

Priest's Point of View

Thank you all for the gracious and enthusiastic welcome to St. Matthew's! Kristina, Zachary, and I have been flooded with hugs, smiles, and good wishes. We are starting to settle in.

I really do want to meet each and every member of the congregation who calls St. Matthew's their church home. I'd like to sit and talk with you, wherever is a comfortable setting for you: where you live, my house (you're always welcome), my study, a coffee shop... I don't care so much about the setting as I do the sharing of our lives.

At Christmas, we celebrate and remember the incarnation of God in Christ, or as Eugene Peterson delightfully put it, "God became flesh and moved into the neighborhood." Thank you for the gift of sharing your lives with me as we travel the road following Jesus together.

Fr. Cristopher

ALL ARE INVITED!

To Mendell Morgan's Black-eyed Pea Party.

January 1st, 2:00—4:00 p.m.

**Enjoy some black-eyed peas (and other treats)
for good luck in the new year.**

Drop in anytime during the hours above.

**If you are able, please bring a non-perishable food
item for RACAP to bless those in need.**



From Your Senior Warden

By Shawn Cooksey

God has plans for you. According to the Bible, NIV, Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” I am sure we have all heard this or told this. However, when life is rough, and you are struggling to just get out of bed, and it seems that every road you go down is under construction, you may question God’s plan for you. We are all on different journeys – according to God’s will for us. God will not let us down, and every event in our lives has a reason or purpose if we are following God.

Have you ever felt like there was absolutely no way you could accomplish a task but accepted it anyway? You pray, you try, and figure you will just do your best. Then you realize you are near completion, look back, realize how far you have come, and that God was with you the whole time. He placed all that you would need right before you. It didn’t come without hard work and challenges, but you grew stronger in your faith, and in many other ways you never imagined. I must be honest; this is exactly how I am feeling as we end this year. As my term as your Senior Warden ends and I hand this very important job over to someone else, I recall a few years back, just after my husband’s death, being asked to volunteer to help in the church office, which I did. Then, a year later, being asked to serve on the vestry which I politely declined but I did agree to be a council alternate delegate. The next year I was asked again to be on vestry and this time I accepted – not sure why – just that I trusted God had a plan. After one year on the vestry, Fr. Tim asked me to be the Senior Warden, which I declined. The look on his face was surprising to me as he explained that I was very capable, that God will be with me, and I would not be alone. I still declined but agreed to pray about it. Several days and many phone calls from caring friends and family later, I agreed. Even though I wanted to quit several times, God would not allow this to happen. He placed everything I needed close by and required that I ask. I learned to ask, and I received the help I needed.

So now, looking back over the past few years, and my whole life for that matter, it has been rough, with many twists and turns in the road. Just when I thought it would calm down, there was another twist. However, it was during those times, although I felt alone, I now know I wasn’t alone. God was holding and molding me, making me stronger, and growing me towards his plans. I am reminded often of Philippians 4:13 (NKJ), “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” I am thankful I didn’t give up when I really wanted to. I am so excited to see our church, and myself, growing, and so many positive events occurring. Is it easy? No! Does it require work? Yes! Will it be worth it? Absolutely!

So now I ask you to pray for God’s plan for you, and then have faith and courage to take a leap and go for it. It could be anything: greeting people as they arrive at church, helping set up the altar, reading, assisting with communion, serve during coffee hour, picking up trash if you see it on church grounds, smiling and greeting a visitor, attending Bible study. Every one of us is an important part of our beautiful, small church. If we all do something, then everything gets done quicker and better, to the Glory of God. More than likely, it is part of your story that God has already written for you. I wish you a very Merry Christmas and many blessings for the new year. Thank you again for your prayers, support, and words of encouragement during these past few years.

Celebration of Fr. Chuck

Our last Sunday with our Interim Rector Fr. Chuck was December 3rd. We are grateful for his ministry to us during our transition and search for a new rector. This was only the second search in our history.



Fr. Chuck's last service as our Interim Rector.



