

Introduction

The mission of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church is to love, welcome, nurture, and serve all people by following the example of Jesus Christ.

Wow, 2005 is over and by the time that we complete our annual meeting we will also be done with its business.

As I looked back over the year I heard the devil in me whisper "how come we didn't manage to meet this goal and why didn't we do this and how come we did that?" In reading the ministry reports herein I know that the devil whispered to many of us. Strangely and blessedly our work continues in 2006. Strangely and blessedly we are renewed in Christ!

During this past year we grew in so many ways. We met our daunting budget. We paid off our debt. We grew in numbers. More joyfully still is that we grew our ministries. We began deep explorations of our faith. We celebrated the lives of our saints. And finally we began to stretch our vision of what St. Matthew's is and is becoming.

Please do read these reports because they reveal our vibrant community. They are a bench mark of what we have done and they are seeds for our growing ministries and faith.

In Christ,

Peter Jensen,

Congregation Council President

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Congregation, 30 January 2005

1. The meeting was called to order at 12:30 PM by Peter Jensen
2. Opening devotions led by Pastor
3. Lisa Bishop determined that 30 voting members are present which is greater than the 10% necessary for quorum
4. The minutes of last year's annual meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously
5. Pastor's Report by Pastor Gladys G. Moore
 - a. Pastor presented both a written and multimedia report which included the following highlights: we are a generous congregation with increased giving; we are the second biggest benevolence giver in Hudson County;
 - b. Pastor reported that we continue to grow in membership and all are encouraged to invite others to worship with us.
 - c. Pastor concluded with "Thank you and Thank God for a Great Year of Ministry!"
6. Financial Secretary's Report by Lydia Brown
 - a. Lydia reported that 25 families/individuals pledged; another 21 gave fairly regularly, but on an unpredictable basis
 - b. Lydia said that we will be asked to make financial pledges within next few weeks and that we need to do our best to meet our commitments
 - c. Lydia asked that we indicate current, benevolence, and special gifts on our envelopes
7. Treasurer's Report by Jon Veen
 - a. Jon reviewed the income and expense report for 2004
 - b. Jon noted errors and corrections to the report
 - c. Jon noted that the report reflects checks written through Dec 31, but that the statements not necessarily cashed
 - d. Jon noted that we increased our expenditures for Witness and Service by over \$4,000 than the amount budgeted; however, he also pointed out that our giving for current expenses needs to be increased
 - e. 2004 Budget and Actual Report approved unanimously
8. In Debt No More report by Lydia Brown
 - a. Lydia reported that the principal balance is now \$15,661 plus interest
 - b. Lydia asked us to consider how we will continue our higher level of giving once we have reached our IDNM goal
 - c. Pastor led in singing "Let us talents and tongues employ"
9. Other Business
 - a. The new mission statement that the Congregation Council wrote and adopted was introduced
 - b. Mansion now completely occupied
 - c. Pastor now president of Jubilee Interfaith Organization

- d. Claudia Perry reported that the Pie awards for best choir attendance go to: Paul & Lisa Bellan-Boyer

10. Proposed Budget

- a. Peter Jensen presented the proposed budget of \$180,805 for both income and expense
- b. Questions regarding the line items were addressed by Peter Jensen and Lydia Brown
- c. It was noted that beginning June 1, 2006 we will be responsible for 100% of pastor's salary
- d. It was agreed by consensus that \$600 should be added to the line item "Stand With Africa" and that this amount should be earmarked for Senegal Mission
- e. It was suggested that the expenditures should be revised to better reflect our mission concerns
- f. The proposed budget was approved as noted above

11. Revised Constitution

- a. Pastor reported that changes to our constitution are necessary so that it complies with the model constitution for congregations of the ELCA
- b. Pastor reviewed the proposed changes to the constitution
- c. Constitution Approved unanimously

12. Election of Congregational Council Members

- a. no new nominations from the floor
- b. The following persons were unanimously elected by acclamation: Kim Aycox; Brian McGovern; Claudia Perry; and John Veen
- c. The term length for each individual is three years

13. Building

- a. Growing concern for the physical state of the building
- b. Issues such as structural repairs, basic maintenance and improving accessibility were discussed
- c. Peter Jensen reported that we are in the process of obtaining quotes for some of these items

14. Evaluation

- a. Feelings: relieved; thankful;
- b. Performance: well organized & non contentious
- c. Tensions: painful; lacking financial clarity
- d. Learnings: more descriptions geared to lay people/newcomers (budget numbers, particularly); get info available beforehand; heaven has really good pie

