



ST. MATTHEW'S

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The Circuit Rider

May 2026

Volume 63, Issue 5

EEC Celebrates 60 Years—You are Invited!

This year marks a momentous milestone for St. Matthew's United Methodist Early Education Center: our 60th Anniversary. Since first opening our doors in 1965, our halls have been filled with the energy, ambition, and spirit of generations of students and educators.



Developed as a community outreach ministry, church members created a program to "enrich the emotional, social, physical and intellectual lives of young children." In 1989, St. Matthew's added child care to its preschool classes and became St. Matthew's United Methodist Early Education Center.

For six decades, we have been more than just a school. We have been a community where lifelong friendships are formed and futures are built. Originally established as a nursery school by Rev. Alan Hogle and the United Methodist Women, the EEC has grown into a well-respected, accredited program that now serves over 220 children and families.

To celebrate our Diamond Jubilee, we are hosting a celebratory event for all ages to honor our past and look to our future. Please join us at the church for an evening of live music, games, and crafts.

For more information, email the EEC at directoreec@gmail.com or call 301-464-1813.



Celebration Event Details

Friday, May 8

5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

St. Matthew's Early Education Center

Food Orders: If you would like to enjoy a meal during the event, please use the links below to place your order and submit payment. **Deadline for food orders is May 4.**

[60th Anniversary Food Order Form](#)

[60th Anniversary Food Payment](#)

We look forward to celebrating this significant milestone with our wonderful school and church community!



Save the Date!

International Sunday is May 31
Potluck Luncheon After 10 a.m. Service

Rev. Park's Pastoral Pondering



Dear St. Matthew's family,

Grace and peace to you in this beautiful season of spring, a time when new life quietly but powerfully emerges all around us. In May, we are given a special opportunity to pause and give thanks for the gift of mothers and all those who have nurtured us with love, care, and sacrifice. Mother's Day invites us into both gratitude and reflection. For many, it is a joyful day filled with appreciation. For others, it carries a mixture of emotions—memories of loss, longing, or complicated relationships. Wherever you find yourself, know that God meets you there with tenderness and compassion. Scripture offers us a powerful image of God's love through the lens of a mother's care. In Isaiah 66:13, God says:

"As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you."

This is not a casual comparison; it is a profound theological truth. The love of a mother—patient, attentive, protective, and self-giving—reflects something essential about the very heart of God. Think about the ways a mother loves. A mother stays awake through the night when her child is sick. A mother senses what is wrong even before a word is spoken. A mother gives, often without recognition, because love compels her. A mother celebrates every small victory and carries deep concern for every struggle. And God says, "That is what my love is like."

In Psalm 131:2, the psalmist writes: "I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me."

This image is not about dependency alone, but about deep trust, peace, and security. It is about being held in a presence where we do not have to prove anything, where we are simply loved. At its best, a mother's love gives us a glimpse of God's unwavering care:

- ▶ A love that does not give up on us
- ▶ A love that nurtures us into growth
- ▶ A love that holds us even when words fail

Of course, no human love is perfect. Even the best mothers fall short, just as we all do. But that is precisely why these images point us beyond themselves. They remind us that God's love is the source from which all true love flows; it is deeper, wider, and more faithful than anything we can fully imagine. Here at St. Matthew's, we are blessed by many who embody this nurturing love, including mothers, grandmothers, aunts, mentors, teachers, and spiritual caregivers who shape our lives in quiet and powerful ways.

See Pastoral Pondering, continued on page 3

Rev. Park's Pastoral Pondering, continued

Pastoral Pondering, continued from page 2

This month, I invite you to do two things:

- ▶ First, give thanks. Reach out to someone who has nurtured your life. Speak your gratitude while you have the opportunity.
- ▶ Second, reflect God's love. In a world that often feels hurried and harsh, choose to be a presence of comfort, encouragement, and care for someone else. In doing so, we participate in God's own mothering love for the world.

As we continue to grow as a church—forming disciples of Jesus Christ who love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously—may we carry this tender strength into all that we do.

May you know the comfort of God who holds you, the patience of God who walks with you, and the love of God that never lets you go.

*With gratitude for each of you,
Rev. JW Park*

Administrative Council Update from April 2026



Please note that Administrative Council meetings are open to the congregation, even when we are holding them via Zoom during times of COVID precaution. 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 April.

Financial Status for March 2026

Offerings were \$79.3k, which is \$20k over budget for the month. YTD total income is \$194.0k, which is \$23.5k under budget. Total expenses for the month were \$71.9k, which is \$0.2k under budget for the month. Apportionment is current. YTD total expense is \$191.3k, which is \$23.2k under budget,

excluding capital improvements.

There was an operating gain of \$20.7k for the month, with a YTD operating loss of \$8.3k (including grants and budgeted transfers from investments).

