Stewardship in the Midst of a Pandemic

Keeping Faith and Sustaining Community

Who knew that the simple elements that work to create community: gathering for worship, singing and praying together, sharing communion, and affirming our connection by shaking hands, could prove to be so very deadly if the coronavirus is allowed to be introduced in the midst of gathering. Church, at a foundational level, is about becoming a community, a gathering of people who, transformed by the love of God, become the Body of Christ in the world. Our inability to safely gather has challenged us to find new ways to make connections with one another.

During this pandemic, we have made great efforts to find ways to sustain our community. We have invested a great deal of time and energy to create content for our website, and we have explored ways to safely engage parishioners. We have a talented and dedicated staff, and their years of experience have informed creative ways to engage our parish. In the midst of a challenging economic climate, we have been able to scale back some of our costs, allowing the parish to operate with a stable budget that remains balanced.

We are entering a season of stewardship that feels very different from previous years. The economic impact of the coronavirus has been both widespread and haphazard in its effects. Uncertainty has become a part of the economy and people’s planning for the future. Some are already feeling the strain of economic contraction while many venture to hold on until we approach some form of normalcy. Others remain unaffected in economic terms by the pandemic.

One of the great strengths of our parish is that households have made financial stewardship a priority and people give out of their abundance. Over the past few years, we have made good progress in the area of stewardship, and our improvement has been spread over the entire wealth of our parish. This is great news, for it indicates that in times of financial stress, we have a track record of individuals contributing in proportion to their ability. It means that this year, even if some have to decrease their pledge, others will be in a position to maintain their current level of financial support. Some may even be able to give more.

Our parish rests upon a strong financial foundation because so many make stewardship a priority. Your yearly financial support through pledging allows St. Matthew’s to continue to sustain our community of faith. I give great thanks for the generosity demonstrated by our parish and know that together...

Continued on next page
I have always wanted to travel the Camino de Santiago. Also known as the Way of St. James, it follows a network of pilgrim roads across Western Europe leading up to the final resting place of St. James in Santiago de Compostella in Northwest Spain. The Camino de Santiago became a major Christian pilgrimage in the middle ages, but was almost forgotten after the pandemics of plague, political unrest, and the Protestant Reformation. Since the 1980’s, the pilgrimage has experienced a revival with spiritual seekers and hikers alike. The major routes of the Camino de Santiago were designated as a UNESCO world heritage site in 1993 (Spain) and 1998 (France). Last year, almost 500,000 people registered as completing the journey. But in this pandemic moment, my travel will have to wait. In the meantime, I just completed a virtual Camino de Santiago pilgrimage, logging in 480.9 miles on my bike since the end of May. Along the way, an app lets me know just how many people are on the virtual pilgrimage alongside me.

A pilgrim takes on the challenge of the journey to a sacred place for spiritual growth, religious devotion, personal adventure, and the search for meaning and wholeness. Pilgrimages actually culminate, not at the destination site, but on the return home when one shares the transformative experience with others. Labyrinths have long been associated with the idea of pilgrimage because the path leads inside and returns us to the outside.

The Episcopal Church adopted the symbol of the labyrinth for our Sacred Ground dialogue of race and faith because it is not a straight path. Becoming beloved community is indeed a journey. In the beauty of our stories, and seeking connections in the complexity of our dynamic diversity, we walk the way with others. We know that when we return to the places we call home, we will be transformed, inspired, and encouraged to seek the greater good. Though we journey as individuals, we share something together, a common experience. This thing we have in common becomes the sacred ground for honest conversations, deep time together, honoring our stories as we confront the sin of racism, seek justice, and strive to live into God’s great love. Connections count, and relationships matter. In September at St. Matthew’s, we will meet the financial challenges of the year ahead. Our community of faith remains strong because of the collective dedication of our parish. Thank you all for your dedicated support of St. Matthew’s.

Blessings,

The Pilgrim Path

Did you know: The World Wide Labyrinth Locator (URL: labyrinthlocator.com/) lists 4977 labyrinths in 80 countries?