15. Pastor closed the meeting with prayer

Faithfully submitted,
Lara Hanson

Minutes of the Special Congregational Meeting, 10 April 2005

1. The meeting was called to order immediately following the worship service by Peter Jensen
2. Opening prayer by Peter Jensen
3. Lisa Bishop determined that 30 voting members are present which is greater than the 10% necessary for quorum
4. Peter Jensen reviewed the necessary chimney repair work and presented the Congregation Council's recommendations to the congregation
5. Diane Kaese moved, James Splond seconded the following motion: To retain the services of Serab Chimney Corp to provide and install a stainless steel chimney liner; repair the damaged masonry separation between the two flues, and make minor repairs to the roofing. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Peter Jensen

Pastor's Report

On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22:2

In the front of the church sanctuary stands a beautiful banner made by our Congregation President, Peter Jensen. The banner is a tree with many leaves, and on the leaves are many of our names and those of our friends and family members. Each of the leaves symbolizes a gift of love given to St. Matthew's so we could be "In Debt No More in 2004."

What amazing work God accomplished in and through us at St. Matthew's in this capital campaign! It took us 18 months rather than 12 to complete our vision of being debt-free after carrying a nearly \$500,000 financial burden for more than 17 years. But what a joy it was to celebrate paying off more than \$109,000 on our Mission Investment Fund Loan at our International Dinner in September. Indeed, we are debt free, to which we can only say, "Thanks be to God!"

But this was only possible because of the leaves on that tree; for those leaves represent YOU and your gifts of time, talent and treasure that go to support God's mission in this place called St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church. And as the writer of Revelation says, "The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

While the tree the writer was referring to was the Tree of Life, we have most certainly been grafted onto that tree through our baptism into Jesus. Thus, as leaves, we too are given for "the healing of the nations." Here are some of the ways in which we were God's healing agents:

- 2005 was a year that called forth our compassionate response to two deadly natural disasters: The Asian tsunami of late December 2004 and Hurricane Katrina. Our generous outpouring of financial aid to Lutheran Disaster Response was commendable. And we did so to help our sisters and brothers heal. Prayers are still needed in these areas.
- We confirmed seven youth in 2005 and celebrated one First Holy Communion. Although we are still struggling to find effective ways of doing Christian Education with children and youth, the ways in which we love and embrace children in our congregation is a joy to behold. Loving children is a healing gift.

- When our beloved Corine Fitch died in late November, St. Matthew's was filled to overflowing for her wake and funeral. In that same week, we hosted the Living Quilt on World AIDS Day, and began our SERRV Handcraft Fair. All of these events were carried out with a true sense of servant ministry, so that those who were grieving, those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, and those living in poverty could experience God's healing and gifts of abundant life.
- Two "Living the Questions" (LTQ) groups were formed last year. Living the Questions is a 12-week small group study that uses a DVD series to help us explore the Christian faith beyond the traditions and rote theologies in which so many people and churches find themselves. The format of each 2 1/2 hour session includes a shared meal, DVD, guided discussion, prayer and Bible study.
- We hope to start more LTQ groups in 2006. These groups aided our sense of intrapersonal and interpersonal healing by offering a safe place in which to share our stories, our concerns, our joys, and to discover more about the Christian faith.
- Our newly developing mission partner, the Waterfront Community Church, will also be starting a LTQ group early in February. It will meet at the Double Tree Suites Hotel. See Pastor Moore or Don Egan for more information.

While there are so many other activities at St. Matthew's, both small and large that could be mentioned, the most important aspect of who we are and what we do is that we represent Christ's healing and hope to one another and to a hurting and hungry world. This doesn't make us unique as a congregation, but keeping this as our focus will help us to remain faithful.

As always, I thank you for your trust in me; for your willingness to respond to my leadership and vision (which is sometimes both passionate and overwhelming) and most of all I thank you for your love. I feel blessed to have so many wonderful partners in ministry and pledge to you my continued love, service, and prayers.

In Christ,

Rev. Gladys G. Moore

Pastor Gladys G. Moore

Pastor's Report Part B: New Members and Pastoral Acts

Adult Members Received by Affirmation of Baptism

Rob Badenoch and Sarah Wolfe
Deborah Comeau and Jill Trudel
Joann Ramos and Israel Rodriguez
Chris and Catherine Townsend

Adult Members Received by Affirmation of Baptism (Confirmation)

Dana Bakirtjy
Wynn Bakirtjy
Avery Barnes
Philip Barnes
Angela Narine
Marian Narine
Jesse Williams

Child Members Received (Baptisms)

Jonah Duane Scott Seppanen
Phaedra Lille Salerno
Harrison Rhys White
Leah Wolfe Badenoch

Adult Members Received by Transfer

Harvey and Carol Andersen
Christy Lohr
Deborah McWilliams

First Communions

Adam Mahabub 12/24/05

Funerals

Corine Fitch, November 28th 2005, St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

Weddings

Joann Ramos and Israel Rodriguez: September 13th 2005 St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

