



# THE EVANGEL

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. MATTHEWS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## A THOUGHTFUL RESOLUTION

When we gather for communion, we take comfort in these words: Christ our Lord invites to His table all who love Him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another.

These words go to the heart of the debate around human sexuality that has challenged many denominations, including our own.

To discern the path for St. Matthews, your leadership, working through the cross-campus shepherding team and with our pastors, set up holy conversations in small groups to hear from everyone.

The goal was to explore all options, explain the process of disaffiliation from the United Methodist denomination, and to hear from you.

Two themes stood out: We are a loving congregation confronting a difficult situation in a mature way. Second, there were questions and concerns, but no clear push to leave the United Methodist Church.

The congregation's message was clear from the beginning. While we could have used time and energy for surveys, consultants and even a vote, church leaders decided to direct those resources to put more momentum into our ministry.

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VOLUME 61, ISSUE 4

MAY 2, 2023



# United Women in Faith

The Sarah Circle of the UWIF at St. Matthews invites all women of the church to join them for lunch and games at Heitzman's Bakery on Saturday, May 20, at

THANK  
YOU

Thanks to all who helped with the Take Me Away Tea for family caregivers- food preparers, servers, set up people and those who washed china and put it away. Special thanks to Ruth Payne for decorations, to Emily Ford for being our "event planner" and to Melanie Sparks for an excellent presentation on self-care which lifted everyone's spirits.



# ST. MATTHEWS

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
RIVER CITY - TABERNACULO DE AVIVAMIENTO

## SERVICE INFORMATION

**BROWNS LANE CAMPUS**  
319 Browns Lane  
Sunday Morning Worship

**8:30am Traditional**

**IN-PERSON & LIVE-STREAMED**

[https://www.facebook.com/  
St.MatthewsUMCLouisville](https://www.facebook.com/St.MatthewsUMCLouisville)

Also available Sunday afternoon on  
YouTube: St. Matthews UMC Louisville

**11:00am Traditional** (In-person only)

**12:30pm Tabernaculo de Avivamiento**  
(Gordon Hall)

**IN-PERSON & LIVE-STREAMED**

[https://www.facebook.com/  
tda.church.1](https://www.facebook.com/tda.church.1)

**RIVER CITY CAMPUS**  
4611 Lowe Rd.

Sunday Morning Worship

**10:45am IN-PERSON & LIVE-STREAMED**

[https://www.facebook.com/  
rivercityumc/](https://www.facebook.com/rivercityumc/)

Giving Online:

[https://www.stmatthews  
methodist.com/giving](https://www.stmatthewsmethodist.com/giving)

or

[https://www.rivercity  
methodist.com/give-online/](https://www.rivercitymethodist.com/give-online/)

## IN OUR PRAYERS

### SENIOR/ASSISTED LIVING AND REHAB

THE ALTENHEIM  
Debbie Brown

BELMONT VILLAGE  
Barbara Harding  
Barbara Tracy

CHEROKEE PARK REHAB  
Grace Hunt

ENCLAVE OF EAST LOUISVILLE  
Liz Swindler

THE FORUM AT BROOKSIDE  
Geneva Madden

HALLMARK HOUSE  
Charlotte Mosley

THE LEGACY (ENGLISH STA.)  
Harold Freeman

PARR'S AT SPRINGHURST  
Forest Bower

STORYPOINT PROSPECT  
Barbara Hamric

### PRAYER REQUESTS

Russell Browder

April Bunn

John Bunn

Ray Cashen

The Cox Family

Pam Cox

Ronnie Dolen

Mark Foster

Chad Graham

Davis Gray

Corky Hall

Christina Harrison

Beverly Herron

Mary Lea Kirven

Jamie Mercer

The Mitchell Family

Bridgette & Phil Mix

Erin Murphy

Tabby Nuckols

Kathy Nugent

Elizabeth Putnam

Nilah Putnam

Tom Roppel

Eleanor Rupert

Tom Schoeberl

Denise Scott

John Sheesley

Bill Sherman

Scott Simpson

Cindy Stuart

Don Wagaman

Luke Watts

Bill Wild

Hans Young

Let us know how we may join in your prayer concerns by filling out a prayer request card, by phoning the church office, by email at [prayers@saintmatthewsumc.org](mailto:prayers@saintmatthewsumc.org), or on the church website: [www.stmatthewsmethodist.com](http://www.stmatthewsmethodist.com).