Susan Brown assisting Shawn Cooksey with the presentation of our gift to Fr. Chuck.



Recognition of our commissioned artist Lorena Leach.



Thank you, Susan Brown, and artist Lorena Leach, for creating our gift for Fr. Chuck.



A Recap From Your Junior Warden

By Wayne Mudge

Following my comments at the annual parish meeting last week, several people asked some follow-on questions. I thought it appropriate to let all of you know the questions and my answers.



- ◆ When the City of Universal City buys the section of land that we own next to Walmart, will the money go to the Diocese or us? The money from that purchase will go to St Matthews. The Diocese had to approve the sale, but we will receive the money from that sale after the contract is signed in January 2024.
- ◆ It appears the parish hall foundation is sinking again. Are the repairs we did two years ago under warranty? No, the additional sinking of the foundation after two years of exceptional drought is not covered under warranty. I do not believe the foundation has settled enough to warrant another foundation repair – at least not yet. We are, however, going to seal the expansion joints and mortar cracks on the parish hall exterior wall. If the foundation continues to sink, we will have the foundation checked again.
- ◆ The tower appears to be covered with algae. Does it need to be washed? The tower will be washed and painted sometime in 2024 – hopefully, sooner than later. Part of the program to prevent the tower from developing water leaks again is to have it repainted every 4 – 5 years. It’s time to do that. We also hope to have the exterior of the church repainted next year.
- ◆ I noticed the main door to the Vellom Education Building (VEB) does not close well. Can it be repaired? Yes. Once we receive the funds from selling the land to Universal City, the Vestry will be asked to authorize repairs to the door and the installation of insulation and weatherproofing in the VEB.
- ◆ Is the old shed going to be replaced? Yes. Like the VEB repairs, the Vestry will be asked to authorize the purchase of a new shed after the land sale.

If you have any further questions, please contact Wayne Mudge.

Time and Talent Giving

By Ellen Yelverton

As we complete our Estimates of Giving, I want to emphasize two of the three T’s – Time and Talent. I know that you all serve St. Matthew’s Church, but there are several ministries in need of a few more “good men and women” including:

Altar Guild – needs 3 or 4 new members. It is the perfect job for those who wish to stay out of the limelight, yet wish to participate in enhancing our worship. If you are interested, please contact Diane Woods. She is an excellent teacher who explains all the steps in setting up both the altar and the nave. She is also very patient and kind.

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Time and Talent Giving (Continued)

Audio/Visual - needs 1 or 2 new members. This is also a behind the scenes ministry but vital to those who can't attend our worship service in person. This ministry works upstairs in the loft during the 10:00 a.m. service. See Terry May if you are interested.

Grounds Committee – needs more help in maintaining our Memorial Garden and landscaping. If you can rake leaves, water plants, put down mulch, or trim a tree, this ministry is for you. Ron Dunlap and Wayne Mudge would appreciate the help.

Greeters and Ushers – we need 2 or 3 more people to greet those who enter the church building, collect the offering before communion, and usher communicants to the altar rail as needed. Contact Ellen Yelverton if you are able to help.

Prayer Ministry – needs a few people who would participate in the privilege of offering prayers with and for people after the church service. This is something we should consider offering after the 8 a.m. service. Contact Ellen Yelverton if you are interested.

Hospitality and Coffee Ministries – “many hands make light work” should be the motto for these groups. Add your name to the list of helpers for the occasional event or volunteer to host coffee hour once a month. Contact Melissa Mudge to volunteer.



Military Outreach Ministry

By AGCS Arlene Stalvey, USN (ret)



The St. Matt's ongoing Prayer List includes the names of five individuals deployed by the US Military. These names were submitted by parishioners: DAVID, DANIEL, JOHN, DENNIS, and GIOVANNI. Let's give some details for Fr. Cristopher about these brave men. Who are they to whomever put them on the list? Which US service are they in? Whatever else you'd like to share about them. Rate/Rank? Where are they now? What do they do for their military operations? (In general, nothing classified or compromising.) How long have they been deployed, and when are they expected to return?