Pastor's Report Part C: Parochial Statistics

Members Received

Baptisms: 4
 Affirmations of Baptism: 8
 Transfers: 5
 Confirmations: 7
 Total members received: 24

Members Removed for Statistical Adjustments and Other Reasons

These are persons in our parochial register who no longer worship nor contribute at St. Matthew's, or who have died, moved, or do not wish to be retained as members.
 Total members removed: 11

Membership Statistics

Baptized: 117
 Communing: 104
 Confirmed/Communing/Contributing: 85
 Unconfirmed Communing: 14

Average Worship Attendance 2001-2004

Year	Attendance	Baptized Members
2001	32	86
2002	42 (+30%)	76
2003	53 (+25%)	105
2004	52 (-2%)	104
2005	55 (+5.8%)	117

Congregational Giving to Current and Mission Support

Year	Current	Mission Support and World Hunger
2002	\$56,376	\$7,600
2003	\$68,282 (+21%)	\$10,853 (+42.80%)
2004	\$63,811 (-7%)	\$13,448 (+24%)
2005	\$72,917 (+14.2%)	\$17,742 (+32%)

Parish Deacon's Report

*We are what God has made us, created in Christ
Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand,
that we should walk in them*

Ephesians 2:10

One issue I have needed to negotiate is when and how my work at St. Matthew's is part of my job as Parish Deacon, and when it is part of my "ordinary" ministry as a member of the congregation. During the first part of this year, it became apparent that I was attempting to do a lot of things, but was not doing many things well. Pastor Moore, the Council, and I have tried to be more attentive to God's call to me and St. Matthew's in this position.

"Doing too much" had a lot to do with my automatically saying "yes" to every project that came my way, rather than listening for God's "Yes!"

Thankfully, that came along very strongly in our congregation's work with the Jubilee Interfaith Organization. After attending the issues assembly in June, I began taking a leadership role in Jubilee's housing task force. As many of you have seen, we are having a major impact on housing policy in our region, and we anticipate the construction of several thousand affordable homes in the Meadowlands due in large part to our continued activism.

In particular, the Jubilee method of community organizing has been eye-opening for me. I am tired of having the right opinions, but not having an impact. Jubilee provides some very practical ways to organize myself and relate to others in ways which help make God's power effective in the world. I was amazed and very pleased at St. Matthew's turnout to our public meeting. I hope that the Spirit is leading us into better developing and acting upon our collective vision of what is needed in our community.

If this is going to go anywhere, in the coming year St. Matthew's will need to develop a Jubilee core team to oversee this ministry and help us use Jubilee organizing principles to aid our congregational development. May the power of God be at work in us and through us, transforming our life together and the community in which we live.

One way that this has already been at work with me, is that I will be seeking St. Matthew's support this year, to be more intentional in guiding me in this work as your Deacon through a support team, and to assist me in moving forward in the process to become an ordained minister. I give thanks that I am able to do this as a member of St. Matthew's, a community which strives to love, welcome, nurture, and serve all people by following the example of the one who calls us his own, Jesus Christ.

Paul Bellan-Boyer

The Barrow Mansion Development Corporation

Built in 1837 as a private residence, the Barrow Mansion is the parish house of St. Matthew's and is a center for community service. Each week over 400 people visit the Barrow Mansion to avail themselves of educational, referral and counseling services, and theatre that are provided by the public spirited organizations, neighborhood associations and self help fellowships that call it home. Rents from for-profit organizations help to subsidize the maintenance, utilities and restoration of the building. The Barrow Mansion is on the National and State Registers of Historic Places.

Founded in 1984, the mission of the Barrow Mansion Development Corporation is to preserve the historic Barrow Mansion and to promote its use as a center for community service. The BMDC is a community based, not-for-profit, 501 (c) (3) corporation.

In the year 2005, the Mansion was fully occupied and generated a cash surplus. The Mansion services seven monthly tenants, 15 twelve-step groups that meet at least weekly, and the monthly meeting of the Van Vorst Park Association.

Normally twelve persons serve on the board (six from the community and six from St. Matthew's) plus the pastor who serves ex officio. Recently the board has been comprised of two community members, four church members and Pastor Moore. The current board members are committed to filling all board vacancies during 2006.

The Board of Directors during 2005: John Hale, president; Gerry Bakirtjy, vice president; Phil Thomas, treasurer; Laird Ehlert; Peter Jensen; Lynn Saltiel; Pastor Moore, ex officio.

Both John Hale and Laird Ehlert resigned their positions on the board as of January 2006. Laird Ehlert served as a faithful board member for several years. In addition to serving as a board member for a very long time, John Hale also served as secretary, vice president and most recently as president.

The Board of Directors for 2006: Gerry Bakirtjy, president; Peter Jensen, vice president; Lynne Saltiel, secretary; Phil Thomas, treasurer; Pastor Moore, ex officio.