Investments increased by \$18.7k last month to \$694.9k. For the year, the investment account decreased \$6.4k from \$701.3k. No funds have been transferred from the investment account so far this year.

The average weekly attendance last month was 144, which is up from 120 the previous month. Average weekly attendance last year was 140.

Chuck Hastings, Chair

Children and Youth

ASP Mission Trip



Our ASP team will be heading to Avery County, NC, the week of July 5-11. If you would like to join us, it's not too late! For more information, contact Becky at beckyroper@stmatthews-bowie.org. We have some spaces we need to fill and would love to share this experience with as many people as possible.

Children's Sunday School Study

Children's Sunday School will be learning about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and Daniel through stories, plays, and arts and crafts. We will finish out our Sunday School year with "Kids' Choice" when they will choose the next person to discover!

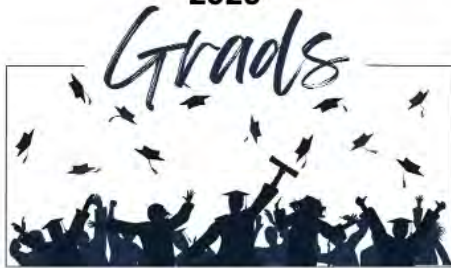
Youth Car Wash

The youth will hold a fundraiser car wash on **Saturday, May 16** from **10-12**. All proceeds go toward our mission trip in July. Come out to support our youth and get a clean car!



Calling All Graduates

It's time to CELEBRATE our **2026**



Are you or your child/grandchild graduating this spring? Give them a shout-out during our Graduation Sunday! Please send a photo to beckyroper@stmatthews-bowie.org with information on where they are graduating from and where they are headed. Graduation Sunday will be held on Sunday, June 7.

Youth Group Study

Our Youth Group just wrapped up sessions on Connecting Faith and Justice using the UMC Social Principles *Book of Resolutions*. They reflected on how they can respond beyond the church walls and how God's living hope sustains faith through challenges.



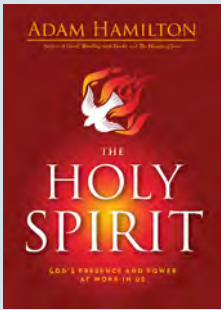
On Sunday, April 19, our youth enjoyed cuddling and brushing Maple and Petey.

Tuesday Bible Studies

Morning

9:45 a.m. Bible Study with Isaac in the Parlor.

Evening



Led by Rev. JW Park, this group began a new book on April 28: *The Holy Spirit* by Adam Hamilton. Join in via Zoom at **7 p.m. on Tuesday evenings** (except the third Tuesdays of the month). The book is available in various formats from places like Cokesbury or Better World Books.

Description: The Holy Spirit is God's active presence and power at work in the world and in our lives. Through the Spirit, we are transformed, led, empowered, and guided in our faith journey. Jesus promised his followers that the Spirit would come alongside them as comforter and counselor, empowering them to transform the world. In *The Holy Spirit*, Adam Hamilton explores what Scripture teaches about God's Spirit, from the Hebrew Bible through Jesus' promises in the Gospels, the powerful Pentecost experience in Acts, and the rich teachings found in the New Testament letters. This study tries to help believers understand and experience the Holy Spirit's presence and power in their daily walk with Christ. This resource focuses on the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles.

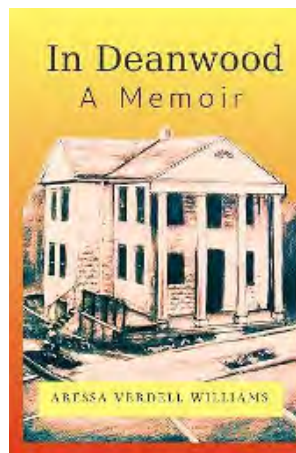
Christmas in April 2026

Watch for a full writeup in the June Circuit Rider.



With the help of volunteers from St. Matthew's UMC, Christian Community Presbyterian Church and the National Council of Negro Women, Christmas in April 2026 proved to be a resounding success.

Christian Book Club

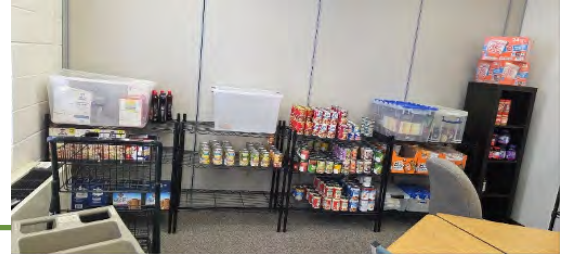


The Christian Book Club normally meets via Zoom. However, in May, the group will meet **IN PERSON** at **7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 19**, in the Parlor. Our guest will be Ms. Aressa Verdell Williams. Her

memoir, entitled *In Deanwood*, is available at Amazon and at Barnes & Noble bookstores. [Read the author's bio here.](#)