# WHAT'S GOING ON AT ST. MATTHEWS UMC

## Sunday, May 7

Traditional Worship, Sanctuary ----- 8:30A  
 Sunday School (All Ages) ----- 10:00A  
 River City Worship (4611 Lowe Rd) ----- 10:45A  
 Traditional Worship, Sanctuary ----- 11:00A  
 Tabernaculo de Avivamiento, Gordon Hall ----- 12:30P  
 AA Group, River City ----- 2:30P  
 Girl Scouts, River City ----- 3:00P  
 Youth Choir, Music Suite ----- 4:30P  
 Youth Group ----- 5:00P

## Monday, May 8

Morning Bells, Music Suite ----- 10:00A  
 Quilted Memories, 204 ----- 11:30A  
 AA Group, River City ----- 6:30P  
 Alanon, River City ----- 6:30P

## Tuesday, May 9

Bible Study Fellowship ----- 6:30P

## Wednesday, May 10

Morning Prayers, 218 ----- 8:30A  
 St. Matthews Ringers, Music Suite ----- 4:30P  
 Wednesday Night Live! Dinner, Gordon Hall ----- 5:00P  
 20-Somethings Community Group, River City ----- 6:00P  
 Youth Handbells, Music Suite ----- 6:00P  
 Children's Choirs, 202, 105 ----- 6:15P  
 Behind the Scenes, 102 ----- 6:30P  
 Philippians Study, 106 ----- 6:30P  
 Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal, Music Suite ----- 7:00P

## Thursday, May 11

Circle of Friends Quilt Guild, 204 ----- 10:00A  
 Diabetes Support Group, 218 ----- 7:00P

## Friday, May 12

Morning Men's Group, Heine Bros Hike Pt ----- 7:30A  
 Educare Cottage School, River City ----- 8:00A

## Sunday, May 14

Traditional Worship, Sanctuary ----- 8:30A  
 Sunday School (All Ages) ----- 10:00A  
 River City Worship (4611 Lowe Rd) ----- 10:45A  
 Traditional Worship, Sanctuary ----- 11:00A  
 Tabernaculo de Avivamiento, Gordon Hall ----- 12:30P  
 AA Group, River City ----- 2:30P  
 Youth Choir, Music Suite ----- 4:30P  
 Youth Group ----- 5:00P

## Monday, May 15

Morning Bells, Music Suite ----- 10:00A  
 Quilted Memories, 204 ----- 11:30A  
 AA Group, River City ----- 6:30P  
 Alanon, River City ----- 6:30P

Board of Trustees, 204 ----- 6:30P

## Tuesday, May 16

## Wednesday, May 17

Morning Prayers, 218 ----- 8:30A  
 St. Matthews Ringers, Music Suite ----- 4:30P  
 Wednesday Night Live! Dinner, Gordon Hall ----- 5:00P  
 20-Somethings Community Group, River City ----- 6:00P  
 Youth Handbells, Music Suite ----- 6:00P  
 Children's Choirs, 202, 105 ----- 6:15P  
 Behind the Scenes, 102 ----- 6:30P  
 Philippians Study, 106 ----- 6:30P  
 Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal, Music Suite ----- 7:00P

## Thursday, May 18

St. Matthews Chamber of Commerce, 204 ----- 8:00A  
 Circle of Friends Quilt Guild, 204 ----- 10:00A  
 Diabetes Support Group, Browns Lane 218 ----- 6:15P

## Friday, May 19

Morning Men's Group, Heine Bros Hike Pt ----- 7:30A  
 Educare Cottage School, River City ----- 8:00A

## Saturday, May 20

United Women in Faith, Heitzman's ----- 11:30A  
 Kinman Piano Studio, Sanctuary ----- 2:00P