Continued on next page
embarked on a year-long long
Sacred Ground
dialogue with 6
full groups.
Currently,
thousands of
Episcopalians
and faithful
friends have signed up to journey together.

In honor of the Feast of St. Matthew, look for
the outdoor labyrinth set in place near the bell
tower. The design is based on a Classical 7-
Circuit pattern, and is built using almost 300 feet
of pro-Manila rope and 250 landscape stakes.
Labyrinths have ancient roots and have become
symbolic of the holy pilgrimage — the journey
we make within life’s larger spiritual quest. They
can be found across many faiths and cultures
around the world. Modern research indicates that
walking a labyrinth can offer many health
benefits, including encouraging relaxation,
reducing stress, lowering blood pressure, and
welcoming calm in anxious times.

Labyrinths are about the journey at least as much
as the destination. The path weaves and
meanders toward a central point. A labyrinth is
not a maze. Labyrinths have one way in and one
way out. So you don't need to think too hard
about where you're going, only to be present in
the moment. The bends can slow down pace and
breath, inviting moments for insight and wonder.
Spiritual teachers believe they offer a tool to go
to the deep places of balance and wholeness. For
some, the labyrinth evokes the image of
communion, “that Christ may dwell in us, and we
in Christ.” For others, it may be a place to pray or
to play.

All are welcome to walk the Labyrinth. Please use
safe social distancing for good health practice
and to share this sacred ground with others.

- Fr. Jay+

Getting the Broken Pieces to Fit

Desmond Tutu wrote in 2014 as a forward to the
book, Random Kindness and Senseless Acts of Beauty,
“We are living in an historic moment. We are each
called to take part in a great
transformation. Our survival as a species
is threatened by global warming,
economic meltdown, and an ever-
increasing gap between the rich and
poor. Yet these threats offer an
opportunity to awaken as an
interconnected and beloved community.”
Even though those words were written over six
years ago, they ring especially true today during the
COVID-19 pandemic, historic wildfires that are
affecting our state, and racial injustices occurring
within our nation and beyond. Tutu was right then
and it is true now, that we are facing an historic
time in the history of civilization. We have never
been here before, and we are constantly having to
learn to be flexible and adapt to the many
changes that we are facing each and
every day.

Where do we turn for comfort when
we cannot see our family and friends
as we used to, cannot go to school and
work as we used to, and cannot be with
each other on Sunday mornings as we used
to? We can turn to God for comfort and strength.
“It is you who light my lamp; the Lord, my God,
lights up my darkness.” Psalm 18:28. God is forever
present in our darkest times of fear and

Continued on next page
uncertainty. God watches over our every step. God watches when we fall and when we stand tall, when we are crying and when we are laughing, when we are unsettled and when we are filled with God’s peace. God is with us every step of the way.

I believe that God wants us to lift up others through love and through our faith in Jesus. Jason Sierra wrote for Forward Day by Day on Holy Cross Day on September 14th, “May I treat whatever power I possess in this world as a gift, entrusted to build up others with love and light.” I wonder what that means to you? How do you build up others with light and love during a time when our world is being turned upside down? It is through offering a kind remark to a stranger, through using your gift of time and talents to help the underserved living in our neighborhoods, or possibly writing a letter of encouragement to a long-lost friend. We need to reach out to others in God’s name, showing light and love to those who might be feeling lost and lonely at this time. We can build up God’s loving presence here on earth.

As it says in Isaiah Chapter 43:19, “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” We are each now called to make a new way in the desert of our lives right now, which is to spread the light and love of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to all of those whose lives touch our own.

Peace and love,
Deacon Lauren

---

**Blessing of the Animals**
Sunday, October 4th

After our regular virtual worship service at 10:00 am, our clergy will move to the front lawn for the blessing of dogs, cats, and all other faithful household companions. Starting at 11:00 am and continuing until 11:30 am, households are invited to find a place in our parking lot and then proceed with their pets to the front lawn. Clergy will observe safe social distancing and offer a blessing for your beloved household animals. Parishioners should wear masks and follow the course of travel laid out on the lawn while adhering to safe social distancing. During the parade of animals, Philip will play festive music, appropriate for the Feast of St. Francis, on our Roth memorial bells.