Refresh of the Little Free Pantry

It takes a village ... or a town ... or a city! The wooden cabinetry Jane Thessin gave us originally to store our Little Free Pantry food supply had passed its prime. Catalina Donnelly, Al and Mary Mitchell, and Marian Eisinger pitched in to assemble the new wire shelving, so we can better monitor our food supply. Scott Lee removed the old shelving so our youth, including Cheyanne, James, Olivia, and Violet (guided by Becky Roper), could arrange and stock the new units. And, of course, it is through donations from the congregation that these shelves and the Little Free Pantry stay filled. We greatly appreciate all your support of this vital mission of easing hunger and food insecurity in our community.



Our Hub and UMCOR Aided Western MD in 2025 Flooding

In the April 2026 *Circuit Rider*, you learned about St. Matthew's role as a Hub for collecting [United Methodist Committee on Relief \(UMCOR\)](#) kits and buckets assembled by churches and organizations in our District and nearby areas. St. Matthew's then transports these to [Mission Central](#) in Pennsylvania, where they are stored until being shipped to disaster areas as part of UMCOR's response.

In May 2025, Western Maryland experienced severe flooding in Allegany and Garrett counties. The Baltimore-Washington Conference (BWC) Disaster Response Team (DRT) stepped into action and still leads and coordinates the United Methodist Church's (UMC) response. The BWC DRT provided two UMCOR grants—\$10K for immediate relief and \$200K for long-term recovery—and sent 3,500 hygiene kits and flood buckets. This shows it's important to keep providing more kits and buckets to Mission Central to ensure that an adequate supply is available for the next disaster! Additionally, the UMCOR Sunday donations from St. Matthew's supported UMCOR's infrastructure so that the response was immediate and allowed 100% of specific Western Maryland donations to be sent there. Learn more [here](#).

Working together, UMCOR, UMC Conferences, churches, individuals, and community partnerships make a big and loving impact to those affected by disaster. UMCOR journeys with communities throughout the disaster cycle: preparedness, relief, response, recovery, and mitigation. UMCOR provides grants nationally and internationally to fund the local UMC conference and local organizations on site.

UMCOR collaborates with seven [disaster response](#) warehouses across the US to transport kits/buckets to areas in crisis and works with the local UMC Conferences to lead the relief effort. Mission Central is the largest of those. As one of four Hubs in the BWC, we are key to keeping Mission Central well-stocked!

UMCOR and our Hub at St. Matthew's need your help in 2026. There is something everyone can do!

E-mail worldwideoutreach@stmatthews-bowie.org to learn more or join the team.



Upcoming SHEEP Events

Please save these dates and look for more information in the bulletin and *Midweek Messenger*. For questions, email SHEEP@stmatthews-bowie.org.

- [Helping Hands](#), **Wednesday, May 6, 10:30 a.m.**, in the SHEEP Barn (Room 223). We will do a clean-up project by turning leftover supplies into as many kits as possible. Thank you to everyone involved in stuffing Easter eggs in April. We stuffed over a thousand eggs!
- **LGBTQIA+ Sunday special service is May 17**, 10 a.m. Volunteers are needed to help plan or participate in this service; please contact lgbtqadvocacy@stmatthews-bowie.org. All are invited!
- **Help Us Continue Serving the Men's Shelter Meal** Meals for the Prince George's County Men's Shelter are needed for the 3rd Sunday of **July, September, and October**. Volunteers help [prepare/buy, deliver or serve a 6 p.m. meal](#) for the 40 men residing at the shelter in Capitol Heights. Please email communityoutreach@stmatthews-bowie.org or talk with Pat Clunies to volunteer your group/family or join in with others. Thanks to all who have stepped up to cover the other months in 2026.

To Read ...

- [Bowie Food Pantry Thank You 13 March 2026](#)
- [Why You Oppose Giving People Too Much Free Food](#) (Anina Estrem) – Reintroducing justice and dignity to the fight to end hunger
- [Silver Spring UMC Hub Thank You to our Mission Central Hub](#), 14 February 2026 – Working together to get UMCOR Hygiene Kits where they are needed
- [UMCOR Grant Supports Long-Term Flood Recovery in Allegany County](#), February 2026, Alison Burdett – Learn what UMCOR and Baltimore Washington Conference are doing to help with this recovery
- [UMCOR Disaster Response Updates](#)
- Uganda Medical Support Thank You – From Dr. Pamela: “Greetings to you from our Father in heaven! Thank you so much for your generous donation to Beautiful Response to support Raising Up Hope for Uganda! Here is the [February 2026 report](#) to show you how your donation has helped so many lives.”
- [With grateful hearts from Give Ye Them To Eat](#), February 2026
- [Protecting Transgender Civil and Human Rights](#), Church and Society, Justice Takes Courage, March 23, 2026: The United Methodist Church unequivocally supports gender inclusivity, sacred worth, and equal protection for transgender and non-binary people.

