



ST. MATTHEW'S

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The Circuit Rider

March 2026

Volume 63, Issue 3

World Day of Prayer—March 6

Friday, March 6 at 1 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Theme: "I will give you rest: come." Matthew 11:28-30

Join the United Women in Faith as we pray for the country of **Nigeria**. Hear stories of the women and their struggles there. (Read more on page 6.)



A recording of the service will be posted on Facebook at 7 p.m. that day.

Lenten Brunch

Saturday,
March 28

10 a.m.

Fellowship Hall



Everyone is invited for
Food, Faith, and Fellowship.

Speaker: **Maura McGee**, local author

Freewill Offering, no RSVP needed.

Please join us!

Babysitting is available—please email us at uwf@stmatthews-bowie.org.

Holy Week Preview



Palm/Passion Sunday March 29, 10 a.m.

Holy Week begins in the Sanctuary with the commemoration of Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem and the service of Christ's Passion.

Simple Service Wednesday, April 1

Soup/Salad Supper 6 p.m.

Simple Service 7 p.m.

Supper in Fellowship Hall, worship in the Sanctuary.

Maundy Thursday April 2 7 p.m.

Meal followed by the service in Fellowship Hall.

Good Friday April 3 7 p.m.

The Chancel Choir will offer a special service based on the cantata, "The Body of Christ."

Egg Hunt Saturday, April 4 10-11 a.m.

See details on page 4.

Easter Sunday, April 5 8 and 10 a.m.

Service at 8 a.m. in the garden (or Sanctuary if it rains).

Breakfast at 8:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Traditional service at 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary with communion, followed by Coffee Hour.

Rev. Park's Pastoral Pondering



Dear St. Matthew's Family,

We are now walking the sacred road of Lent, which has always been understood as a journey. Early Christians spoke of the Christian life as a pilgrimage—a lifelong walk toward God. Augustine of Hippo famously wrote, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You." Augustine understood that faith is not a destination we arrive at quickly, but a path we walk day by day as God draws us closer.

Recently, we witnessed a powerful reminder of this truth. Buddhist monks completed their cross-country Walk for Peace, passing through our region as part of their spiritual pilgrimage. Their journey is now finished, but their witness remains as a reminder of humanity's deep longing for peace, compassion, and spiritual grounding.



As Christians, their walk invites us to reflect on our own journey. Lent is our pilgrimage. We walk with Jesus toward the cross, not because we seek suffering, but because we trust that God meets us there. The cross reveals both the depth of human brokenness and the greater depth of God's love.

In our Wesleyan tradition, John Wesley understood the Christian life as a continual journey of grace. He taught that God meets us through the "means of grace", namely prayer, Scripture, worship, fasting, and acts of mercy. These are not simply religious duties. They are pathways where Christ walks beside us, shaping us, healing us, and making us new. In other words, we do not walk alone.

Here at St. Matthew's, I see you walking this road every day—in your prayers for one another, in your acts of kindness, in your service to the community, and in your faithfulness to Christ. These ordinary steps are holy steps. Through them, God is forming us into the people we are called to be. And this journey has a destination.

Easter is just ahead, arriving on the first Sunday of April. Resurrection awaits, but we cannot skip the journey. Lent prepares our hearts to receive the joy of Easter more deeply.



So, in these remaining weeks of Lent, I invite you to keep walking:

Walk in prayer.

Walk in compassion.

Walk in grace.

And trust that the Christ who calls us is walking beside us every step of the way.

*Grace and peace,
Rev. JW Park*

Administrative Council Update from February 2026

Please note that Administrative Council meetings are open to the congregation, even when we are holding them via Zoom. If you wish to attend, please contact Chuck Hastings for Zoom details; however, be advised that discussion and voting are limited to Ad Council members. A list of the members of the 2026 Administrative Council can be found [here](#).



The Administrative Council did not meet in February. They will meet on Wednesday, March 18.

Chuck Hastings, Chair

St. Matthew's Participates in March

Read a summary of this important event [here](#).



*Holding the left end of the banner are United Methodist Bishops Minerva Carcaño, **LaTrelle Easterling** (bishop of our conference) and Cynthia Moore-Koikoi. Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.*

- More than 2,000 people of faith marched around the U.S. Capitol on February 25 to witness to the Christian faith and to let immigrants know that they do not stand alone.
- Capitol Hill United Methodist Church served as host for the worship service, which reached standing-room-only within minutes of the doors being opened.
- At the end of the march, participants gathered at Senate Park, just north of the Capitol, and dozens spent time visiting lawmakers on Capitol Hill.
- A recording of the Faithful Resistance livestream is available at ResourceUMC.org.