**Parish Town Hall**
Sunday, October 4th

Join us at noon via Zoom on Sunday, October 4, for an update about our parish and school. We will provide an update of parish finances along with a review of the ways to engage with St. Matthew’s online. Participants will have the opportunity to meet our Interim Head of School, Ralph Wales, and we will have the opportunity to share the state of reopening plans for both the church and school. There will also be ample opportunity to ask questions. A Zoom link will be provided in the Ivy Leaf the week of the meeting.
**Prayers of the People**

During the Prayers of the People portion of the Sunday Service, we ask for God's redemptive presence in the church, the world, our community, and individual lives. If you would like to add a name to be read during the Prayers of the People at an upcoming Sunday Service, please contact the church office at office@episcopalstmatthew.org or 650-342-1481.

---

**Need Continues for Second Harvest Food Bank**

As the COVID-19 crisis continues, the Food Bank is seeing substantial increases in need as community members are furloughed, losing hourly wages, and forced to deplete savings while still providing for their families. If you are able to provide financial support, donations can be made online here: https://give.shfb.org/donatenow

---

**Contributions and Pledges to St. Matthew’s**

Your generous support helps St. Matthew fulfill its mission: to live God's love, to share the Gospel, and to grow spiritually. Thank you for continuing your giving during these times. Contributions and pledges can be mailed to the church or made online at: https://episcopalstmatthew.org/giving/donate-now/

---

**You Shop, Amazon Gives**

If you haven’t already, please consider designating St. Matthew’s as the beneficiary of your Amazon orders. Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you are familiar with—the same products, prices, and service. To learn more, go to AboutAmazonSmile. Amazon Smile is now available in the mobile app! Go to Settings in the app to link to your Smile account.

---

**Bishop’s Ranch Retreats**

During select weekends this fall, Bishop's Ranch will offer lodging and meals in a weekend getaway retreat format for individuals, couples, and families seeking a safe and familiar place of respite. Overnight stays are available for 2-3 nights on these dates: October 9-11; October 16-18; October 23-25; October 30-November 1. More information is available here: https://thebishopsranch.wufoo.com/forms/m1bpvfwb1e7g92i/

---

**Milestones**

**In Memoriam**

**John Brinkman**, beloved husband of devoted parishioner and Laurel Brinkman, August 6th

**Pat Jones**, parishioner and beloved husband of Wendy Jones, August 22nd
UTO Ingathering in Pandemic Time
Sunday, October 25th

Dear St. Matthew Sisters and Brothers,

As you know, we had no spring 2020 United Thank Offering (UTO) Ingathering because church was via Facebook Live, and we were unable to meet in person. In canceling the May Ingathering, we hoped to be back in church in person for a single Ingathering in October. However, at this juncture an October full parish service in person seems highly unlikely, so we will have our single 2020 UTO Ingathering via mail and online.

The United Thank Offering is a collection of funds given in thanksgiving for our Lord’s many gifts to us, large and small. Even during these challenging, topsy-turvy days, we have many things for which to give God thanks – from the simple, like a perfect rose in my garden or orchids that have never bloomed so prolifically, to the significant, like having a home, an income, education, food, and so much more. For what are you thankful? Will that thankfulness be expressed as a gift to the UTO to carry on its work throughout the whole Anglican communion? Already in 2020 the UTO has given 27 grants to dioceses in Massachusetts, Texas, Tennessee, Wyoming, Haiti, Burundi, Nigeria, and the Philippines, among others. You can read about all these grants in the 2020 Grants brochure: https://unitedthankoffering.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/uto_2020_grants_brochure_web.pdf. Here you can explore the depth and breadth of these awards. Remember, every cent given to UTO goes to grants.

