

Saint Matthew's News

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Jersey City, NJ



September 2001

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

Call Process Update

July 15th, long anticipated as a day when the congregation would take a step forward toward redevelopment, took an unexpected turn. The Council had offered a compensation package to the candidate that totaled over \$75,000, a big financial challenge but one that we believed could be met as the congregation worked with a new pastor to rebuild the congregation.

However it did not meet the candidate's needs and we are reminded of the particular challenge of trying to call an experienced pastor at a higher salary and meet the high cost of housing in downtown Jersey City. Something we will discuss with representatives from the Synod office in September.

So, on Sunday, July 15th, Joe Brown led worship and we met afterward to consider where we go from here. The good news out of that meeting is that members came together with a plan to reaffirm our life as a congregation while the call process continues: The congregational retreat scheduled for Saturday, September 22, 10AM to 3:30PM in Bavendam Hall. We will begin with Bible study and continue with discussion of why we are here, what we need from and bring to St. Matthew's.

All members and friends are invited on September 22 for the retreat. Please join us!

Lydia Brown

An Invitation to Christ's House

The invitation to St. Matthew's was one of the best experiences in my life. When I enter the sanctuary every Sunday, I thank God that I lasted another week of uh-oh!

Being part of St. Matthew's has gotten me invited to Lutheran youth events and Synod meetings in Ocean City. It led me to the First English Lutheran Evangelical Church in Virginia, where I cherished the time spent with Ann and John Lindholm, who showed true Southern hospitality to a fellow Lutheran from Jersey. I've experienced what many need: an invitation to Christ's house.

St. Matthew's has so much to offer to the community and extending the invitation is a challenge. It will take effort to provide a spiritual need and inviting new ideas for us to grow as a congregation.

We have an open pastoral vacancy and that invitation has not reached its destination yet. I pray that the invitee returns and accepts the new and rewarding opportunities offered. I pray for a new presence whose energy and strength becomes the backbone of our congregation.

An invitation to Christ's house is open to all who enter. Christ welcomed a diversity of people and felt true empathy. His invitation saw no bounds, he saw good in all people and we glorify his name. Amen

Respectfully Submitted,
Earlyne L. Muamba

God's Vision

The congregational meeting on July 15th moved me. A vision took shape on the heels of the disappointment, a vision of moving into the future as a people of God, caring for one another and others in this community. I was challenged to ponder, knowing the love of God and the gifts we have been given, how might I participate? How might we as a people reach out to the community around us? How might we care for one another and others in Jersey City?

Presently on leave from call and enrolled full time in a training program as a Clinical Pastoral Education supervisor in New York City and a neighbor of St. Matthew's, I enjoy serving as a supply pastor. It is important for me to be a part of a faith community, to give and to receive care. Still I wonder about my participation in congregational life and about the ways I can contribute.

These wonderings stand solidly on Scripture and God's vision for life as God's people. In Acts Christians were known as people who loved one another. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42) In Romans, Paul writes, "For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another." (Rm 12:4-5) We are called to live as Christ's Body the church in this place.

We can live out God's vision for us even as the search continues for a pastor. We can use every opportunity to respond in ways that expand our horizons and define ourselves as God's people in this place. Collectively we can spend time with God on September 22, 2001, gathering for prayer and discussion, examining our life together and developing strategies for moving forward. I look forward to this time together and invite each of us to wonder and consider what is faithful stewardship of our lives as we live in community. See you there!

In Christ's service,
Pastor Connie Bonner

Have you seen...

the young blond couple in church? They move forward, to the right or the left, but they are there, Sunday after Sunday. What brought them to St Matthew's? What caused them to get involved?

John and Deanna Seppanen moved to Jersey City from Greenwich Village in November. John, who works in New York City, had been there for six years and Deanna joined him from St Paul, MN five years ago. They found St Matt's through their house hunting, a successful quest for more space that will eventually land them in a house at Fifth and Erie.



Both grew up with church, Deanna in the Evangelical Free Church, similar to Lutheranism. John was confirmed in Bethlehem Lutheran, Temple City, CA, where his faith motivated him to become a high school youth group leader and member of the church council. "We had a community of friends in that church," he explains.

St Matthew's can only be grateful that at this moment of questionable leadership, these two architects have become involved in our community, from John's assistance planting flowers at the Barrow Mansion and assisting with this newsletter to Deanna's volunteering to teach Sunday School in the fall.

Deanna says that her desire to work with the children of St Matthew's stems from her own strong Sunday School roots. "Learning while you're young is the easiest," she says.

Karen June Cantrell

An Interview with...

Herluf Jensen, Former Bishop to the New Jersey Synod

A couple of weeks ago I visited my Dad and we talked about some of the challenges facing St. Matthew's. He is retired now but used to be in the religion business and has always been a good talker. Asking him a few questions, I thought, would be much easier than my trying to look things up in a book.

I had this idea that if we ran through the list of congregational committees the outline of a healthy congregation would become apparent. A list of church committees could be used to describe any number of organizations or businesses.

The evangelism committee is really the community relations department. Youth ministry might be recruitment and fellowship could be employee relations. How is it that a Church can have the same structure as a profit driven business?