BIS Management of Jersey City manages the building. BIS collects rent, deals with tenants, directs repairs, maintenance and cleaning and reports to the board. This service is donated by Gerry Bakirtjy.

Several years ago St. Matthew's loaned \$25,000 to the BMDC for construction purposes. During 2005 the BMDC paid of the loan with a final installment of \$5,000.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Jensen

The Barrow Mansion Development Corporation

Operating Statement

2005 Income:

rentals	\$89,726
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2005 Expenses:

Salaries and Associated Taxes	28,297
Payroll Tax Employer	6,242
Maintenance	2,873
Insurance	14,623
Supplies	271
Utilities	17,620
Exterminating	324
Miscellaneous	1,345
Bavendam Loan Re-payment	5,000
Loan Interest	125
Total expenses	<u>\$74,591</u>

This operating statement is excerpted from the year end report prepared by Phil Thomas to the board members of the BMDC.

Waterfront Community Church

The NJ Synod approved the Waterfront Community Church as an experimental mission outreach project and worshipping community for the Hudson Waterfront. Its purpose is to make a relational connection into the Hudson Waterfront Community and begin an ELCA faith community.

The vision of the Waterfront Community Church (WCC) is to create a *moving* gathering of believers who moved by the Spirit of God experience the transforming, restoring and reconciling Good News of Jesus Christ. Don Egan, M. Div. is called on a limited part time basis as the lay developer for this mission project. St. Matthew Trinity, Hoboken (Rev. Mary Forell) and St. Matthew's, Jersey City (Rev. Gladys Moore) have chosen to become partners in prayer. The direction of the project is overseen by the Rev. Judith Spindt, ELCA Mission Director for the New Jersey Synod, ELCA.

In early 2005, St. Matthew Trinity completed a follow up to a Brand Asset Mapping and Natural Church Development Seminar created and led by Waterfront Community Church leader. The goal of this seminar was to assist St. Matthew Trinity to "look inside" at its layperson assets for growth and begin mission building from that location. The results of the seminar bore sweet and rich fruit and new ways of thinking about mission for participants. Result: A spirited prayer group was formed and led by congregant Peggy Brockman, a leader servant on the Waterfront initiative. The prayer group continues to grow because St. Matthew Trinity is committed to developing naturally from within to grow their church. Also, St. Matthew Trinity began thinking in new visionary directions as to incorporate more art and dance in services and build Lenten activities during the week leading up to at the their ecumenical Easter Vigil. We believe God is creating a new thing at St. Matthew's Trinity. Result – Supportive Mission building actions for congregations yield positive results.

Waterfront Community Church administered ashes on Ash Wednesday at the Liberty Tower marina in Jersey City. Over 100 people received ashes and over three hundred leaflets were passed out inviting folks to Holy Week services at local Lutheran Churches. The result - A major article was written on the initiative in the Jersey Journal and awareness that the Waterfront Community Church and the ELCA is mission planting the area.

The winter and early spring was full of planning. As with any new mission start, we were armed with faithfulness, a fervent spirit and a desire to create a Leadership board made of passionate laypersons that could assist in nurturing the vision. We looked to lay persons in partner churches for assistance. Each member commits to work for a year and a half in shaping and growing the core leadership team. In planning meetings we wrestled with what is the identity of this group, what are guiding principles and core values. We wrestled with, scripture, timetables and the direction of Waterfront activities in Hoboken with limited resources and time. Many volunteer hours were spent on planning the vision and a plan was wrought out in which to commence from.

During this time, Rodney Aycox, a leader servant, and the team spearheaded the planning, design, execution and maintenance of a new website,

www.waterfrontcommunitychurch.com. Its purpose is to keep partner churches and interested parties abreast of small group meetings and events of the community.

In the summer and fall, we continued our weekly leadership servant training sessions. Don led a special teach-in at St. Matthew's Jersey City. Its purpose was to share the vision of WCC and a lively group of faithful followers joined us for a study on "hospitality". Result – Sharing leadership resources and enrolling partner churches in vision.

We created the beginnings of an external communications campaign. A central part of the campaign is the goal to become public witnesses. We created two prayer actions in which planned prayer activities occurred at specific locations throughout the Waterfront. Our prayer team distributed over 500 leaflets and talked to over scores of people about prayer requests and alerted them to WCC. We asked individuals if there was anything or anybody they would like to be prayed for. Individuals were given informational cards and Good News pins donated to our community through the American Bible Society. (Thanks to Kim Aycox). Key Learning – We need to keep creating witnessing events and plan follow up. They draw attention and response. We also designed, created and placed advertising communicating WCC existence and small group work appeared in local publications. Result two members. Key learning - Continue advertising and leaflet buildings.