There is a shipboard tradition in the Navy on New Year's Eve. The midnight watch stander makes a logbook entry in poetry about the change-over of the year. I hope all of you read Sr Warden Shawn Cooksey's letter about all the 2023 happenings at St. Matthew's. Even though it was in prose form, there was something poetic about it. We began the year saying farewell to our beloved priest Fr. Tim. We are ending this year with a great big welcome to our new priest Fr. Cristopher. Let's remember though, that the people of the parish are the principal doers of our mission. So, roll up your sleeves - 2024 is going to be a productive, adventurous, and fun year!

Finally - let us give tribute to our newest addition to the US Armed Forces, the Space Force. The final mission of NASA's Apollo program, Apollo 17, returned to Earth on December 19th, 1972. This marked the end of a remarkable era in space exploration and the last time humans walked on the lunar surface.

Hospitality Notes

By Melissa Mudge

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. (Romans 12:9-13)

Many Thanks

Thank you, people of St. Matthew's, for all we have shared in 2023; a tough year in some ways, but all in all a bountiful year. Thanks for being a part of sharing time, talent, and treasure.

On-Going Hospitality

- ◆ Morning Coffee Fellowship after each Sunday Service.

8:00 Service—morning coffee and snacks will be ready about 8:45.

10:00 service—coffee and snacks will be ready about 10:45.

Thanks host families. You make every Sunday a special occasion in the Parish Hall. The snacks are delightful and the conversations compelling. Sometimes it's hard to get up and move on to the rest of the day.

- ◆ Hospitality Committee – Volunteers are needed to prepare food, set up, serve, and clean-up at some of our church related activities. If you would like to be “hospitality on call,” please let me know.

Give it – To Go

Please pick up a bag to give away to someone who needs it. These bags can travel in your car and then be given as you like.

Finished bags are available in Creasy Hall with a water bottle, snacks, a wash cloth, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, and black socks.

There is room to add anything else, such as: long sleeved tee shirt/sweatshirt, sunscreen, feminine hygiene products, an additional pair of socks, or a gift card to a fast-food establishment. The person to whom you might give this bag is experiencing difficult times and has limited resources, so think about portability.

Items needed at this time include deodorant, small shampoo/conditioner, body lotion, and sunscreen. No hotel samples please, not much product and too much trash. There were some recent donations of bags and deodorant. Yes! If you are cleaning out closets in the next few weeks, some gently used adult sized sweatshirts would make great additions to the bags. Thanks so much.



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Hospitality Notes (Continued)

Special Events (Some dates to look forward to)

- ◆ January 24—Belly Laugh Day. A day celebrating the great gift of laughter. Laughter is known to have many holistic benefits which include the expanding of tissue lining of blood vessels which consequently increases blood flow. In turn, this can make you feel more positive, boost your immune system, and generally just makes us feel happier and more energetic. Belly laugh day aims to remind people of the benefits of laughter and encourage people to spread laughter in their lives and the lives of others. So, all you jokesters and punsters – bring us your best.
- ◆ February 13—Shrove Tuesday. (Really) Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper – more information coming in January.
- ◆ February 14—Ash Wednesday, beginning the season of Lent. Also Valentine’s Day.
- ◆ March 10—Start Daylight Saving Time.
- ◆ March 25 – 31—Holy Week
- ◆ March 31—Easter Sunday – Easter Egg Hunt and Finger Food Luncheon
.... And maybe more.

Annual Parish Meeting, Tamales, and Trimmings



The hall is ready for the meeting, breaking bread, & decorating!



Preparing the feast to go with the Tamales!



So much yumminess to choose from!



More Annual Parish Meeting, Tamales, and Trimmings



Annual parish meeting was informative!



Decorating the parish hall tree



RACAP NEWS

by: Kathy Ercoline

Thank you to all who generously donated to the Holiday Basket Program. Your donations of food and money were greatly appreciated and added to the success of distributing food baskets to many families in our local area. There will be a final report on the basket program in the January Matt's Missive.