Employees go to work because they are required to as a condition of employment. No pay, no work. No work, no pay. A pretty straight forward relationship. But we don't get paid to come to church. We come here because we have a relationship with God. Even when we don't come, we are still part of God's family.

My Dad says that to worship, witness, and serve is what a congregation is about not the committee structure.

How do we develop and experience the **worship** life of the congregation? Through the understanding of scripture, prayer, and communion, communion to shut-ins, musical offerings and art.

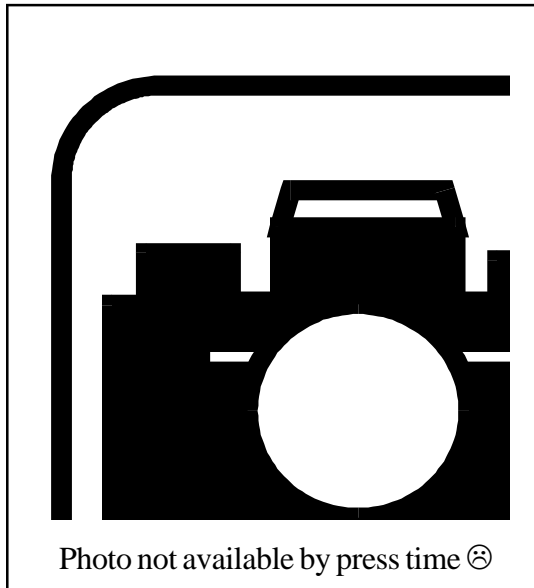
How do we **witness** the story of Jesus Christ in a meaningful way to the people of the community? Through personal outreach and public programs, education and Sunday school, ecumenical activities and evangelism.

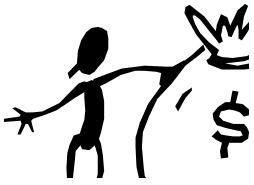
How do we **serve or minister** to people in their needs? Social ministries such as a food pantry, healthcare and job training or a warm meal, clothing, and shelter are services that are a part.

A big congregation might have a dozen bulging committees organized around worship, witness, and service. A small congregation might have only an agenda to explore what it means to worship, witness, and serve.

Though we are part of a major multi national, we're not a business. We're a community of faith that struggles and we are a community of faith that succeeds.

Peter Jensen





Dollars and Cents

The following financial update as included in May bulletin announcements:

Averaged figures for January-April 2001:

\$6,365 Average monthly expenses*
 \$7,424 Average monthly income**
 \$11,347 Monthly expenses with full time pastor***

Averaged figures for January-June 2001:

\$6,370 Average monthly expenses*
 \$6,527 Average monthly income**

*Includes expense of supply/interim pastors and the high oil bills due to boiler problems.

**\$1,050 of this is rental income; Jan-Apr. current offerings averaged \$5,136; Jan-June current offerings average is \$4,300.

***This estimated budget figure includes the full cost (housing benefits, housing) of a pastor and excludes the budget expense for supply/interim pastors.

This information tells us that we are managing, but attendance is down and that is reflected in the level of giving.

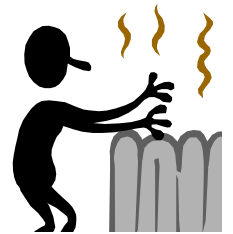
We need you with us in worship. It is important that members continue to meet their regular contribution commitments, even if they are not at St. Matthew's every Sunday.

Side Notes

What's the Boiling Point?

The immediate crisis is getting the boiler replaced before the cooler fall weather arrives, at an estimated cost of between \$15-\$20,000 on top of our annual budgeted expense of between \$15,000 and \$20,000 to pay down the debt.

For any of you who receive this newsletter but do not worship with us regularly, we ask for your continued prayers. A number of you are faithful in sending financial support occasionally



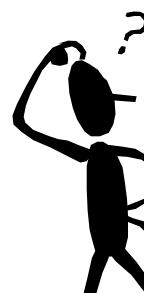
during the year; if you have not done so recently, we ask that you consider making a contribution at this time toward debt reduction or to help meet the cost of boiler replacement.

Where in the world...

Sunday after Sunday usually found **Frieda Faltings** in her usual pew, stage right near the back. Communion usually found her officiating in some capacity, either carrying the Common Cup or organizing the lines of the faithful as they approached. But lately, she's been absent.

Frieda we miss you! Those wishing to contact her can write to this address:

Frieda Faltings
 St Clare's Hospital
 Lakeview Sub-Acute Center
 130 Terhune Road
 Wayne, NJ
 (973) 616-5885



Calendar of Events

Rummage Sale

September 8/9 & 15th

It's time to clear out your clutter before all those fall activities hit full-force. Bring those fabulous but not-as-necessary-as-you-once-thought items to St. Matthew's so that others may have the opportunity to purchase them.

Then come back on September 8 and 9 and 15th with your wallets open to pick up all the bargains to be had on household items and clothing, not to mention some of Andy's cooking!

