A Thought from the Rector

Some of you know that I co-host a theology podcast with my brothers, The Brothers Zahl. In it we discuss important theological topics in a down-to-earth, humorous, and hopefully winsome manner. We started doing it during the pandemic, and it’s taken form from there. In previous seasons, of which there are two, we have discussed: God, Creativity, Jesus, Depression, Grace, Evil, Christmas and Prayer, to name a few.

The Brothers Zahl – Season 3 just dropped in June and includes six fresh episodes. I think they are the best we’ve recorded to date. This season’s six episodes include the following topics: Faith, Free Will?, Imputation, The Holy Spirit, Easter, and Parenting (with my mother, Mary, as a guest)…. If you’re interested in thinking about matters of faith, or simply looking for a new podcast, I can’t recommend The Brothers Zahl enough. Perhaps it will help to get your spiritual juices flowing this summer, or, at least, help you to think somewhat intelligently about what it means to be a professing Christian.

You can find The Brothers Zahl wherever you get your podcasts, or here: https://thebrotherszahl.fireside.fm/ The podcasts do not need to be listened to in order; simply pick the topic that most interests you. Hopefully, from there, you’ll be hooked and want to hear more.

I hope you’re having a lovely summer, and I look forward to seeing you for worship in our lovely Chapel-in-the-Woods. Sending love, and praying for all of you,

Grace & Peace,
A Snapshot into the Church School Children’s Minds

To close out the year we had a fantastic celebration that included a “Stump the (Associate) Rector,” a Sparkling Cider “Toast” and year-end review game. The children have an incredibly strong understanding of the concepts we’ve learned this year. Their questions about God, Faith and The Bible were deep and curious. They asked Rev. Drew 15 questions – and he was only stumped twice! They asked:

1. How many churches are there in the world?
2. Why is God invisible?
3. Why did God send Jesus to die on earth?
4. Who created God?
5. God created the earth but did God create the whole universe?
6. Why are there 7 days of creation? Why not just one day?
7. Where was everything before the universe created?
8. How old was Jesus when he died?
9. How did God make people?
10. Where is Heaven?
11. When was the Bible created?
12. What happened on page 273 of the Bible?
13. Is the Old Testament the same as the Hebrew Bible?
14. How many words are in the Bible?
15. Some people don’t believe that Jesus was God’s son. Does that mean they don’t worship God?

Rev. Drew’s answers ranged from simple to layered and philosophical to silly. There were follow up questions to almost every answer and the hands remained raised for the entire Chapel time. These wonder-filled kids are wise and curious and so incredibly engaged. The future of Church School (and beyond) at St. Matthew’s is bright!

If you’re interested in a front row seat for this faith journey, consider joining the Church School volunteer team for the 2024-25 school year!

Welcome Back Sunday

Pre-Church and Church School will resume Sept. 8 with a Backpack Blessing and Welcome Back Sunday kick-off to the new Church School year, including a special Coffee Hour! More information will be sent out in my Friday e-mails when they resume in the fall. If you aren’t receiving these, please email me!

Melissa Torres, Children’s Ministry Coordinator

A Glorious Preschool Graduation and Picnic
An Oft-Overlooked Part of the Book of Common Prayer: Newborns!

This weekend I had the privilege of spending time with an 8-days-old baby, and his parents. They invited me to swing by for “a blessing,” which, technically, means turning to a somewhat overlooked service in the Book of Common Prayer (pp. 439-446) – “Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child.” There is almost no better example of pastoral sensitivity than the prayers found in that little service.

When a new baby finally arrives, the parents are filled with two primary instincts toward prayer. The first naturally-occurring prayer of the new parent is: “Thank You!!!” And the second is: “Help!!!” Notice how the Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child liturgy surfaces those sentiments so touchingly in the following Collect:

O God, you have taught us through your blessed Son that whoever receives a little child in the name of Christ receives Christ himself; We give you thanks for the blessing you have bestowed upon this family in giving them a child. Confirm their joy by a lively sense of your presence with them, and give them calm strength and patient wisdom as they seek to bring this child to love all that is true and noble, just and pure, lovable and gracious, excellent and admirable, following the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

To quote Stevie Wonder in regards both to that perfect prayer and also to every newborn: “Isn’t she lovely?!”