United Women in Faith

All are invited to attend any/all of the circle meetings. For more information, send an email to uwf@stmatthews-bowie.org.

Martha/Agape Circle will meet on **Friday, May 8**, in the Parlor at 10:30 a.m. We will continue our video/discussion study. All are welcome—no preparation is needed.

Friendship Circle will meet on **Monday, May 11**. Come join us in the Parlor at 12:30 p.m. for social time, a short business meeting, a program, refreshments, and more social time. We would love to see you there!

Koinonia Circle will meet on **Monday, May 18**, at 7 p.m. in the Parlor.



United
Women
in Faith



Helping Hands stuffed over 1,000 Easter eggs for the egg hunt, delighting the 50+ children who attended.



On Earth Care Sunday, Tameeka Washington, founder and president of the Interfaith Coalition of Bowie, gave a very engaging children's message.



Save the Date!!!!

3rd Annual Car Show

Saturday, June 13

9 a.m.—2 p.m. *Rain or shine*

Lectionary Readings for May 2026

May 3 – 5th Sunday of Easter

Proverbs 4:10-18; Psalm 119:9-32
1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

May 10 – 6th Sunday of Easter, Mother's Day

Ezekiel 34:1-7; Psalm 115;
1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

May 17 – Ascension Sunday

Isaiah 45:1-7; Psalm 21:1-7;
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

May 24 – Pentecost; Heritage Sunday

Numbers 11:24-30; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 7:37-39

May 31 – Trinity Sunday

Peace with Justice Sunday

Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Psalm 8
2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Matthew 28:16-20

May Communion Offering: Peace with Justice

Donations for this special Sunday support programs and ministries to educate, equip, and mobilize actions in support of identified economic, health, and gender justice priorities.

Half of the funds collected on this special Sunday will remain in the Annual Conference to strengthen social justice ministries within the local conference. The other half of the donations collected will fund national and international peacemaking ministries and grants.



Messy Church attendees had a fun evening!



Life Changes

Death:

Mary Smith, mother of Steve Smith (died April 4)



Baptism:

Cassian John Olajide Carew, baptized on April 26. He is the son of Devon Carew and Jessca Lee Ackerman and grandson of Emile and Yvonne Carew.

Birthdays:

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



- Bill Willoughby May 6
- Margie Dague May 23



On April 26, Cassian John Olajide Carew was baptized by Rev. JW Park with family and friends in attendance.



The Circuit Rider is published monthly by St. Matthew's United Methodist Church

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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.

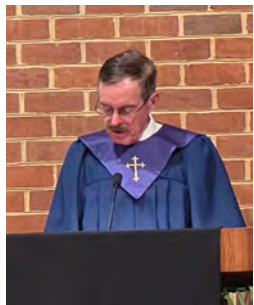
Please call to verify receipt of any faxed articles.



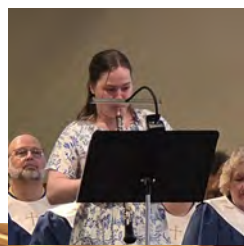
On **Palm/Passion Sunday**, the Gloria Ringers rang "The Palms" and accompanied Rod Berfield who sang Bach's "Betrachte, Mein Seele" (arranged and conducted by Jeff Schaumeyer).



The cross was carried in to close the service.



The **Good Friday** service was narrated by Becky Roper and George Huffman; the choir sang the cantata, "Not My Will, but Yours."



Easter Sunday was glorious with a beautiful altar, uplifting music, a joyous children's message, and everyone's favorite, "The Hallelujah Chorus."





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

Facebook: stmbowie



Time Dated Material
Please Deliver Promptly



Weekly Schedule

<p>Sunday Services In person</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Garden Worship Service (Parlor if raining)</p> <p>10 a.m. Worship in Sanctuary w/Children's Church</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Matthew's UMC Facebook • St. Matthew's UMC Website <p>Zoom: Contact church office for the link.</p> <p>11 a.m. Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall</p> <p>Children's Sunday School, Rm 222</p> <p>Adult Sunday School, Parlor</p>	<p>Tuesday 9:45 a.m. Bible Study with Isaac Borocz (Parlor)</p> <p>7 p.m. Bible Study with Rev. Park on Zoom</p> <p>Wednesday 7 p.m. Simple Prayer Service (Sanctuary)</p> <p>In-person or call-in 267-807-9601, access code 111-576-270#</p> <p>Daily 6:30 a.m. Morning Prayer (except Sundays)</p> <p>Call-in 267-807-9601, access code 111-576-270#</p>
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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.