Book Group

September 17th

The Book Group will discuss *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamont on September 17th, 7:30 PM at Karen Cantrell's, 158 Franklin Street #5, NYC 10013.

The Red Tent is the story of Dinah (Dee-nah), the only daughter of Jacob, whose only mention in the Old Testament is having been raped. Ms. Diamont touches briefly on the famous stories, such as Jacob's wrestling with angels and Joseph's beautiful coat, and focuses on Dinah and her relationship with her family, from Jacob, the patriarch, to his four wives and twelve sons.

Past books have included *Evening* by Susan Minot, *Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, *House of Sand and Fog* by Andre Dubus III, *Evening News* by Marly Swick, and *The Mark of an Angel* by Nancy Huston. Book group participants are encouraged to make suggestions.

Those interested in attending may contact Karen Cantrell at (212) 334-0457 or kjwords@aol.com for information.

Stories of Faith

September 22nd

Join us on a **congregational retreat** where we will explore our stories of faith and God's calling for us on September 22d, 10:00AM to 3:30PM in Bavendam Hall.

Pastor Connie Bonner will lead the congregation through a program based on Ruth's story of faith and building on that to include OUR stories of faith. Lunch will be served.

There will be a separate program for children. Please RSVP Lydia Brown (212) 673-1105 if you need childcare.

Health Fair

September 29th

Over a dozen healthcare providers will be present for St. Matthew's third annual Health Fair on September 29th between noon and 4:00PM.

The Health Mobile will be on hand for free screenings. Information will be provided on issues like dependency, women's issues, stress reduction, AIDS and HIV counseling, and alternative health programs such as Reiki demonstrated by church organist Timothy Andrews.

Call 201-432-9319 or speak with **Andy Rhodes** for more details.

We're Doing It Again!

Noisy Offering October 1st

It happened one Sunday in May. Around the sanctuary, mugs, coffee cans, and gallon jugs sat like parishioners on the pews. Some sprouted faded palm branches. All contained congregational spare change.

Almost everyone marched to the front. The mugs and coffee cans were emptied, the palms kept. Wallets and pockets emptied pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters into the brass coffer. Then near the end, Sirch Chanthayask walked forward with his jug, which when upturned rained pennies as long as a spring shower. St. Matt's made more than \$300 that day.

Now it's happening again on Sunday, **October 1st**. Don't forget your change.

KJC



All smiles...

Yes, the rumor is true...**Hal and Ann Deadman have a little girl**— Isabelle Amanda Tuong Vi Deadman, born at 10:38 pm on March 17 (St. Patrick's Day!). She weighed in at 6 lbs 12 oz, 20 inches long. Ann claims that she's a very happy baby and very easy.

Isabelle is a name they both liked. Amanda comes from Hal's 95 year-old grandmother. Tuong Vi (crepe myrtle in Vietnamese) was chosen by Ann's mother. Hal and Ann call her either Be Vi (pronounced BEH-VEE which means baby Vi in Vietnamese) or Busy Izzy or Izzy Bee or just Baby :-D

Isabelle was born the day after Hal and Ann moved into their new house in Fairfax, VA —11 days earlier than expected. Hal is still working for the same company, Tallan, but is now working locally. Ann is now a full-time stay-at-home-mom and enjoying every minute of it!

Isabelle and Ann were both baptized on May 27 at St. Matthew's in Woodbridge, Virginia. Hal and Ann celebrated their 5 year anniversary on July 6.

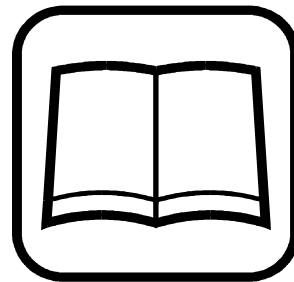
You may contact them at:
adeadman@cox.rr.com

Hdeadman@cox.rr.com
(703) 988-0552



Sunday School for the Children...

to begin on September 16th. Class will be held during service beginning at 11:00.



Attention!

The **Food Pantry** has an urgent need for boxes of cereal. Members are encouraged to bring a box of cereal with them every Sunday. Cereal, which is not terribly heavy, is nonetheless bulky and difficult to fit into the monthly food shopping runs. Interested contributors should speak with Nancy Thomas if they have any questions.



Prayer

I accept God's invitation to be in fellowship among his flock. For he chose me to be a vessel by spreading the word to the meek and lonely of heart.

Earlyne L. Muamba

September

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---------|-----------|----------|----------------------|--|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 13 th Sunday after Pentecost | 3 Labor Day | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 Rummage Sale |
| 14 th Sunday after Pentecost <i>Grandparents' Day</i> | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 Holy Cross Day | 15 Rummage Sale |
| 15 th Sunday after Pentecost | 17 7:30 Karen Cantrell 212.334.0457 Book Group | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 10 - 3:30 Lydia Brown 212.673.1105 RETREAT |
| Sunday School 11:00 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 12:00 - 4:00 Health Fair |
| Sunday School 11:00 16 th Sunday after Pentecost | 23 11:00 16 th Sunday after Pentecost | | | | | |
| Sunday School 11:00 17 th Sunday after Pentecost | 30 | | | | | |

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