## Sunday, May 21

Traditional Worship, Sanctuary ----- 8:30A  
 Sunday School (All Ages) ----- 10:00A  
 River City Worship (4611 Lowe Rd) ----- 10:45A  
 Traditional Worship, Sanctuary ----- 11:00A  
 Tabernaculo de Avivamiento, Gordon Hall ----- 12:30P  
 Samuelson Piano Studio, Sanctuary ----- 2:00P  
 AA Group, River City ----- 2:30P  
 Girl Scouts, River City ----- 3:00P  
 Youth Choir, Music Suite ----- 5:30P  
 Youth Group ----- 5:00P

## Monday, May 22

Morning Bells, Music Suite ----- 10:00A  
 Quilted Memories, 204 ----- 11:30A  
 AA Group, River City ----- 6:30P  
 Alanon, River City ----- 6:30P

## Wednesday, May 24

Morning Prayers, 218 ----- 8:30A  
 St. Matthews Ringers, Music Suite ----- 4:30P  
 20-Somethings Community Group, River City ----- 6:00P  
 Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal, Music Suite ----- 7:00P

# MAY Birthdays

May 2 ----- Angelo Vaccaro  
Ashley Deskins

May 3 ----- Karen Fenton  
Debbie Cheatham  
John Dickinson

May 4 ----- Xander Kleiner  
Scott Weigel

May 5 ----- Katharine Shafferman  
B.J. Allison  
Gary Davenport

May 6 ----- Phil Hunt  
Meg Lebeck

May 7 ----- Ralph Snowberger

May 8 ----- Harrison Zoercher

May 9 ----- Thomas Priest

May 10 ----- Chaz Hammond, III

May 11 ----- Brianne Setzer  
John Howard

May 13 ----- Brenda Froelich

May 14 ----- Janice Smith  
Jenna Faulhaber

May 15 ----- Megan Harrington  
Dylan Shafferman

May 18 ----- Willa Mook

May 19 ----- Becky Hall  
Pierce Hackett  
Abby Hackett Welton  
Becky Fenton  
Kalab Golden

May 20 ----- Aaron Weaver  
Evan Walker  
Oscar Guerrero Sanchez

May 21 ----- Mary Jenkins  
Nathan Dearen  
Anne Shadle

May 24 ----- Joshua Hilliker

May 25 ----- Kameron Reed

May 26 ----- Barbara Hamric  
Sharon Hammond  
Bob Oliver

May 27 ----- Juanita Blakeman-Cashen  
Elijah Glover

May 28 ----- Frances Smith

May 29 ----- Kathleen Bartels

May 30 ----- Emily Sheesley  
Mike Silliman

May 31 ----- Alyssa Gorman-Lyons  
Karen Diehl

## *In Sympathy*

Our thoughts and prayers are with Dee & Don Wagaman on the recent death of her nephew, Richard Miller, in Maryland;

and with Bridgette & Phil Mix on the death of her daughter, Aleah Aaron, on March 26, in Oregon.



## **St. Matthews UMC May Food Drive for Chenoweth Elementary**

Chenoweth Elementary, located at 3622 Brownsboro Rd, has installed a food pantry on their school grounds. Within days of being filled, their food pantry is emptied. Chenoweth Elementary has asked for help keeping the food pantry stocked. For the month of May, St. Matthews United Methodist is collecting non-perishable food items in the Upper Colonnade. Together, we can help fight this food insecurity in our community. Please contact Chenoweth mom Emily Sustek at [ehelenab@gmail.com](mailto:ehelenab@gmail.com) with any questions, and don't forget your non-perishables next week!

### **HELP WANTED**

**WHEN:** Saturday, May 20, 2023  
9:00AM - 1:00PM

**WHERE:** St. Matthews UMC, Browns Lane Campus

**WHAT:** Painting, Mulching, Miscellaneous

**CONTACT:** Charlie Stevens, [stevenscharlese@aol.com](mailto:stevenscharlese@aol.com)  
Sandy Hottell, [shottell@stmumc.org](mailto:shottell@stmumc.org)

## RESOLUTION (continued from page 1)

Frankly, there was an awareness that a disaffiliation vote would not change our course but would create anxiety and even division. You may want to know that other large United Methodist Churches in our area reached that same conclusion. Thus, the cross-campus shepherding team and the administrative board have resolved unanimously to remain in the United Methodist Church.