In early winter, we began final construction adjustments on our prayer tower. A mobile information and prayer center for "environ" evangelism. Thanks to Peggy Brockman and her coterie of architects, engineers and builders who gave up their time and talents to assist in nurturing our vision by donating the prayer tower. Tower will be ready by spring for use.

We are planning for a public witness event in Jersey City using a portable labyrinth where by individuals can meet God through the spiritual practice of walking and praying. The event is scheduled for late summer 2006.

Fall and winter brought the planning and utilization of "Living the Questions", as a tool for small group spiritual and leadership development. This is a thoughtful DVD series on grappling with the big questions of Christianity and its application in our lives. This series will be used to develop small groups on the Waterfront throughout 2006. Again we thank Pastor Moore for her gift of this special program to WCC in the hopes that it will change one life and bring a new disciple to Christ. These seminars will be held at the Doubletree Hotel on Washington St. We have already started an advertising communications campaign to get the message out.

Looking to the future we see the need for growth in the following areas 2006:

- Assistance and Development from Partner Churches
- Evangelism and Small Group Growth
- Increasing Leadership Team
- Fundraising

- Communications – Internal and External

Developing a *new faith community* is difficult at times, but we continue to bear growth with limited time of volunteers, finances, resources and staff . We press on the upward way and remember that it is grace that will lead us forward. We look forward to St. Matthew Trinity Hoboken , St. Matthew's, Jersey City, Rev. Judith Spindt, Mission Director, and the NJ Synod continuing to support our endeavors and finding new ways to increase our territory and proclaim God's Good News on the Waterfront..

Yours in faith,

The WCC Team

Coffee Hour

When I accepted the responsibility of signing up members of the congregation for coffee hour, I didn't know it would be such a challenge! Before I began coordinating this venture it was prepared solely by Andrew Rhode. He used to set up coffee and tea, provide all of the edible stuff and pack away and clean up afterward.

Coordinating coffee hour during 2005 was a time of trial and error for me. I have never taken on a responsibility to get people to commit to half hour of serving and cleaning up. Some folks readily volunteers while I others I had to beg. Sometimes I got frustrated asking persons to do it. The summer months were the most difficult time to sign up volunteers because everyone at sometime or the other is on vacation.

Some members of the congregation requested that there needed to be more healthy food and fewer sweets. I have tried to introduce fruit, vegetables and sugarless cookies to the coffee hour.

But I must say on a final note, that all in all 2005 was a good year for the coffee hour ministry. Andy got a break and many others had the opportunity to serve St. Matthew's. I hope that 2006 will be better than last year. Thanks to all.

Coffee Hour Coordinator,
Stephanie Sheppard

Communications and Publicity

During the preceding year, members got the word out about our knitting circle, the blessing of the animals and a few other St. Matthews' events. Late in the year, Jessica McGeary began the task of updating the Web site, taking over from John Seppanen and Monyca White. Additional committee members include Rodney Aycox, Laird Ehlert, Nancy Thomas and myself.

Our goals for the coming are to start a St. Matthew's e-list, update and expand the Web site to include a church calendar and possibly links to areas of mission such as the Creative Arts Club and the Food Pantry, continue to communicate with members who are not Web-enabled and streamline publicity for church events. My recurring health issues have slowed some of the work, but committee hopes to move forward with all deliberate speed. Additional help and suggestions are always welcome.

Respectfully submitted,
Claudia Perry
Chief Communicator

The main source of unpaid coverage is through the newspaper free community/religion press coverage including occasional spots on the Community Bulletin Board on cable TV.

During the year flyers were prepared for each event at St. Matthew's. Andy Rhode placed posters in our neighborhood to announce events as well as on our board outside the church and sends postcards and letter mailings on all events.

Newspaper notices appeared on the Religion Column page in the Friday edition of the Jersey Journal (twice a month).

Feature paid ads are placed in the Hudson Reporter and Jersey Journal for events such as the rummage sales and health fair.

The Jersey Journal published a great article about the Ash Wednesday blessing at the PATH station

We thank all for their involvement in publicizing the work of St. Matthew's!

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Thomas,

Chief Publicist

Food Pantry

Let's Celebrate's support of the St. Matthew's food pantry this year has been sporadic due to political problems they have experienced with some of their programs. We have been creative in stocking our pantry and received both large and small donations of food and money for the pantry from our members and friends. We are thankful for the generous donations from members that have supplemented Let's Celebrate's funding. This year proceeds from the Pot Roast Dinner were used to purchase groceries. Many people are involved in unloading food, packing bags, taking inventory, and arranging for food pickups. We especially recognize Andy Rhode's efforts in this program. He is the key contact with individuals who pick up food directly from the church and is always available to help unload heavy cartons of cans on shopping days or nights. The grocery bags that we fill with food are distributed by Hyacinth Aids Foundation to their clients in Hudson County that require emergency assistance.