Members from St. Matthew's participated in the Faithful Resistance march in Washington, DC on February 25, 2026.

- (At left) Jane Miller, Pat Clark, Pat Layfield, Melissa Hauer, and Becky Roper await the opening worship.*
- (Center) Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, former pastor at St. Matthew's, reunited with St. Matthew's attendees and sends her greetings to the congregation.*
- (Right) Rev. Marguerite Matthews, Bob Matthews, and Ruth Miller met up with the rest of the St. Matthew's contingent at the march.*

Children, Youth, and Family News

Children’s Church during Lent: “Listening to Jesus”

"Is that a snake I hear up in that tree? Oh, don't listen to that!" So begins this sound-filled Lenten journey. In these Lent daily devotions for kids, readers are invited to open their ears and listen to Jesus' saving words and the many Biblical sounds that accompanied Jesus to the cross and beyond to the opening of his tomb! All children were given a devotional to follow our *Listening to Jesus* series. We hope our families take a moment each day to read the devotionals as we grow closer to Jesus this Lenten season.

Children’s Sunday School Explores the Good News

In Children’s Sunday School we are diving into the “Good News” through stories, plays, and art. We meet in Room 222 following our Worship Service.

Youth to Attend Conference

Ignite! Two of our high school youth will be heading to the youth conference in Ocean City, March 20-22. Please keep us in your prayers during this time.

Save the Date for the Egg Hunt!

Our annual Egg Hunt will be held **Saturday, April 4** from 10-11 a.m. This year we will begin with a book “Before We Hunt for Eggs” by Kristi Dusenbery and then have our traditional egg hunt.

We are asking for **donations of candy** to fill the eggs. Donations may be dropped off in the Church Office.

We are also **looking for volunteers** to hide the eggs and help with the hunt. If you can help, please contact Becky Roper (beckyroper@stmatthews-bowie.org). Many hands make light work!

Join Helping Hands in **stuffing the eggs** on Wednesday, April 1, at 10:30 a.m. in Room 223—**no fooling!**



We welcomed the beginning of Lent with the annual Shrove Tuesday pancake supper—a great success with 125 dinners served by the youth to raise funds for the ASP trip!

Losing a Loved One— Unexpected Aspects

This Panel Discussion will take place **Sunday, March 15, 11:10 a.m.** in the Parlor.

The St. Matthew's Endowment Committee has asked several church members who have lost spouses or close ones to talk with us about some of the unexpected aspects of their loss.



The panelists will talk about the practical (how did they plan a remembrance of life service), what was hard (or easy) about probate, and the emotional (what helped support them, what emotions did they need to handle alone, what was hardest). Most important, we have asked them to share suggestions to help the rest of us navigate this difficult time when it comes.

Last Chance for Taking Pictures for Church Directory!

**Come to Fellowship Hall
during Coffee Hour on
Sundays, March 8 and 15**

Get your photo taken and/or complete the information form to ensure we have the correct information for your family!



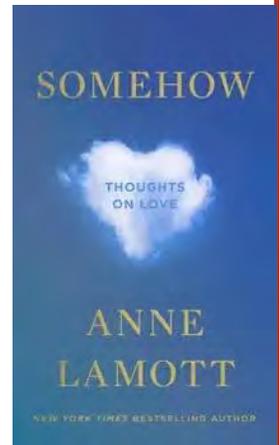
Spring Ahead



Before retiring to bed on Saturday, March 7, don't forget to set your clocks **forward** one hour. We would miss you if you came to church on Standard Time instead of on Daylight Savings Time on March 8!

Christian Book Club

The March meeting of our Christian Book Club will occur via Zoom on **Tuesday, March 17** at 7 p.m., when we will continue a discussion of *Somehow: Thoughts on Love* by Anne Lamott, chapters 5-8 (pages 80-145). Our Zoom link invitation will be sent the day before we meet.



Endowment Update

The Endowment Committee forgot to include one important distribution in the February Circuit Rider! In addition to awards for a music intern, handbell refurbishing, pulpit supply, assistance in lower parking lot restriping, and support of the EEC 60th anniversary, the committee also awarded \$2,000 to continue with our innovative Messy Church.



World Day of Prayer: Come Pray for Nigeria

Friday, March 6 **1 p.m.**
Sanctuary



World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement of Christian women from many faith traditions who come together for an annual observance of a common day of prayer and action on the first Friday of March.

Each year a different country serves as the writer of the worship service. This service has been happening for **99 years!** The country of focus for 2026 is **NIGERIA** and the theme is "I will give you rest: Come" from Matthew 11:28-30.

Please join us for a time of prayer, music, and stories from Nigeria, and education about the country at **1 p.m. on Friday, March 6**, in the Sanctuary.