Our opportunity is to remain who we are – a congregation that has always had differing backgrounds and opinions – and the will to find common ground and work together.

The Council of Bishops and our St. Matthews UMC clergy have encouraged us to stay unified -- to reclaim, revive and renew our ministry.

The task, as John Wesley would put it, remains to do all the good we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, in all the places we can, at all the times we can, to all the people we can, as long as ever we can.

Are we able to remain true to that heritage and move forward as people who love the Lord, who earnestly repent and seek to live in peace?

With your help, Lord, we answer: “Yes, we can.”

### Cross Campus Shepherding Team

Dennis Shaw, John Stokes, Karen Fenton, Sean Deskins, Courtney Kellner, Paul Powell, Raiko Ruz, Yoel Escriba

### Administrative Board

Marcus Norton, Chairperson, Juanita Blakeman, Lisa Martin, Charlie Stevens, Dennis Shaw, Stacie Leonard, Connie Mele, Sean Deskins, John Dickinson, Gary Stuart, John Ford, Tom Jones, Carolyn Childress, Cordell Lawrence

Continued:

Page 8: Appendix I, St. Matthews UMC Discernment Process

Page 9: Appendix II, Statement from Bishop Leonard Fairley

Page 11: Appendix III, Statement from St. Matthews UMC Clergy

## Appendix I: St. Matthews UMC Discernment Process

The discernment process used by our congregation involved three steps and began more than four years ago.

First, our church engaged in two rounds of Holy Conversations (2018 and 2020) to foster healthy dialogue. The first round involved broader conversations around race, violence, human sexuality, and other issues. The second round, which was cut short by COVID, focused on human sexuality and the upcoming General Conference.

Second, in 2022 our church engaged in a series of informational sessions led by our Cross-Campus Shepherding Team. These sessions laid out the issues at hand, the disaffiliation plan that General Conference had approved, and positioned members of the Cross-Campus Shepherding Team for questions and feedback.

Third, in early 2023, after hearing no clear push from the congregation to leave the United Methodist Church, the Cross-Campus Shepherding Team made the decision to forgo further discernment and draft a resolution to stay United Methodist in an effort to reduce uncertainty and gain momentum in our ministries going forward.

Why did we not hold a church-wide vote? A disaffiliation vote was a tool only for churches who wanted to leave the United Methodist Church for reasons related to human sexuality. Under the Book of Discipline, disaffiliation votes are the exception, not the rule. With the church clearly not leaning that way and with no formal inquiries made to the Annual Conference, our Cross-Campus Shepherding Team and Administrative Board believed that no vote was necessary and that a church-wide vote might actually be harmful.



## Appendix II: Statement from Bishop Leonard Fairley, Kentucky Annual Conference

Sisters and brothers in Christ, I have watched with great sadness as congregations have inquired and voted on disaffiliation. It is out of this sadness that I speak to you now. I know many of you are wondering if I will call a special session of Annual Conference this fall. I will answer that question in this statement, but first you need to hear my heart.

Throughout this season of disaffiliation, the Kentucky Annual Conference Trustees and the Appointive Cabinet have acted in ways that have been fair and gracious toward congregations and clergy who have chosen to disaffiliate or withdraw from The United Methodist Church. That posture will not change.

I acknowledge that there is a perceived lack of trust with the Connection. However, I believe Kentucky's record of trustworthiness and grace has been exhibited throughout this process. While there is continuing pressure from voices urging our congregations to "get out while you can," I give thanks for the many congregations and clergy who have decided to remain United Methodist and for the congregations who have decided to extend their season of discernment through the 2024 General Conference.

Last summer, we shared a discernment tool to aid you in this, or in any decision-making process. This extended time of discernment allows you to fully weigh every available option. We are able to make the best decisions when all the information is on the table.