Nancy J. Thomas,

Food Pantry shopper

Gay and Lesbian Outreach Committee

The Gay and Lesbian Outreach Committee was formed in 2003 in recognition of the large GLBTI¹ community which has developed in the neighborhood in recent years. There is a particular need for outreach to gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender and inter-sexed people because of the constant stream of hatred, misinformation and lies which comes primarily from fundamentalist Christians in this country! We must separate ourselves from this misinterpretation of the Bible and let everyone know that all people were created into the loving family of God, and that all are invited to God's house. St. Matthew's became a Reconciling in Christ² congregation in 2001 by a unanimous congregational vote. This is one of numerous areas in which our church stands for social justice.

This year our outreach activities further established our reputation for being a welcoming congregation. Here is a brief summary of our activities for the year:

- Jersey City Gay and Lesbian Organization had a community networking event at the waterfront Marriot Hotel. St. Matthew's had a table and 4 representatives there. Feb. 13
- Hamilton Park Festival & Flea Market: Volunteers from the congregation staffed a table with our church's literature, new "Need a hug?" buttons, and sold some jewelry from our rummage sale stash. June 11
- Tent and table staffed by members of the congregation at the Jersey City Gay Pride Festival. We gave out festive Mardi Gras beads and our brochures and buttons. Deb and Jill had a bead-stringing and craft table for the kids (and adults). We spoke to many people and invited them to visit St. Matthew's. Aug. 27
- Barrow Mansion host site for Jersey City Connections Transgender Day of Remembrance (of Transgender murder victims) on Sunday, Nov. 20th
- "The Living Quilt". Testimony and remembrance in celebration of the lives touched by HIV / AIDS. Co-operative event with the Jersey City Gay and Lesbian Organization held in St. Matthew's Bavendam Hall. Dec. 1
- Hyacinth Foundation representatives attended St. Matthew's International Dinner, which served as a fundraiser in support of our food pantry which donates to Hyacinth.

¹ GLBTI has become a commonly used acronym which stands for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Inter-sexed. Transgender people are those who know with a certainty that their soul was born into a body of the wrong sex. Intersexed is the modern term for a hermaphrodite, a person whose genetics are a combination of both sexes. Their genitalia have indications of both male and female. This occurs in about one out of a thousand births.

² *Reconciling in Christ* is the name given to the program which indicates that people of all sexual orientations are welcome in the congregation.

- Laird represented St. Matthew's at the Hyacinth Foundation Holiday Party on Dec. 13.

Respectfully submitted,

Laird Ehlert, Team Leader

Team Members: Pastor Moore, Jill Trudel, Brian McGovern, Don Egan

Health Fair

Despite a delayed start in contacting participants for our Health Fair we were fortunate to obtain many of our previous agencies along with several new ones.

The following organizations had representatives that participated in the Health Fair:

- National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependency of Hudson County
- Hyacinth Foundation
- North Hudson Community Action Center
- Horizon Health Center
- Jersey City Connections (HIV Buddies)
- New Jersey Family Care
- Jersey City Fire Department
- Jersey City Police Department

New Participants include:

- Lynn J. Saltiel – Psychotherapy and Consultation
- Jennifer Kellow, RN – The F.M. Alexander Technique Center for Comprehensive Care
- Curves (with free one week trial offer)
- Ensemble Financial

Organizations providing materials for distribution:

- United Way of Hudson County
- American Diabetes Association
- Partnership for a Drug Free New Jersey

With the weather cooperating for a change we were enabled to meet outside (and even serve refreshments there) where over one hundred individuals were tested for blood pressure, cholesterol or received valuable information about health concerns and services.

We extend our appreciation to all the volunteers, agencies and organizations that set up, cleaned up, manned tables or served refreshments.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew C. Rhode Jr.

Pot Roast Dinner

We have been unable to discover how our funding for our Food Pantry has been affected since the City has taken over "Meals on Wheels" from Let's Celebrate – but we do realize we had not been supplying our Pantry.

How does this relate to our Dinner? Still being concerned about supplying Food Bags for Hyacinth Foundation (serving those with HIV/AIDS) and those in need, the Council voted to have the receipts from our Pot Roast Dinner designated for purchasing food for our Pantry.

Informing our members of our intent and mailing flyers to our Rummage Sale listing, we received \$856 at our Dinner and over \$700 was utilized for the Pantry and Hyacinth received Holiday Food Bags.

Members of Hyacinth Board attended the Dinner as well as an individual who was being housed in Jersey City as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

We are most grateful for a wonderful response, for all those who provided salads and desserts and to those who served and cleaned up.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew C. Rhode, Jr.

Property Concerns

The installation of a stainless steel chimney liner was approved by the congregation and installation began in autumn and was completed in January of 2006. Much thanks to Gerry Bakirtjy and Andy Rhode for their patience and for making sure that this necessary work was completed.

