



Reaching out  
Reaching within  
Proclaiming God's Love

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

P.O. Box 342  
2001 Windsor Drive  
Newton, Kansas 67114  
Church: 316-283-3310  
[www.stmatthewsnewton.org](http://www.stmatthewsnewton.org)  
[www.facebook.com/stmattsnewton](https://www.facebook.com/stmattsnewton)

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# *The Messenger*

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## A Note from Fr. Mike Loyd

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### THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT CHRISTMAS

Shortly after I received word that I had been accepted by St. Matthew's to be your priest, Jill and I were having our weekly Facetime call with our daughters, Ali and Juliana. During our call Jill and I informed the girls that I was to be the priest at St. Matthew's. Suddenly and unexpectedly, I stood up and exclaimed, "YES! Christmas Eve at St. Matthew's! I guess at that moment, it just hit me with a reminder that Christmas Eve at St. Matthew's is so very special. The nave of the church is always so beautiful and it brings out a spiritual feeling that is hard to define. But we know that it's something about Christmas at St. Matthew's. And on Christmas Eve, we have the candles, the Christmas story from the Gospel of St. Luke, the music, and the singing. Yes, we tend to sing out more on Christmas Eve and I believe that somehow, we all have good singing voices on Christmas Eve.

Speaking of music, I think about that event that happened during the wartime hell of World War 1 when a ceasefire was declared on Christmas Eve in 1914. It was trench warfare and it was cold and foggy. Both sides were waiting for the horrible moment when the gunfire would resume and the bullets would come whistling toward their human targets. But it didn't happen. Instead, from the German side, the soldiers began singing, *Stille Nacht* (Silent Night) and in the next moment, the British joined in singing

Silent Night. The British sang *O Come, All Ye Faithful* and the Germans responded with the Latin version of the carol with *Adeste Fideles*. And the spirit of Christmas spread throughout the trenches with Germans and British emerging from the trenches and sharing food, playing football, and wishing each other "Merry Christmas."

Unfortunately, it didn't last as the gunfire and killing resumed. But for that brief time, what God wants for humanity took place among the trenches of that horrible war. And it gives us hope. There's something about Christmas that gives us hope. There's something about Christmas that brings out our desire for peace, to love and be loved. And as we get older there's something about Christmas that makes us remember. Remembering all the things that make life good.

I'll close with a few lines from the sermon in one of my favorite classic Christmas movies, *The Bishop's Wife*. "Let us ask ourselves what Jesus would wish for Christmas. And then, let each put in his share, loving kindness, warm hearts, and a stretched out hand of tolerance. All the shining gifts that make peace on earth."

May we all have a wonderful and joyful Christmas full of blessings.

Fr. Mike



## ***St. Matthew's Vision Statement***

*St. Matthew's Episcopal Church is living into God's vision for us as a beloved community and disciples of Christ. We are always growing in relationship with God, embracing our neighborhood and our world, and leading through acts of service as a beacon of God's justice and love.*

## ***St. Matthew's Mission Statement***

*The Mission of St. Matthew's is to Welcome, Respect and Care for All People. We accomplish this by following Christ, the perfect example of God's reconciling love, as we promote justice, peace and healing for ourselves and our world.*

Office phone: 316-283-3310

Office e-mail:

office.stmatthewsnewton@gmail.com

### **St. Matthew's office hours:**

- Monday-Thursday 9:00 am—2:00 pm
- Fr. Mike's office hours will be Monday and Thursday 9:00 am-3:00 pm.

**Services:** Holy Eucharist 10:15 am every Sunday  
Evening Prayer 6:00 pm Wednesday

\* St. Matthew's Vestry meeting will be Sunday, December 14 after church

## **Discretionary Fund**

This is a reminder that on the first Sunday of each month any loose money in the collection plate goes to the Rector's Discretionary Fund. This gives the Rector resources to give to someone that asks for help with a utility bill, rent, food or anything else that is asked of the church. Please be generous.