I am deeply troubled for congregations who are making decisions based on fear, coercion, biased or inaccurate information, and without knowing what options may be forthcoming from the 2024 General Conference. Passionate Spiritual disciples and leaders are guided by the Holy Spirit, not by fear.

It is my continued expectation that before voting, every United Methodist clergy and layperson lead with a grace that exhibits fairness for all voices. Please remember you do not need to vote on anything. However, if your conscience around human sexuality makes it necessary, please make sure you are using deep discernment from the whole congregation, not just a select few.

Again, fear is not a good place to start discernment. No one should feel "forced" to leave or stay. Paragraph 2553 states the limited reasons a church may disaffiliate and outlines specific mandates to do so. If you are voting, your district superintendent, in strict adherence to The Book of Discipline, will give this as the sole reason behind the vote. Churches who vote to leave for any other reason are not living into the requirements of this process, and that will be between you and God. We cannot determine what is in a person's heart when he or she votes.

Amid all the talk of disaffiliation and misinformation, I am concerned we have not reminded ourselves and celebrated the strengths of our United Methodist theology and tradition. In fact, there are abundant reasons to remain UMC. Below, you will find 12 compelling reasons to remain United Methodist, because there is humble strength and beauty in our Connection: We all have benefited from our Connection:

Theological:

- We believe in the Triune God.
- We believe in the primacy of Scripture.
- We emphasize the sacraments as means of grace and highlight the four dimensions of grace.
- Our doctrinal beliefs and articles of religion are in the restrictive rules of our Book of Discipline's constitution and have not been "revised, altered, or changed."

(Continued on next page)

Ecclesiastical:

- We are connectional.
- We are missional.
- Church unity is a positive witness.
- We discover, develop and send quality clergy and lay spiritual leaders.

Witness:

- We are diverse in ethnicity, cultures, perspectives, and ideas.
- We build support and accountability for our clergy.
- United, we can demonstrate how to treat and communicate differences graciously in a Christ-like way.
- We are disciples, making disciples to transform the world.

It is past time that we turn our attention toward fulfilling our mandate to “Make passionate spiritual disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” It is my sincere hope that you choose to remain United Methodist. For those considering disaffiliation, my prayer is that you wait until the 2024 General Conference, where I believe another pathway for those wishing to disaffiliate will be made. It is also my hope that, as passionate spiritual disciples, we refocus and rediscover our calling to offer salvation, love, peace, and justice to a world in desperate need of Jesus Christ.

The Kentucky Annual Conference has begun conversation around the pivot toward a Hopeful Future. We are creating teams, ideas, and plans to help follow Jeremiah’s example of planting seeds and gardens in times of upheaval. Our conference New Church Development team and Appointive Cabinet are creating ways of caring for the clergy and laity who wish to remain United Methodist. Our Board of Ordained Ministry is working with candidates who will be commissioned and ordained in June. Our Connectional Ministries teams are discussing their priorities for our continuing United Methodist presence in Kentucky. Our administrative teams are working to ensure our resources are aligned to support our pivot and work in the Hopeful Future. And friends, be confident, there is a Hopeful Future for United Methodists in Kentucky.

I am sure you are wondering why there has not been a called fall session of Annual Conference. The Kentucky Annual Conference was one of the first conferences to discuss and execute the process for disaffiliations pursuant to 2553, having announced the process in 2019 and completing our first disaffiliations in 2020. Including the June 2023 regular session of our Annual Conference, we will have provided five 2553 disaffiliation opportunities. I am aware of the voices and their reasoned desire to call another fall Annual Conference. I have considered thoughtfully and prayerfully what is the best step for our conference moving forward. We have been in this season for too long, and the two extremes fighting each other are crushing “the mouse in the middle” while harming our witness in the world.

Friends, most if not all of our attention has been on disaffiliation, trying to distinguish fact from fiction. Again, we have been distracted from our true mission and ministry for far too long. My Grandma Gladys always reminded me, “You reap what you sow.” Reaping discord and destroying the witness of the church is not what I desire to be a part of. We cannot afford to continue on this path of acrimony. The world needs us now.