Lisa Loftus, RACAP's Program Director, came back to the pantry a few weeks ago after her surgery and complications that led to a long recovery. It was good to see her smiling face in the RACAP office. She is working one day a week, and she hopes to build her strength to be back full time in January. Please keep Lisa in your prayers, as she continues to gain stamina. Kathy Stone, RACAP's Assistant Director, is doing an outstanding job keeping the pantry running smoothly.

During the Holiday Basket Program, RACAP was also busy with clients, helping them with food, rent, gasoline, and prescriptions. I deliver the food donations from St. Matthew's weekly and every week I am amazed at the volume of groceries that passes through the pantry. The need is great! Everything donated is used and very much appreciated.

Current Pantry Needs:

Canned Fruits	Tomato Products	Ramen	Dried Beans
Rice	Canned Meats	Muffin Mix	Mac n Cheese
Meat Helpers	Canned Beans (not green beans)	Canned Soup	Jello
Toothpaste	Shampoo	Dish Soap	Laundry Detergent
Feminine Hygiene Products		<i>Pet Food is Always Accepted</i>	

These items are the current needs, but any non-perishable food item and/or monetary donations are always accepted.

In January we will be collecting soups for **RACAP'S "Souper Bowl."** We are asking the congregation to donate cans or jars of soups (all varieties), saltine crackers, oyster crackers, etc. The "RACAP Souper Bowl" will begin on New Year's Day and continue through Super Bowl Sunday.

Wishing you a blessed holiday season. Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year!

November 2023 Pantry Assistance

of Families assisted: 105

of People assisted: 297

of Pantry Visits: 67

of People fed: 195

Estimated value of food given: \$15,817

"Thank you for helping us help others."



Happenings Around The Diocese

Camp Capers Open House: January 14, 2024. Mark your calendars for Camp Capers' first Open House, on Sunday, January 14th from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.! This event is the perfect opportunity for you to learn more about our programming, tour Camp Capers, meet our staff, and participate in a Q&A session.

A Conversation About Indigenous Ministries: January 8, 2024, at the Bishop Jones Center. Join World Missions for *A Conversation About Indigenous Ministries*, featuring mission experts including the Rt. Rev. Barry L. Beisner, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Navajoland. The free workshop will be held on Monday, January 8 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The Rt. Rev. Dr. David G. Read will give an opening prayer and the Rev. David Chalk will provide music. Topics of discussion will range from steps in initiating partnerships with indigenous people to ways of engaging the local church with indigenous ministries.

Mustang Island Beautification Weekend: February 16 - 18, 2024. A service-oriented weekend for adults to help Mustang Island Conference Center and experience an enjoyable weekend away. Work projects may include grounds clean-up, boardwalk maintenance, storage construction, or gardening. Projects will be coordinated by Mustang Island Conference Center staff to match the volunteer skills and what is most needed at that time.

You can find more information and registration on these and other events at <https://www.dwtx.org/events>



EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE
of West Texas

From the Blog

"Love Came Down at Christmas, A Gift for all Seasons of Life:" A Christmas Letter from the Rt. Rev. Dr. David G. Read

"Love Came Down at Christmas, A Gift for All Seasons of Life," the Rt. Rev. Dr. David Read's Christmas Message reminds us that because God sent the Son to be born in a humble, messy place, we can be assured that he will abide with us when our lives are a mess. He writes, " God chooses to dwell with us in both the joys and the very real challenges of life. So go, tell it on the mountains, over the hills and everywhere, that Jesus Christ is born." Read more [here](#).

The Rev. Leyla King Joins the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas as Canon for Mission in Small Congregations

Bishop Coadjutor, the Rt. Rev. Dr. David G. Read of The Episcopal Diocese of West Texas is pleased to announce the Rev. Leyla King as the Canon for Mission in Small Congregations. King will join the diocese on January 22. Bishop Read states, "We are elated to have King in this newly created position. Our small congregations are served by faithful clergy and lay leaders who wear many hats. This role was created to support these congregations as they explore new ways to build engagement within their communities. King's background and passion make her the ideal person to lead our mission to lift and grow the small churches in our diocese." Read more [here](#).