When UTO was established over 125 years ago, the women who founded it endowed its administration, so no donated funds go to the UTO organization.

Normally we would ask you to pick up a blue box or an envelope from the back of the church and present it during the Ingathering, but now we are asking that you either:

1. Donate using this link: https://unitedthankoffering.org/give/ (in the “Diocese” box, put California, and in the “Parish” box, St. Matthew’s); or,

2. Mail your check to St. Matthew’s, made payable to the League for Service, with the memo line labeled “UTO”.

Please make your contribution on or before Sunday, October 25. Thank you for your continued generosity to UTO, and for its ministry to remind us all to be grateful for the many gifts generously given to us.

The United Thank Offering Prayer

Gracious God, source of all creation, all love, all true joy: accept we pray these outward signs of our profound and continuing thankfulness for all of life. Keep each of us ever thankful for all the blessings of joy and challenge that come our way. Bless those who will benefit from these gifts through the outreach of the United Thank Offering. This we ask through Him who is the greatest gift and blessing of all, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Christ,

Albe Larsen
UTO Coordinator and League Outreach Chairman
Sunday Service and Morning Prayer Video Archives on the Website

All the Sunday Service and Morning Prayer videos are available on our website for watching without a Facebook account. The direct links are:

- Sunday Service Video Archive:
  https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/sunday-service-videos/
- Morning Prayer Video Archive:
  https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/morning-prayers/

For all video archives including Children’s Chapel Storytime and Organ and Bell Tower Music, and Faith Journeys and Coffee Hour Reflection audio stories, they can be found under the “Multimedia” tab at the top of the website. The direct links are:

- Children’s Chapel Storytime Video Archive:
  https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/childrens-chapel-storytime/
- Organ and Bell Video Archive:
  https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/organ-and-bell-music/
- Coffee Hour Reflections Audio Archive:
  https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/coffee-hour-reflections/
- Faith Journeys Audio Archive:
  https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos_faith-journeys/

The homepage (https://episcopalstmatthew.org) also has many links to recent videos. The scrolling large images at the top of the homepage are clickable and will take you to the related webpage for videos or articles. Additionally, the "News & Updates" and the "Watch Livestream Sunday Services" sections will include the most recent Sunday service and Morning Prayer video links.

Please contact Ming Lacey at mlacey415@yahoo.com if you have questions about the website.

Video Archive on YouTube

Videos of Sunday Services, Morning Prayer, organ and choir performances and Children’s Chapel Storytime are now available on the St. Matthew’s YouTube channel. Don’t miss any videos by subscribing. Visit our YouTube channel by clicking on the link below:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu3LEb_tM1jL6DNKcZDIzQ
The Episcopal Church of St. Matthew is a family called by Christ . . .

to Live God’s Love,
to Share the Gospel,
to Grow Spiritually.

Come Celebrate with Us!

Sunday Services Livestreamed on Facebook at 10:00 am

The Rev. Dr. Eric Kimball Hinds, Rector
The Rev. Jay Sapaen Watan, Associate Rector
The Rev. Lauren P. McCombs, Deacon
The Rev. Amber Stancliffe Evans, School Chaplain

Tau Cross Staff
Editor: Beth von Emster
Associate Editor: Cherie Hammer
Layout & Design: Ming Lacey

The Tau Cross is the monthly newsletter of the Episcopal Church of St. Matthew. We welcome submissions that have a connection to the parish. Inclusion is at the discretion of the staff and may be edited for space or clarity. The deadline for articles is the 15th of the month and may be sent by email to Beth von Emster at beth.vonemster@gmail.com. Entries should follow these guidelines: Include title of event or article; 200 word maximum description including when, where, cost and contact information as applicable. Avoid abbreviations and other “insider” lingo. Further guidelines and tips available upon request.

Upcoming Events

Monday-Friday Morning Prayer
9:30 am

Sundays Children’s Chapel
9:30 am Zoom

Sundays Livestream Sunday Service
10:00 am

Sundays Zoom Coffee Hour
11:00 am