Therefore, after prayerful and careful consideration, a fall special session will not be called in Kentucky. We will continue to work with churches pursuant to our previously published timeline and process remaining 2553 disaffiliations at our June Annual Conference. I am confident that this is the decision that lessens discord and harm done to one another. In Kentucky, we are ready to pivot to a Hopeful Future.

## Appendix III: Statement from the Clergy of St. Matthews UMC

Dear St. Matthews UMC Family,

The current upheaval in the United Methodist Church has been a difficult and sometimes painful conversation and discernment process for all those who call themselves Methodist. It's been a unique and painful challenge for clergy as well.

For pastors in our connection, this is something that has loomed on the horizon for many years. Difficult and painful conversations have been had with our families, our friends, our colleagues, and our church members. We have known that we would ultimately be asked to make a decision of our own, and we hope you can understand the need for our discernment to be made separately from the work of St Matthews UMC. We have talked at length about our commitment to the church, to this conference, and the deep sorrow we have felt in this tumultuous season in our ministry.

We have each taken vows at baptism, at confirmation, and at ordination. We were asked if we would be loyal to the United Methodist Church, do all in our power to strengthen its ministries, and entered into a covenant with the conference to serve the kingdom of God as United Methodist clergy in Kentucky.

We love the United Methodist Church. We love our Wesleyan heritage, we love our open table, we love our understanding of the grace of a God who loves humanity more thoroughly than we can fathom, we love the diversity of the church, and our worldwide witness as a denomination.

Unity among great diversity is not easy, but it is who we are called to be as the body of Christ in the world. We do not desire a church where everyone is exactly alike and where we all share the same opinions and convictions. Spaces where we can come together in loving communion and fellowship together, and wrestle faithfully with big questions are hard to find. In a world that is so polarized and driven to the extremes, we believe our unity in diversity is perhaps one of the greatest witnesses we have to offer the world.

This will not be the last conflict we are asked to navigate together. But our hope is that we can, indeed, navigate the challenges to come together. Regardless of the issue at hand or the differences of opinion within our congregation, we want to affirm unequivocally that it is our desire to be pastoral leaders in the lives of our entire church family. In our relationships together, our prayer is that differences of opinion do not mean differences in love or care.

Therefore, we are committed to our covenant to be United Methodist clergy and remain in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races.

Sincerely,

Rev. Adam Sparks, Senior Pastor

Rev. Renee Jennings, Associate Pastor and River City campus pastor

Pastor Maikel Rojas, Assistant Pastor and Tabernaculo de Avivamiento Pastor.

The Evangel for May 2, 2023  
 St. Matthews United Methodist Church  
 319 Browns Lane at Norbourne Boulevard  
 Louisville, Kentucky 40207

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 Permit No. 127



Traditional Worship - 8:30 & 11 AM;  
 Sunday School - 10:00 AM  
 River City Campus - 10:45 AM  
 Hispanic Worship - 12:30PM  
 ST. MATTHEWS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
 319 Browns Lane at Norbourne Boulevard • Louisville, KY 40207  
 502-897-6449  
 www.stmatthewsmethodist.com

CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Adam Sparks.....Senior Pastor  
 Rev. Renee Jennings.....Associate Pastor  
 Rev. Maikel Rojas.....Associate Pastor  
 Kate Shafferman.....Care Coordinator  
 Harrison Zoercher.....Director of Discipleship & Missions; Organist  
 Shannon Seidt.....Director of Children's Ministries  
 Noel Weaver.....Director of Music Ministries  
 Raiko Ruz.....TDA  
 Aaron Weaver.....Music Associate, Youth  
 Mark Benz.....Music Associate, Children's Choirs  
 Amber Jenkins.....St. Matthews Campus Youth Minister  
 Sandy Hotell.....Administrator/Financial Secretary  
 Allyson McCormick.....Nursery Coordinator  
 Frank Krause.....Sexton

SEEKING  
 the Kingdom of God  
 SHARING  
 the Gospel of Jesus Christ  
 SERVING  
 our neighbors