Two 24,000 BTU window air conditioners were donated and were installed in Bavendam Hall in June. Thanks to Gerry Bakirtjy and his team of electricians (Rocco, Reed and Wynn) who installed the circuit breakers, conduit and switches necessary to operate the equipment. Thanks also to Andy Rhode who assisted me in installing the support frames and window units.

During 2006 we will be investigating and monitoring the cracks that are evident in the southern wall of our sanctuary building. I have interviewed one structural engineer and Diane Kaese and I have identified two specialist firms to also interview. We will present our findings and recommendations to the Congregation Council and most likely to the congregation during the first quarter.

During this past year we received dramatically more requests to address handicap accessibility to the this building as well as to the sanctuary. We will also make recommendations on this matter later in the year.

Sincerely,

Peter Jensen

Rummage Sales

Many years ago, the phrase "Ace Team" came about when initial placed on cups for re-use as we were working. Putting the cups on a shelf it became Andy, Carrie, Emma! This year Debbie McWilliams joined us and now we are known as the ACED Team.

Debbie is a wonderful member of the team, becoming very involved and most willing to work. Our appreciation Deb!

With many fine donations from members and neighbors we raised \$3,900 for the February and May Sales. With people moving and donating furniture, clothing and toys, \$2,200 was added in September and the November Sale netted \$2,354. Our Christmas sale ended up with \$259.

Together, our sales raised \$8,713. Having members who belong to Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, we received a matching grant of \$1,300 bringing our grand total to \$10,013.

We are most grateful for our sales and donations and for those who assisted us in so many ways. We are further thankful for the opportunity to share our surplus with other churches and organizations who serve those in need.

Please continue to support our Rummage Sale Ministry by donating or purchasing as it enables us to assist our church, our neighbors and underprivileged people.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew C. Rhode Jr.

Spoken Word Ministry

What is it? I believe Spoken Word Ministry is a way of communicating God's word via speaking and/or reading. It is an integral part of worship. It is also an essential way in which a person can more fully participate in the life of the church, convey God's Word, and enhance our worship experience.

How is it done? It is done by the reading aloud of God's word. However, it can also be done in a more personal and less structured level by incorporating interpretive spoken word readings during worship (material related to worship) either as a soloist or in conjunction with others. This can include adding music playing in the background and/or gestures. It is whatever the individual(s) deem would be appropriate and/or would enhance the piece being done.

Why? I see this as yet another way that a person, can more fully participate in worship and the life of the church. It enhances worship by making it more personal and allowing one to thank God, for an opportunity to grow and perhaps find something within that is unique to them and that they never knew was there. It also allows one a chance to share and communicate the word of God on a more personal level with others in a distinctive way unlike any other as well as share your whole self with others. Finally, and more importantly, it brings one closer to God and enables one to feel God's spirit at work and alive within them.

Having previously completed an interpretive piece, I can say that I felt all of these things. I also felt that the worship atmosphere, the depth of worship service, and my individual worship experience were lifted up more than usual. I see this as extremely positive and I strongly and heartily issue you an invitation to join in the Spoken Word Ministry. Make it as unique and individual as you are. Make it your own. Thank you so much for your kind attention.

Logistics of Ministry: There is now an active, rotating list of readers who were asked if they would be willing to read on a regularly scheduled basis before being put on the list. There are also "guest" readers who are not yet on the regular rotation who will be slotted in either one Sunday a month or perhaps for a whole month to give the regular readers a break (this is still a work in progress) who may then be asked to join the regular rotation at a later time. These may also be congregation members who would like to read but circumstances may prevent them from doing so on a regular basis or who only want to read occasionally. There are back up readers standing by in case of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.

Lectors/Readers are expected to arrive at least 15 minutes before worship begins on their scheduled date of reading so as to be made aware of any last minute changes or to do a mike check if needed. They are expected to contact me in advance (if possible) if they cannot be at church on their scheduled reading date or if they have not received their scheduled readings by the Wednesday before their scheduled reading date. I have provided contact information as well as phone numbers and an email address. I have provided some handy tips, which I believe, will assist them in this ministry. (See handy tips attached).

With the help of Mr. Timothy Andrews, an alternative microphone has been placed on the organ side and is available for those readers for whom the pulpit set up does not work. Readings are provided 3 days to 1 week ahead of time to those scheduled to read via email, regular mail, or in-person.

This is a new undertaking for me and as I am still feeling my way through it, I ask for your patience.

I can only say that I welcome any and all prayers, advice, ideas, and assistance that anyone wishes to provide. I also hope to learn and grow into this important work and hope that I can bring new ideas into the mix as well. I take this work very seriously and will do the best I can to make it all it can be.

