

St. Matthew's

CHURCH AND SCHOOL

Fourth Sunday in Advent

December 21, 2025

WELS

Christ's Love, Our Calling.

Welcome to St. Matthew's!

We are delighted that you have joined us for worship today! It is our prayer that God would fill you with His grace and peace as we worship our Lord and Savior Jesus. If you have questions about St. Matthew's or would like to speak to one of the pastors, please feel free to reach out to us using the contact information on the back cover.

IMMINENT ARRIVAL

IMMINENT ARRIVAL OF EMMANUEL

Emmanuel is an important person. "Emmanuel" means "God with us." It was a special name given to Jesus already 700 years before he was born. Who is with us when Jesus is with us? God himself. God became a human being in a special way, becoming truly human but remaining God.

God is still with us. We encounter him in a special way when we gather with two or three others in worship. He is so near to us that the thrill of anticipation is almost unbearable. Let it wash over you as you celebrate Christmas this week.

ADVENT WREATH

The Lighting of the candles on the **Advent Wreath** is a blessed tradition of Advent. The circular nature of the wreath signifies the nature of God—without beginning or end. Each candle represents a different aspect of the Advent and Christmas story.

The first one is the Prophecy Candle; the second—the Bethlehem Candle; the third—the Angel Candle (pink). The candle in the center is called the Christ Candle and will be lit on Christmas Eve. Today we light **the Shepherd's Candle** which recalls the delight of the Shepherds as they saw their Savior.



For Your Convenience

- ◊ Restrooms are located down the hallway on the left.
- ◊ A Parents' room is available in the back of the sanctuary for those with small children.
- ◊ A Mother's room, located in the parents' room, offers privacy for nursing mothers.
- ◊ Large Print Service Folders are available from an usher upon request.
- ◊ Please silence your cell phones before worship.
- ◊ View services on Charter 985 on Thursdays at 12PM and 7PM or Sundays at 10AM. You can also visit https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=st+matthews+oconomowoc
- ◊ St. Matthew's is on Instagram. You can follow us @St.MatthewsOconomowoc.

The Order of Worship for
Fourth Sunday in Advent
December 21, 2025

Preservice **O Come, O Come, Emmanuel**

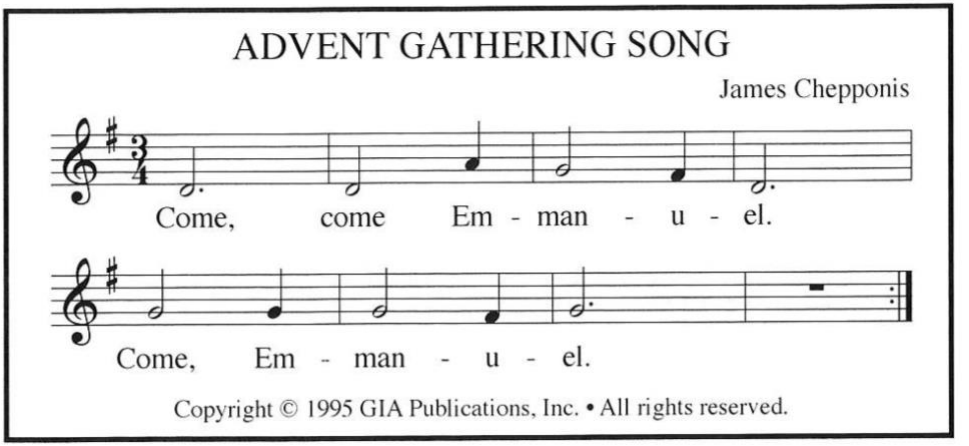
Handbells

Advent Gathering Rite

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

And also with you.

The following refrain repeats as the cantor sings the verses below.



1. God will give us a sign, so *come*...
2. For a child from the virgin will *come*...
3. And his name will be Jesus, so *come*...
4. Oh the King of glory shall *come*...
5. He will save us from sin, so *come*...
6. For the son of God will *come*...