An offering will be taken to benefit the women and children of Nigeria. You may donate through the church using Fund #324 (World Day of Prayer).

A recording of the service will be posted on our Facebook page at 7 p.m.



United
Women
in Faith

UWF Events, Meetings

Please join us at these upcoming United Women in Faith events:

- **World Day of Prayer on Friday, March 6**, at **1 p.m. in Sanctuary**; on Facebook at **7 p.m.** (See article at left.)
- **Lenten Brunch on Saturday, March 28**, at **10 a.m. in Fellowship Hall** (see page 1)

Thank You for Your Support!

Thank you to all who purchased soup during our Soup-er Bowl Fundraiser! It was a great success –over \$1,400 was raised! The proceeds will support the missions of the United Women in Faith.

Circle Meetings:

Friendship Circle will meet **Monday, March 9**, in the Parlor at **12:30 p.m.** for socializing and the business meeting at 1 p.m. We welcome new folks and look forward to our delicious refreshments and our interesting programs. Hope to see you also at the World Day of Prayer in the Sanctuary on Friday, March 6 at 1 p.m.!

Martha Circle will meet **Friday, March 13**, in the Parlor at **10:30 a.m.** Did you know laughter benefits both your physical and mental health? Could you use a little laughter in your life? If so, please join us! We will enjoy a video with Chonda Pierce, a stand-up Christian comedian, television hostess, author, and actor.

Koinonia Circle will meet **Monday, March 16**, at **7 p.m.** in the Parlor.



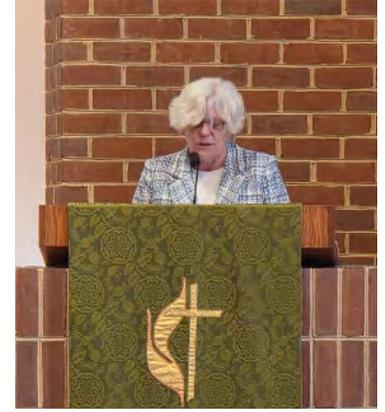
United
Women
in Faith



Rev. Galen Menne graciously filled in during Rev. JW Park's absence.



Becky Roper gave TWO sermons on February 8—the Children's Message and the regular sermon! Well done, Becky!



The Gloria Ringers helped celebrate Rev. JW Park's return from his spiritual renewal leave of absence on February 15.



The congregation enthusiastically passed the Peace on the first Sunday of Lent.



Rev. JW Park and Lay Leader Gemina Archer-Davies led the Sacrament of Communion on the first Sunday of Lent.



SHEEP Happenings

SHEEP Upcoming Events

Please save the dates and watch for more information in the *Midweek Messenger*.

For further information, email SHEEP@stmatthews-bowie.org.

- **Helping Hands** meets **Wednesday, March 4, 10:30 a.m.**, SHEEP Barn (Room 223). Rescheduled from February due to the weather, we will put together kits for making birthday cakes and minestrone soup. The kits contain everything needed to make and decorate a cake or to make a pot of healthy soup. The birthday cake kits will go to the Bowie Food Pantry and the soup kits will be given to the Bowie Food Pantry and the Little Free Pantry to distribute. Bring a lunch; drinks and dessert will be provided.
- **Helping Hands** will meet **Wednesday, April 1, 10:30 a.m.**, SHEEP Barn (Room 223). Join us to stuff LOTS of Easter eggs for this year's Egg Hunt. Fun will be had by all! Bring a lunch and we will provide drinks and dessert.



Do You Have a Car You Would Like to Sell?

The Moahids, the beloved Afghan family that St. Matthew's has helped assimilate into the U.S., are looking for a commuter car for the mother, Fatima. She works several times a week as a seamstress and alterations specialist. However, to get to work, she has a 30-mile commute.

The family is looking for a good, clean, reliable, used car that can pass a Maryland state inspection with no major issues and gets reasonable gas mileage. They are willing to pay a fair price based on the car's condition, mileage, and overall value.

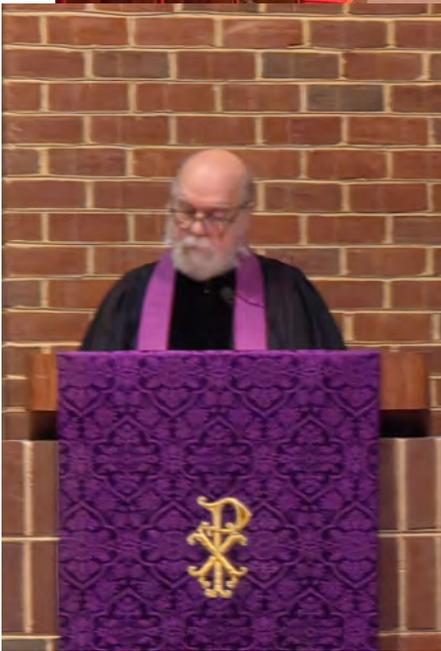
If you or someone you know has a car to sell that would meet these parameters, please contact Dave Miller.