## **STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN**

Christians give to the Lord because they are grateful. The giving of themselves in totality - body, mind, spirit, talents, time and material resources - is the Christian way of expressing their thankfulness to God for all that they have. Responding to the immeasurable love and grace of God, dedicated Christians open their hearts and hands toward God in a spirit of appreciation and love.

We are starting our annual pledge drive here at St. Matthew's. Please think about and pray how you can give both financial and with your talents to St. Matthew's Church in 2026.

Be on the lookout for a letter from Fr. Mike Loyd along with a pledge card in the first part of December. Thank you for everything everyone at St. Matthew's does to make our church a loving, generous and prayerful place.



Dear Lord,

You have brought us to Christmastime once more. Help us not to get lost in the glitter and the glow, but to see the true glory of the birth of Your only begotten Son. Keep our hearts from clinging too tightly to parties, presents and decorations, and turn our eyes instead to Christ — who bears Your very image and brings us Your message of love and hope.



## Advent and Christmas Schedule



**Sunday, November 30—10:15 am**

Hope: The first candle, often called the Prophecy Candle, symbolizes the hope for the coming of the Messiah and the promises made in the Old Testament.



**Sunday, December 7— 10:15 am**

Peace: The second candle represents the peace that Christ's birth brings to the world, as announced by the angels.



**Sunday, December 14—10:15 am**

Joy: The third candle, frequently colored pink and called the Shepherd's Candle, symbolizes the joy of the shepherds and the overall rejoicing in anticipation of Christmas.



**Sunday, December 21—10:15 am**

Love: The fourth candle represents God's great love for humanity, made manifest through the birth of his son, Jesus.



**Sunday, December 21—10:15 am**

On this 4th Sunday of Advent we will be having a service of Lessons & Carols. Please join us for this wonderful service of music and scripture as we prepare for the Christmas Season. We will also be decorating St. Matthew's after the service in preparation for Christmas. Please stay and help beautify our church and bring snacks to share after we are finished.



**Wednesday, December 24—7:00 pm**

Christmas Eve candle light service will start at 7:00 pm with music and the worship service starting at 7:30 pm. Please plan to be here to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ

A fifth candle, is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to represent Jesus, the Light of the world.



**Thursday, December 25—10:15 am**

A service of Morning Prayer will be provided on Christmas Morning.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ, who came to save us. On this special day, we pray for hearts filled with gratitude, peace, and love. Help us to keep our focus on the true meaning of Christmas, to share your joy with those around us, and to act with kindness and generosity throughout the day. Guide our family and friends, bless our celebrations, and may our day be filled with laughter and with your holy presence. Amen.



## ADVENT 2025 Living Well Through Advent Sundays at 9:00 am Practicing Generosity with All Your Heart, Soul, Strength and Mind

Sunday Morning Advent Study discussions started on the first Sunday of Advent, **November 30** at 9:00 a.m.. Each Sunday a participant of Education for Ministry (EfM) will lead the discussions. The 56-page devotional booklets are available at the church.

Please join us any Sunday during Advent, whether or not you have the booklet.

Week One	November 30
Week Two	December 7
Week Three	December 14
Week Four	December 21

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and, love your neighbor as yourself. Luke 10:27

**T**he Living Compass Model for Well-Being offers us guidance in four dimensions of our being: heart, soul, strength, and mind. Just like a mobile or kinesthetic art, these dimensions are interconnected.

Whatever impacts one area of our lives (positively or negatively) will have an impact on the other areas. Each of the four compass points focuses on two areas of well-being, and each of the eight areas helps to guide and equip us as we commit to being more intentional about the way we live our lives. The purpose of this Compass is to provide a dynamic resource that will assist us in our search for balance and wellness. The invitation is to live an undivided life, where heart, soul, strength, and mind are integrated into both our *being* and our *doing*.



## The journey begins at Advent

When Advent begins on November 30 this year, so does a new church year for liturgical congregations. The church seasons, which correspond to key events in Jesus' life, begin with the four-week Advent period of preparation for our coming Savior at Christmas. After the 12-day season of Christmas is Epiphany, which begins January 6 and continues through Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. That period of preparation culminates in Holy Week, and then Easter marks the pinnacle of every church year. Forty days after the Resurrection we celebrate Ascension, and 10 days after that, the Pentecost season begins; it lasts until Advent, when the cycle begins again.