Confession

We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as our dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

Congregation sings refrain once before cantor sings

Cantor sings	Lord, have mercy upon us and *come*…
	Christ have mercy upon us and *come*…
	Lord, have mercy upon us and *come*…

Absolution

God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will. **Amen.**

All sing the refrain one final time together

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the burden of our sins, and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

The Word

First Reading *(Sermon Text)* — Isaiah 7:10-14
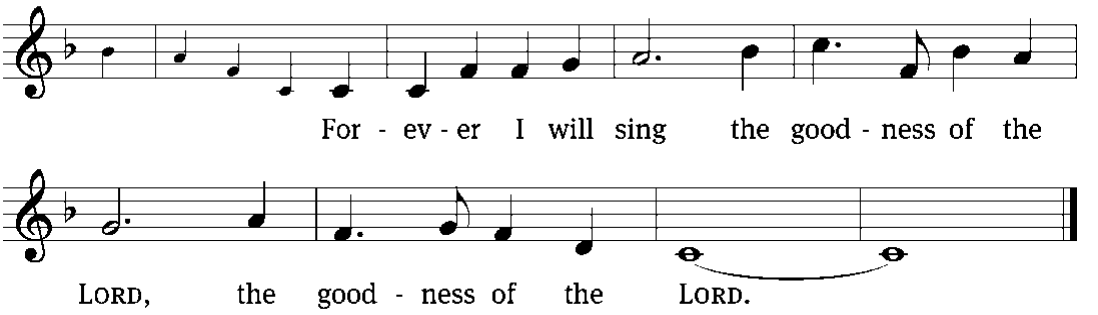
Isaiah prophesies that a virgin would give birth to God in the flesh.

10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, 11 "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the
deepest depths or in the highest heights."
12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test."
13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience
of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will
give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him
Immanuel.
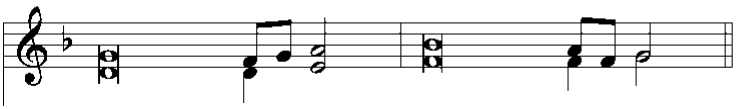
The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 89A — Forever I Will Sing

Refrain



Tone



I will sing of the LORD's great love for- / ever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all gener- / ations.
I will declare that your love stands firm for- / ever,
that you have established your faithfulness in / heav'n itself.

The heavens praise your / wonders, LORD,
your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the / holy ones. *Refrain*

Who is like you, LORD God Al- / mighty?
You, LORD, are mighty, and your faithfulness sur- / rounds you.
Blessed are those who have learned to ac- / claim you,
who walk in the light of your / presence, LORD.
They rejoice in your name / all day long;
they celebrate your / righteousness.
Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain*

Tune: Marty Haugen
Text: © 1969, 1981, 1997 ICEL (refrain). Used by permission: OneLicense no. 716690
Tune: © 1988, 1994 GIA Publications, Inc. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 716690
Setting: © 2011 Faith Alive Christian Resources. Used by permission: License no. 130017693

Second Reading — *Romans 1:1-7*

After thousands of years of God's promises, Paul looks back and sees every one of them kept when God became man.

[1]Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— [2]the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures [3]regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, [4]and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. [5]Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. [6]And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.
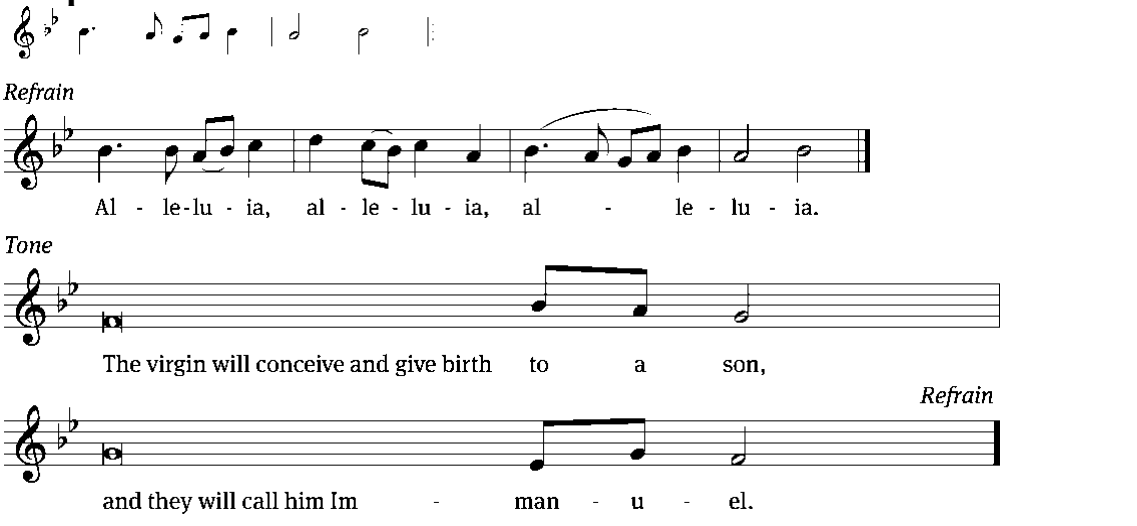
[7]To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Anthem — Still, Still, Still

Handbells

Gospel Acclamation *Matthew 1 :23*



Tune: © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 716690

Gospel *Matthew 1:18-25*

Joseph knew full well that Mary would give birth to a son who would be Emmanuel, God with us.

