 118,282 people in 2024.



Fontaine

Important Restoration Work at St. Mary’s

Critical restoration work is nearly complete to preserve St. Mary’s Church for future generations. The project is being funded by a substantial grant from St. Matthew’s Bedell Fund, generous support from St. Mary’s Vestry, and community contributions. St. Mary’s Church is operated and maintained by volunteers and supported entirely by donations.

Beauty in Simplicity

Constructed by farmers in 1853, St. Mary’s hand-hewn timber frame, white-painted wood clapboard, dry-laid fieldstone foundation, belfry and magnificent full-height double-hung wood windows portray beauty in simplicity. Over its 171-year history of continual use, alterations made to the building are minimal. Running water and plumbing have never been installed.

Restoration Project

The project kicked off in Fall 2023 with reconstruction of the fieldstone foundation walls, which were breaking apart and collapsing inward. A team of masons used hydraulic jacks to temporarily shore up the church so they could dismantle and rebuild the walls in sections. They rebuilt the inboard walls using cement while retaining the historic exterior appearance of the dry-laid fieldstone. Original hand-hewn floor joists were fortified with new underpinnings installed on new hand-dug concrete footings.

In Summer 2024, scaffolding was constructed around the belfry so carpenters could replace its rotted clapboard siding and railings and install a new copper roof. The church’s deteriorated asphalt roof was replaced with a new cedar roof to match original wood roof shingles discovered under layers of modern roofing, and the clapboard facades and window shutters were repaired and painted. In Spring 2025, the plaster ceiling and walls, severely damaged by leaks, were restored and the interior was painted. St. Mary’s hosted several weddings in May and June with another in late-September. The project will culminate in Winter 2026 with restoration of the magnificent 20-over-20 double-hung wood windows and original glass panes, preserving the beloved church for generations to come.

Yea, Susannah!

Susannah Leighton, who has been leading our Monday Bible Study and will be assisting at the 5 p.m. Sunday Evening Prayer service, has been officially approved by Bishop Heyd to become a candidate for the vocational diaconate. It means that one of St. Matthew’s own is headed toward ordination. She has begun her training with the Diocese of New York. Susannah, this is wonderful news and we are so proud of you for embarking on this journey.





Blessing of HVAC

A Bedell grant to the Haitian Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan in the Bronx was recently recognized during a celebration of the Feast of the Good Samaritan, with steel drums, dancing in the aisles, and a sprinkle of holy water. It all took place on a 90-degree Sunday afternoon in the packed, standing-room only sanctuary where they were honoring their own Rev. Sam Owen on his final Sunday after 13 years of service as their Priest in Charge. Sam, who has spoken several times at St. Matthew's, is also the founder and director of the New York Haiti Project. He is moving on to be the Regional Canon for Westchester/Putnam Counties and Canon for Local and Global Organizing.

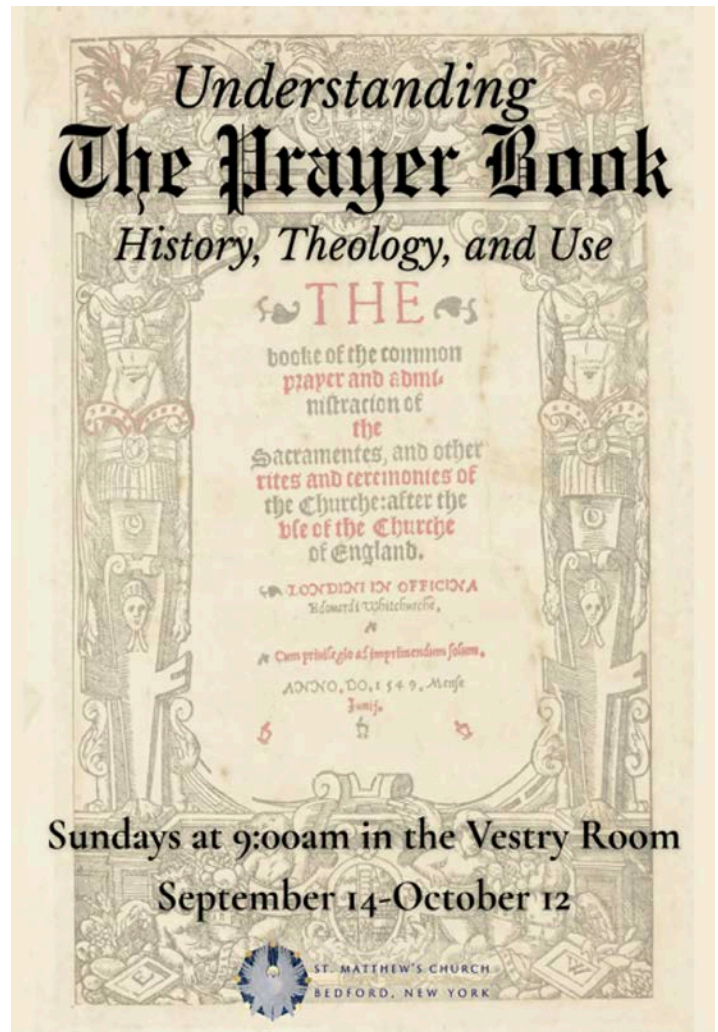
The Haitian Episcopal church primarily serves Haitian Americans living in New York City and provides them a place to worship in their native tongue. Its services are conducted in Haitian Creole and French with just enough English to keep visitors engaged. Its outreach includes a food pantry and ESL classes several days a week.

Haitian Episcopal rented spaces from nine other churches throughout Manhattan and the Bronx for 49 years and did not have a permanent location until 2021, when the Diocese of New York gave them the former space of St. Martha's Church, which was in need of a complete energy analysis. The Parish took several years to complete this, consulting with the Diocese and ultimately partnering with Metro IAF (non-profit contracted by NY State Energy Research and Development Authority) to find the best clean energy options and applicable clean energy rebates.

Sam, who worked with Kathy Brenner in 2023 for a \$25,000 Bedell grant to replace the front doors of the church, now had a larger request to fund adding insulation to the Parish Hall, adding energy efficient windows in the parish hall office and undercroft as well as replacing an old boiler with a new HVAC system. A \$260,000 Bedell grant was approved by St. Matthew's Vestry in 2024. This carefully researched and executed project serves as a Clean-Energy Demonstration Project which earned additional rebates. To further reduce their energy costs, currently solar panels are being installed with funds from the 2024 Bedell grant.

It was fitting that on a sweltering July afternoon, about three hours into the celebratory service, Rev. Owen asked the parishioners to raise their hands, as they joyfully blessed the work of Bedell, St. Matthew's, multiple contractors, the energy consultant/rebate wrangler (Matthew Marienthal from Metro IAF) and those efficient new air conditioners.

Robyn McCree, Bedell Committee



Comings & Goings

New and Returning Parishioners

Mr. Chas Slingsluff & Ms. Katey Chapman
340 South Bedford Road
Mt. Kisco, NY 10549

Holy Baptism

Received into Christ's Holy Church

Mason Carroll Marschke, July 6, 2025

Edward Taylor Neumeier- July 27, 2025

Eleanor Grace McAvey- August 10, 2025

Jacob Alphonse Yachouh- August 10, 2025

Cameron George Cox- August 24, 2025

In Memoriam

In sure and certain hope

Stephen Miele, August 24, 2025