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The submission **DEADLINE** for the Missive is the 15th of the month. Any late submissions will be in the next month's issue.

From the Blog *(Continued)*

Investiture of the Rt. Rev. Dr. David G. Read Ties Together Tradition and Transitions

On Friday, December 1, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, San Antonio was full of joy, glorious music, and The Holy Spirit during a service of Choral Evensong and the Investiture of the Rt. Rev. Dr. David G. Read. The location held tradition as each of the previous ten Bishops have preached from the St. Mark's pulpit, and at one time it was the Cathedral of the Diocese. Read more [here](#).

'Come and Go With Me: A Collection of Stories and Lessons'

World Missions Director Dr. Marthe Curry's new book, *Come and Go with Me: A Collection of Stories and Lessons*, is a compilation of inspirational blog entries she was called to write. It is aimed at urging readers to persistently seek a deeper connection with Jesus. The devotional makes a great Christmas Gift! Click to [order](#).

"Thanksgiving for Blessings Given" - A Reflection from the Rt. Rev. David M. Reed

Bishop David M. Reed has released a Thanksgiving letter to the diocese. "This Thanksgiving, I think my heart may be more full than my belly—full of gratitude for all good gifts, for all the blessings of family, friends, country; and gratitude for you, the clergy and people of the Diocese of West Texas, and for the honor and adventure of having lived and served among you as bishop, brother, and fellow child of God." Reed said. Read more [here](#).

DWTX Announcements

The diocesan offices at the Bishop Jones Center will close for the Christmas Holiday beginning Wednesday, December 20 at 12:00 p.m. and reopen Wednesday, December 27. Additionally, the offices will close for New Year's Eve on Monday, January 1. If needed, the staff email directory is available online, at dwtx.org/staff.

From The Episcopal Church

Following his December 4 surgery for a subdural hematoma, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has been released from the hospital and will continue recovering at home. His surgeon is happy with his continued progress, and Bishop Curry will be attending follow-up appointments and working from home in the days ahead. Click [here](#) to learn more.

The Episcopal Church Indigenous Ministries Winter Talk 2024 will be held on January 13-15 at the Mustang Island Conference Center in Port Aransas. Portions of the event will be livestreamed for broader viewing. A registration link for virtual attendance will be available soon. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has announced that the Rev. Ann Hallisey, will succeed Bishop Mike Klusmeyer in the role of Canon to the Presiding Bishop for ministry within The Episcopal Church. Click [here](#) to read more.

JANUARY CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 <i>Office Closed No Prayer Meeting</i> AA Meeting 8-9pm (CH)	2	3 HOME 10am-3:30pm (CH, C, CEB) Eucharist 11am (ARC)	4 AA Meeting 8-9pm (CH)	5	6
7 Worship 8 & 10am (C) Sunday School 9:15am (L) Kiwanis 5-6pm (CH)	8 Staff Meeting 9am (L) Prayer Meeting 12pm (L) AA Meeting 8-9pm (CH)	9	10 HOME 10am-3:30pm (CH, C, CEB) Eucharist 11am (ARC)	11 AA Meeting 8-9pm (CH)	12	13
14 Worship 8 & 10am (C) Sunday School 9:15am (L) Kiwanis 5-6pm (CH)	15 Staff Meeting 9am (L) Prayer Meeting 12pm (L) AA Meeting 8-9pm (CH)	16 Vestry Meeting 6pm (CH)	17 HOME 10am-3:30pm (CH, C, CEB) Eucharist 11am (ARC)	18 AA Meeting 8-9pm (CH)	19	20
21 Worship 8 & 10am (C) Sunday School 9:15am (L) Kiwanis 5-6pm (CH)	22 Staff Meeting 9am (L) Prayer Meeting 12pm (L) AA Meeting 8-9pm (CH)	23	24 HOME 10am-3:30pm (CH, C, VEB) Eucharist 11am (ARC)	25 AA Meeting 8-9pm (CH)	26	27
28 Worship 8 & 10am (C) Sunday School 9:15am (L)	29 Staff Meeting 9am (L) Prayer Meeting 12pm (L) AA Meeting 8-9pm (CH)	30	31 HOME 10am-3:30pm (CH, C, VEB) Eucharist 11am (ARC)			