Update on the Family: The family is doing well and mentions each time we see them how much they appreciate the fantastic support our church has provided to them since their 2022 arrival in Bowie.



Volunteers help load the church truck for a trip to Mission Central—great job, everyone!

Scenes from Ash Wednesday Worship



Lectionary Readings for March 2026

March 1 – 2nd Sunday in Lent

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17

March 8 – 3rd Sunday in Lent

Exod 17:1-7; Psalm 95
Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

March 15 – 4th Sunday in Lent

UMCOR Sunday

1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23
Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

March 22 – 5th Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130
Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45

March 29 – Palm/Passion Sunday

Palm Litany:

Matthew 21:1-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Passion Litany:

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 26:14-27 or 27:11-54

Life Changes

Deaths:

Andy Fleshman, husband of Bonnie
(died February 5)

Robert Baber, brother of Dare Draughn
(died February 17)

William "Bill" Allen Hooper, III, brother-in-law of
Melvin and Pat Layfield (died February 24)



Birthdays:



Please join us in wishing those in our church family who are 80 and older a very Happy Birthday!

Phyllis Jensen	March 7
Marty Bridgewater	March 14
Dave Chapman	March 17
Jean Arvin	March 21
Betty Ciomei	March 26
Jean Baker	March 27
Marty Cronlund	March 30



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Articles are due by the 15th of each month. Please e-mail articles to the above address or submit to the church office.

Please call to verify receipt of any faxed articles.

Introducing St. Matthew's New Financial Administrator



The Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee is pleased to welcome Scot Dahl as the new Financial Administrator for St. Matthew's.

Scot had previously been serving as the Chair of the Finance Committee. When Don Genson, our then-Financial Administrator died suddenly in December, Scot stepped up to ensure that St. Matthew's financial operations continued.

Now that the selection process is complete, Scot is formally taking up this key staff position. He is typically in the office on Tuesday and Thursday, and can be contacted at 301-262-1408 or bookkeeper@stmatthews-bowie.org.

Scot is a long-time member at St. Matthew's, who is active in the music program and has occasionally appeared on-stage with the Theatre Troupe.

Look for future reporting of St. Matthew's financial position in upcoming issues of the Circuit Rider!

God's Light is All Around Us!

Each month, we share a moment of positivity and hope, and how God is touching lives in our world every day!

*13 I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.
14 Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord*

Psalm 27:13-14



Psalm 27:13-14 tells us to see the goodness of the Lord. **Where have you seen the light of God recently?**

Please tell us by emailing us at

feelgoodstory@stmatthews-bowie.org!

March Communion Offering



UMCOR SUNDAY

With your help, UMCOR supports humanitarian relief and recovery efforts around the world.

100%

UMCOR Sunday donations cover UMCOR's operation costs so that 100% of donations received for emergency appeals go directly to communities in need.



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WE'RE ON THE WEB!
STMATTHEWS-BOWIE.ORG

Facebook: stmbowie



Time Dated Material
Please Deliver Promptly



Weekly Schedule

Sunday Services In person

8:30 a.m. **Early Worship Service**, Parlor

10 a.m. **Worship in Sanctuary** w/Children's Church

- [St. Matthew's UMC Facebook](#)
- [St. Matthew's UMC Website](#)

Zoom: Contact church office for the link.

11 a.m. **Coffee Hour** in Fellowship Hall
Children's Sunday School, Rm 222
Adult Sunday School, Parlor

Tuesday 9:45 a.m. Bible Study with Isaac Borocz (Parlor)
7 p.m. Bible Study with Rev. Park on Zoom

Wednesday 7 p.m. Simple Prayer Service (Sanctuary)
In-person or call-in 267-807-9601,
access code 111-576-270#

Daily 6:30 a.m. Morning Prayer (except Sundays)
Call-in 267-807-9601,
access code 111-576-270#

St. Matthew's Welcome Statement

Inclusive Community. Connecting in Christ. Making a Difference.

St. Matthew's UMC is an inclusive church, connected to our community, and committed to welcoming all persons in every phase of church life. We choose to live by Christ's example, affirming that all people are created in the image of God.

We celebrate our diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, age, marital status, nationality, physical abilities, mental abilities and economic position. Through the Spirit we commit to live in the words of John Wesley to "love alike though we may not always think alike."

Wherever you are in your faith journey, you are welcome here.