[18]This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. [19]Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

[20]But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21]She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

[22]All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: [23]"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

[24]When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. [25]But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise be to you, O Christ!

Hymn 327 **O Come, O Come, Emmanuel**

Sermon **God Is With Us**

Pastor Mark Voss

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Connection Cards and Offerings

We are delighted you have joined us for worship today and we would love to stay connected with you. To help us do so, please fill out the Connection Card in the seat back. You may place it in the offering plate as the offering is gathered or hand it to one of the ushers. You also have the ability to record your worship or give a gift using the appropriate QR code below. Those who have downloaded the St. Matthew's App can check-in and give offerings directly through the app. You may also text GIVE to 833-921-6451.

Guest Form St. Matthew's App Give Online

Forward for the Next Generation Video

We encourage you to refer to turn to Page 15 in the Worship Folder for more information pertaining to this video.

Prayer of the Church

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.
Amen.

Closing Hymn 360 Behold, a Branch Is Growing

In our Prayers: We rejoice with **Rob and Beth Knoelke** who are celebrating their 47th Wedding Anniversary

Join us this afternoon at 1:00p, as our Grade School children in grades 3-8 present their Christmas Service: "The Christmas Gift"

Acknowledgments
Setting One from Christian Worship
Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.TM Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.
Liturgical and musical settings of Scripture based on text from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.TM Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.
Software distributed in partnership with Northwestern Publishing House.
Created by Christian Worship: Service Builder © 2024 Concordia Publishing House.
The following are used by permission under CCLI Church Copyright License no. 2688981 and CCLI Streaming License no. CSPL055104.

Bible Study Opportunities

Sunday Adult Bible Study @ 9:15am
Our Adult Bible Class is on a historical journey generation by generation, seeing how God has blessed WELS over these past 175 years! For parents with young children, childcare is available for children ages 0-3 in the Pre-K2 room so that those parents can attend class.

Teen Study @ 9:15am
Sunday School is on a two-week break and will resume on Sunday, January 4. Teen study will meet this week but will not meet Sunday, December 28.

Thursday "Women in the Word" Bible Class – Resumes January 8
Join us in January as we begin a new study of God's Word, specifically examining the **Book of Daniel**. Most people recall that he was in the Lion's Den, but there so much more! Join us on Thursday mornings at 8:30 a.m. in the Gathering Space.

Men's Bible Breakfast – 2nd Saturdays of the Month
Calling all men to come for a great breakfast and a study of God's Word. Breakfast starts at 7:30am on the second Saturday of each month. Pastor Bigelow is leading the topic, "Connecting Sinai to Calvary."

Grounded in God
SHINE Women's Ministry would like to invite all St. Matthew's women and friends to join us for Coffee and Devotion, "Grounded in God". Join us in the Gathering Space at Church at 7:45 a.m., conveniently after school drop-off. Children are welcome!

Thank you for Serving our Savior and Us		
	This Weekend	**Next Weekend – December 27 & 28**
Ushers	**Early –** Tim Taubenheim **Late –** Andy Rosenau	**Christmas Eve 1pm –** Eric Ziel **Christmas Eve 3:30pm** – Todd Helwig **Christmas Eve 6:30 pm –** Sam Weiss **Christmas Day –** Jim Fulmer **Saturday** – Tony Kobussen **Early –** Josh Strassburg **Late –** Bill Neubauer
Greeters	**Early** – John & Jill Fields **Late** –	**Christmas Day** – Curt Delie **Early –** Joe & Jill Sharp **Late** – Mike & Joy Lenz
Hospitality	**Early –** Gary & Karen Haertel **Late –** Tim & Sandy Torgerson **LES 1pm –** Char Bouche	**Christmas Eve 1pm –** Char Bouche **Christmas Eve 3:30pm** – Rudy & Chris Dovnik **Christmas Eve 6:30 pm –** Jon & Ginny Kehren **Christmas Day –** Ralph & Tracy Schmidt **Saturday** – **Early –** Tom & Mary Thiele **Late –**
Organist	Pastor Jon Kehren	**Christmas Eve –** Joy Elowski **Christmas Day –** Char Bouche **Sunday –** Diane Erdman
Special Music	Handbells	**Christmas Eve –** Choir, Emily Knoelke **Christmas Day** - Choir
Projection	**Early –** Jon/Henry Peterson **Late –** Josh Charais	**Christmas Eve 1pm –** Ava Hillmann **Christmas Eve 3:30pm** – Harper Gerczak **Christmas Eve 6:30 pm –** Kendra Lauersdorf **Christmas Day –** Dan Shaw **Saturday** – Molly Kalma **Early –** Kylee Glorioso **Late –** Matthias Uttech
Sound	**Early –** Julia Watson **Late –** Charlie Bagdassian	**Christmas Eve 1pm –** Scott Heins **Christmas Eve 3:30pm** – Joel Aldinger **Christmas Eve 6:30 pm –** Steve Vasatko **Christmas Day –** Rik Krahn **Saturday** – Vickie Bence **Early –** Karen Haertel **Late –** Heather Bigelow
Livestream	Jason Cox	**Christmas Eve –** Andy Hiloman **Christmas Day –** Tim Taubenheim **Sunday –** John Schuh