Children of RMM Come to St. Matthew’s

On Wed., Aug. 21, St. Matthew’s will again host a picnic for the 100+ children, aged 8-17, of the Overnight Youth Leadership Camp sponsored by the Rural and Migrant Ministry. The Rev. Richard Witt, an Episcopal priest, is the executive director of RMM and spoke movingly at St. Mary’s in June. These are the children of the rural and migrant agricultural workers from across NYS.

After a field trip to NYC, the campers will arrive at St. Matthew’s at 5 p.m. for a picnic, followed by a Vespers Service in the Chapel-in-the-Woods. We hope our parishioners will help welcome these young people by flipping burgers, cooking hot dogs, providing side dishes and serving. If you would like to volunteer to help, please contact Mary Finn. If you would like to help defray the cost of the picnic, please send a check to the office with RMM Picnic in the memo line.

Here is a wonderful film about the RMM Camp.

A Perfect Picnic!

John Zahl presented Tina Foster with the Bedford Key at the picnic.
A Stomping Great Way to End Our School Year!
Thank you to all who attended Peonies and Palomas on June 5th. The event was a huge success—raising $80,000 to surpass our $75,000 (net) goal. Cutler Whitman’s personal and good-humored auctioneering brought us instantly together. The peonies were bountiful; Gavin McLaughlin’s cheese and oysters abundant and the warm air an inviting backdrop to Mark Weigel’s music. The ease and laughter under the hanging lights spoke of a fellowship far more valuable than the dollars raised, and it’s symbolic that the most popular items were not the vacations to far-flung locales, but the intimate gatherings offered by church members—like dinner hosted by John and Sarabeth Zahl, a Gavin McLaughlin catered event & the pews on Christmas Eve. And of course, the first candle. We can’t wait for next year!

Looking for some books to read during July and August? Here are some suggestions from our clergy.

John Zahl
Unapologetic: Why, Despite Everything, Christianity Can Still Make Surprising Emotional Sense by Francis Spufford
Low Anthropology by David Zahl
How Far to the Promised Land by Esau McCaulley

Drew Courtright
Novel with Christian themes: The Big Fisherman by Lloyd C Douglas
Practical Theology: Generous Justice by Tim Keller
Book of the Bible: Philippians (It’s only four chapters and if you read it in one sitting it really captures the service of adventure and importance of the early church!)

Our Youth Group Bowls Them Over
A Family Concert!

The Celestia Trio: Hyemin Kang (piano), Jennifer Buschman (violin), & Deanna Maclean (flute) — played a family concert in St. Matthew’s Fellowship Room on June 8 in the afternoon! The Trio all members of St. Matthew’s welcomed families and friends to a classical afternoon concert with short pieces including: Mozart’s Allegro Assai from his Piano Sonata in F Major & Bach’s Vivace from his Double Violin Concerto in D Minor.

Children played on the playground before the concert, and were welcomed to be children.

The goal of Celestia Trio’s mission is to make classical music in live performance accessible to families. Donations are graciously accepted and may be made to St. Matthew’s Church.

Season 3 - Episode 1 of The Brothers Zahl theology podcast has started. Catch fresh episodes every Monday for the next six weeks. [Click here to listen]

Anybody there?

Every Sunday, when she is walking to the 8 a.m. service, Aimee Whitman looks into the bluebird box by the circle. Twice this year she as found beautiful bright blue eggs!

Comings & Goings

New & Returning Parishioners:

- Michael & Alison Allwin
  800 Fifth Ave, Apt 25C
  New York, NY 10065
- John Day & Margaret Herman
  358C Heritage Hills
  Somers, NY 10589
- Joey & Courtney Rault
  771 Lake Avenue
  Greenwich, CT 06830
- JB & Baily Reece
  52 Stone Hill Road
  Bedford, NY 10506
- Ellie Sullivan
  29 Great Hill Farms Road
  Bedford, NY 10506

Holy Baptism

Received into Christ’s Holy Church

Oliver Hendrix Brenner – June 2, 2024
Lucy Barclay Conrad – June 23, 2024