I am both honored and humbled that someone believed enough in me to even ask me to be a part of this ministry. How truly magnificent God is that he led me to such a wonderful place with such fantastic people. Indeed, I am truly blessed!

Respectfully submitted

Deborah McWilliams

Policy on Sexual Harassment and Misconduct

Statement of Policy

It is the policy of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Matthew's) that sexual harassment and misconduct will not be tolerated. Any complaint of sexual harassment and misconduct will be dealt with quickly and confidentially. Our Policy applies to clergy, lay employees and volunteers. The intent of this Policy statement is to make certain that responses to any allegation of sexual harassment and misconduct be just and compassionate for all involved, and that all parties be heard.

Definition of Sexual Harassment and Misconduct

Sexual harassment and misconduct refers to behavior which is not welcome to the recipient and that is personally offensive. There are many forms of offensive behavior including, but is not limited to:

- Unwelcome sexual advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures
- Deliberate assaults or molestation
- Questions or comments about sexual behavior
- Gender based harassment
- Undesired physical contact
- Inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance
- Persistent sexually-oriented humor or language
- Continued or repeated jokes, language, epithets or remarks of a sexual nature
- Causing another person to engage in a sexual act by threatening that other person, placing that other person in fear or asserting undue influence over that other person
- Providing or displaying pornographic media to a person below the age permitted by law
- Any attempt to engage in or perform any of the above
- Any additional activity that is covered either by Federal or State laws

Reporting

Any person who believes that they have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment or misconduct, or have had a sexual harassment or misconduct issue reported to them should report it immediately to:

- The President of the Congregation's Council or his/her designated representative; or
- The senior pastor of this Congregation, or
- Reports involving a rostered member of the ordained clergy or rostered lay person at St. Matthew's, shall also be promptly reported to the Bishop of the New Jersey Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

If required by law, ordinance or similar regulations, a designated member of the Congregation shall immediately report this incident to the proper authorities.

Investigation

- Each incident that is reported will be promptly investigated with confidentiality, care and concern for all involved by the Congregation Council or designated committee.
- Investigation will include interviews with all concerned.
- Investigations will include review of all relevant documentation.
- The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances. Should an individual's words or conduct be determined to constitute misconduct or harassment, recommendations for action will be developed and appropriate action will be taken. The action will depend on the severity of the situation.
- The Congregation Council will be sensitive to the needs of all involved and shall provide any support necessary including counseling during the investigation and response.

Response

- The Congregation Council or designated committee will review all information obtained during the investigation, and when deemed necessary, will seek legal counsel to assist in the investigation and resolution.
- The Council, or committee, upon reaching a course of action, will meet separately with the person filing the complaint and then with the accused to communicate the results and resolution.
- The Council may recommend a course of action that may include counseling, education, or disciplinary action.
- If a complaint is not substantiated, all parties will be informed.
- St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church will not engage in or tolerate retaliation against any clergy person, lay employee, or volunteer for making a good faith claim of misconduct or harassment or providing information relating to such complaints during an investigation.

Communication of Policy

This Policy shall be given to and review with the Congregation's clergy and employees to ensure their understanding and support of this Policy. This review shall take place on a regular basis. Their signature below indicates that the individual employee has reviewed, understands and supports this policy statement.

In addition, the Congregation shall periodically publicize this Policy to all its members and volunteers through church bulletins and other appropriate forms of communication.

Approval

The Congregation Council of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church has approved this policy as of March 15, 2005.

Clergy, Employee and Volunteer Acknowledgement

_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Date

Our Affirmation of Welcome

As a community of the people of God, we are called to minister to all people in our world, knowing that the world is often an unloving place. Our world is a place of alienation and brokenness. Christ calls us to reconciliation and wholeness. We are challenged by the Gospel to be agents of healing within our society.

We affirm with the apostle Paul that in Christ "*there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female*" (Galatians 3:38). Christ has made us one. We acknowledge this reconciliation extends also to those whose affectional orientation is toward a person of the same gender.

Because gay and lesbian persons are often scorned by society and alienated from the Church, we wish to make known our caring and concern. It is for this purpose that we affirm the following:

- that gay and lesbian people share with all others the worth that comes from being unique individuals created by God;
- that gay and lesbian people are welcome within the membership of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church upon making the same affirmation of faith that all other people make; and
- that as members of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, gay and lesbian people are expected and encouraged to share in the sacramental and general life of our congregation and of the New Jersey Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Adopted March 25, 2001

Evaluation of meeting checklist:

- Feelings – Share a word or a sentence that expresses your feelings as a result of this meeting. If you don't have a feeling to share just say "pass."
- Tensions – Were there any actions or discussions that made you feel uncomfortable or tense?
- Performance – How did we do in terms of accomplishing our work for the evening?
- Strategic Learning – As an organization, did we learn something new about how we lead?