This Week at St. Matthew's		
Sunday	8 & 10:30 am 9:15 am 1:00 pm	Worship Service Adult Bible Study; Sunday School; Teen Bible Study LES Christmas Service (Grades 3-8)
Monday	6:30 pm	Bible Information Class
Wednesday	1, 3:30 & 6:30 pm	Christmas Eve Services
Thursday	9:00 am	Christmas Day Service
Friday		Church & School Office Closed
Saturday	5:30 pm	Communion Service
Sunday	8 & 10:30 am	Communion Service

Highlights and Announcements

Giving That Makes Ministry Possible
"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." — Matthew 6:21
Giving is the outward sign of an inward trust. In Christ, we've received everything by grace, and our gifts are a joyful response. Through your generosity, the Spirit multiplies our offerings into worship, care, service, and learning. God uses ordinary generosity to do extraordinary things—comforting the weary, forming young disciples, and sending the Gospel into our community. This is the impact of faithful stewardship—giving that reflects the heart of Jesus. May God shape our hearts to give cheerfully and confidently, knowing that He provides for every need.

— **Board of Stewardship**

SCAM EMAIL Reminder
Please be aware of scam emails that appear to come from St. Matthew's pastors or staff. **No St. Matthew's pastor or staff member will ever ask you for money or gift cards.**
A quick check: hover over the sender's email—if it does not end in **@smls.org**, it is not from us. When in doubt, call the person directly or contact the church or school office.

New Online Store
Get ready for Christmas with St. Matthew's! We've teamed up with EZ Promotions to bring you an extra online store option—*20% of all purchases* go back to St. Matthew's. Find St. Matthew's, Cardinal, and First Steps gear for the whole family! Order at https://bit.ly/SMezstore

German Worship Service For Christmas
Celebrate Christmas with a German Worship Service at 10:00 AM on Wednesday, December 24, at St. Mark's Church in Watertown (215 N. 6th Street, two blocks north of Main Street). All are welcome to attend. For more information, call 262-8500.

2026 Marriage Retreat

Looking for a meaningful Christmas gift for your spouse? Register for St. Matthew's Marriage Retreat on **Saturday, February 14, 2026**. The church is covering the cost of the CliftonStrengths assessment, a $25 value per person. Upgrade options are available for those who want a deeper dive. Register today at https://bit.ly/SMmarriage or use the QR Code.

Lift Up Our Cardinals: DONATE TO SOAR 2026!

St. Matthew's School is looking forward to **Soar: A Night Benefiting Cardinal Scholars on Saturday, March 7, 2026**! This special evening supports our students through a fun night of fellowship and giving. Make sure to mark your calendars! We're currently seeking **donations** such as gift baskets, event tickets, unique experiences, or services that can be featured in our fundraising activities. Every contribution helps our Cardinals continue to learn, grow, and thrive. If you or your business would like to donate or sponsor the event, please contact us at soar@smls.org. Thank you!

Tickets to SOAR are Now on Sale!

Spend a festive evening at ***Rustic Manor on Saturday, March 7,*** enjoying complimentary beer, wine, and savory small plates — all in support of our Cardinal Scholars and the St. Matthew's community.
Space is limited. Reserve your spot today! https://auctria.events/SOAR2026

St. Matthew's Christmas Project

This year, St. Matthew's is partnering with **Make-A-Wish Wisconsin**! We're collecting **new, unwrapped toys** to help bring joy to children's wish journeys. Donation boxes are located at the church and school **now through January 5**. *Let's share the hope and excitement of the season with those who need it most!* Use the QR Code for the wish list or to donate online.