C – Church; **CH** – Creasy Hall; **VEB** – Vellom Ed Building; **L** – Library
ARC – Army Residence Community

Diocesan Immigration & Refugee Ministries has issued an urgent request for baby clothing, bottles, infant formula, other supplies, and volunteers for the Plaza de Paz Respite Center in response to increasing numbers of families with toddlers and babies at the center. New and gently used infant and toddler clothing (sizes Preemie to 4T) can be delivered to the Bishop Jones Center. Needed items may also be purchased through their [Amazon List](#) and [Walmart List](#). The delivery address is: Plaza de Paz, 111 Torcido Dr., San Antonio, TX 78209-5642. Click [here](#) to contact Flor Saldivar, Director of Immigration Ministries, for more information and to volunteer.

JANUARY 2024 SUNDAY MINISTRY SCHEDULE

Ministry	January 7	January 14	January 21	January 28
Altar Guild	Terry May Diane Woods	Diane Woods Training	Janet Clere Suzanne Milton	Terry May Suzanne Milton
8 AM Reader	Jayne Dunlap	Suzi Hopkins	Joan McClain	Max Hopkins
8 AM Greeter/Usher	Suzi Hopkins	Joan McClain	Max Hopkins	Ron Dunlap
8 AM Coffee	Jayne Dunlap	Suzi Hopkins	Tarawanda Howard	Joan McClain
Server	Shawn Francis	Terry May	Sean Keane-Dawes	Sean Keane-Dawes
10 AM Reader	Liz Sampson	Susan Brown	Ted Whittier	Diane Woods
10 AM Greeters/Ushers	Ted Whittier Arlene Stalvey	Melissa Mudge Wayne Mudge	Kathy Ercoline Bill Ercoline	Diane Woods Terry May
Prayers of the People	Janet Clere	Bill Ercoline	Ted Whittier	Maribeth Likins
Newcomer Visits	Ellen Yelverton	Terry May Diane Woods	Ellen Yelverton	Terry May Diane Woods
Home Communion	Sean Keane-Dawes	No Home Communion	Janet Clere	No Home Communion
Prayer Ministry	Maribeth Likins	Ellen Yelverton	Mendell Morgan	Maribeth Likins
10 AM Coffee	Kathy Ercoline	Melissa Mudge	Diane Woods	Kathy Ercoline
Audio Visual	Wayne Mudge	Terry May Kristina Robinson	Wayne Mudge	Terry May Kristina Robinson
Lockup/Security	Janet Clere	Richard Guerrero	Jayne Dunlap	Maribeth Likins

January Birthdays

*For I know the plans I have for you,"
declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and
not to harm you, plans to give you hope and
a future." (Jeremiah 29:1)*

Lynn Medina	Tommy Evans
Ted Whittier	Keith Black
Lori Tidwell	Rose Marie Smith
Leah Tafolla	Fr. Tim Vellom
Courtney Hopkins	Craig Hopkins
Michael Winkle	Mary Dunham
Dante Black	

NOVEMBER 2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

Monthly	Pledge	Plate	Other	Total	2023 YTD	Pledge	Plate	Other	Total
Operating Income Received	\$13,438	\$1,392	\$585	\$15,415	Operating Income Received	\$177,483	\$18,788	\$66,468	\$262,739
Operating Income Budgeted	\$15,132	\$1,917	\$736	\$17,785	Operating Income Budgeted	\$166,457	\$21,083	\$13,699	\$201,239
	Monthly	YTD				Monthly	YTD		
Overall Operating Expenses	\$13,323	\$231,872			Outreach	\$1,460	\$9,646		
Budgeted Operating Expense	\$18,408	\$243,983							

ST. MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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