St Matthew's Ski Club 2025-26 Season

Ski Club is back! Students ages **7–18** can join our Alpine Valley ski club. A **$30 Club Card** includes one free lesson and discounts on lift tickets, rentals, and lessons.
Sign up for **St. Matthew's Ski Club 2025–2026:** https://bit.ly/SMski
Club Nights (3 PM): Jan 5 & 19, Feb 9 & 27
Contact **Kristi Albert** **kalbert74@gmail.com** **262-617-6468**

Save the Date: Women's Retreat – February 28, 2026

Join us for a day of fellowship and spiritual growth at our annual Women's Retreat! This year's theme, **"Renewed Minds, Transformed Lives"** (Romans 12:2), invites us to experience God's transformative power. **Early Bird Registration opens January 1, 2026.** More details coming soon!

Opportunity to Help Our Neighbors
Zachariah's Acres, located just north of our congregation, is looking for volunteers to help at their WINTERFEST Family Event on Saturday, January 31st. The volunteer shift is 12:15-4:30 and the event runs 1:00-4:00 p.m. Please visit https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B054BA8AF2CA31-59923312-winterfest/4302118#/ if you can help! Volunteering helps children with special needs and their families. Volunteers must be 16+ and are asked fill out the Zachariah's Acres volunteer application located on their website. Zachariah's Acres mission is to connect children with special needs, and their families, to the miracles of nature so they may know their Creator. Contact Karen Vasatko 262-422-7725 with any questions!



Reminder for Worship Next Weekend

A Festival Service of Scripture and Song

Dec. 27	**Saturday Worship – Christmas 1**	**5:30pm**
Dec. 28	**Sunday Morning – Christmas 1**	**8:00 & 10:30am**
	No Bible classes this Sunday; No NY Eve service	

FORWARD
FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

December
2025 Edition

Spotlight: Celebrating 2025, Preparing for 2026

This month's episode of our Forward for the Next Generation video series takes a look back at the ways God has worked through St. Matthew's in 2025 and shares a glimpse of what's ahead in 2026. Church President Kyle Koltz reflects on a year of faithful growth, ministry blessings, and the financial realities that come with an ambitious, gospel-focused ministry plan.

A Year of Faithful Growth

- **Blessings & Realities:** Kyle Koltz reflects, "Our ministry plan is blossoming, but we're also dealing with the practical realities of expenses."
- **A Christ-Centered Mission:** Despite financial pressure, our ministry plan remains bold and focused on spreading the gospel—bringing more people, including those new to the faith, into our St. Matthew's family.
- **Growing Use of Our Campus:** Kyle shares his excitement over "all the activity and how we're using the facility and gathering space" to connect people to Jesus and to one another.

Financial Snapshot

- The 2025–26 ministry plan required a 24% increase to our unified budget offering, following several years of 10%+ annual giving growth.
- Offerings are currently behind plan but still more than 10% higher than this time last year.
- Leadership continues to steward resources carefully:
  - The Personal Member Ministry coordination role remains paused, with volunteers continuing its work.
  - The Music Coordinator role is budgeted, with a planned call for July 1, 2026 to align with staffing needs and the next ministry plan.

Looking Ahead to 2026

Kyle emphasizes keeping Christ at the center of every decision:
"We have to make sure we check the boxes on why we're doing this—sharing Jesus' redemptive love with everyone."

He reminds us of our mission:
"We want to take as many people as possible to heaven with us."

Watch Video & Reflect

SCAN ME

OUR MISSION *COMPELLED BY THE LOVE OF CHRIST,*

St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church and School seek to reach out to our families, community and world, using Law and Gospel to make disciples, growing and nurturing them in their Christian faith and life.

PHILIP BIGELOW
Pastor
pbigelow@smls.org

STEVEN HILLMER
Pastor
shillmer@smls.org

MARK VOSS
Pastor
mvoss@smls.org

TOM PLITZUWEIT
Principal
tplitzuweit@smls.org

JULIE NEHR
School Admin Assistant
jnehr@smls.org

JENNIFER MANSSEN
Church Office Manager
jmanssen@smls.org

GEORGE ZAFEROS
Business Administrator
gzaferos@smls.org

CONNIE ABRAM
Communication Manager
cabram@smls.org

AMBER TERRY
First Steps Director
aterry@smls.org

St. Matthew's CHURCH AND SCHOOL

First Steps CHILD CARE CENTER

WORSHIP SERVICES SATURDAY: 5:30 PM
SUNDAY: 8:00 & 10:30 AM

Christian Education For All
SUNDAY 9:15 AM

Phone :

Church: 262.912.6060
School: 262.912.6364
First Steps: 262.912.6338

Welcome Visitors:
Please fill out the connection card in pew or scan

SCAN ME

Location :
1650 Brown St, Oconomowoc

Social Media:
@StMatthewsOconomowoc

Website : SMLS.ORG