"Like a great waterwheel," writes Joan Chittister, "the liturgical year goes on relentlessly irrigating our souls, softening the ground of our hearts, nourishing the soil of our lives until the seed of the Word of God itself begins to grow in us, comes to fruit in us, ripens in us the spiritual journey of a lifetime."



Advent in the Episcopal Church is not just a season of preparation for Christmas but also a time for reflection and renewal. It is a period of fasting, prayer, and contemplation that encourages the congregation to slow down and prepare their hearts for the joy of the Christmas Season. This season is marked by the lighting of candles, prayers, and hymns, all aimed at helping the faithful to long for God again and to arrive ready for the celebration of Christmas.



# DECEMBER

Birthdays, Baptisms, and  
Confirmations

*Remember to pray for each of these persons  
on their special day*

Watch over your children, O Lord, as their days increase; bless and guide them wherever they may be. Strengthen them when they stand; comfort them when discouraged or sorrowful; raise them up if they fall; and in their hearts may your peace which passes understanding abide all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## December Birthdays

December 9—Amy Ekerberg, Katrina Southern  
December 10—Micah Garner  
December 12—Jason Penner  
December 22—Sarah Hill Kenney  
December 27—Rosalind Scudder  
December 30—Melissa Keenan  
December 31—Ian McCloud

## December Baptisms

December 5 —Jim Reese  
December 20—Maddie Stonehouse  
December 22—Drew Holstine, Wayne Reif  
December 23—Alison Loyd, Nancy Craig  
December 24—Haley Southern  
December 26—Mary Ann Glover Beck  
December 29—Jane Orr, Charles Beck

## December Confirmations

December 7—Donna Mills, Melissa Keenan, Sean Hall  
December 8—Rosalind Scudder  
December 16—Annette Bernard  
December 23—Andrew Craig

If you know of other birthday, confirmation, or baptism dates that are not listed, please contact the office so they can be included. Thank you.

## December 2025 Coffee Hour Hosts



December 7 - OPEN  
December 14 - OPEN  
December 21 - hanging of the greens/ BRING SNACKS  
December 28 - Melissa Keenan

There will be a new 2026 Coffee hour calendar in the parish hall towards the end of December. Look over your calendar and pick a date that you can serve as Host during coffee hour in 2026. Thanks to everyone that has provided snacks during 2025! Its always delicious!

## St. Matthew's Prayer Chain



If you have a request for prayers for yourself or others, contact Mary Upton at **316-841-1736**. The information you share will then be passed on to the chain leaders who will pass the information on to their team. The members of the chain will add your request to their prayers. The information you give me is confidential and will not be shared with others outside the prayer chain without your permission.

## Other Prayer Requests:

This is a reminder that you can add names to the Prayer List that is read during the worship service at the Prayers of the People. There is a white binder in the church office that you can have any name added to. The names will stay on the list for a month and then be taken off. If you need continued prayers just let Charlie know and the name(s) will continue to be on the list.



## St. Matthew's Outreach

### Food Cart

12 non-perishable food items were delivered to the Salvation Army "Harvest of Love" food bank in November.

Please remember those who don't have enough to eat.

### Adopt A Family

We have adopted a family of 4... Dad, Mom, and 2 young boys. Our Christmas wreath will be in the parish hall on Sundays until all of the gift tags are gone.



Please have your wrapped gift, with tag attached, back to church no LATER than December 21st. Any questions or concerns, please contact Melissa. Thanks.

### Shut Ins & Soldiers

If you have a loved one that you would like to have on any one of our bulletin boards in the parish hall, please include a picture....they will receive cards, and visits. Thank you.



If you would like to donate towards Christmas Poinsettias, please fill out the form available at the church and give to Margie Knupp. You can donate whatever amount you would like and can give in memory of someone, for blessings received or for any other blessings you would like to honor. Please have the form turned in as soon as possible. Deadline is December 21. These flowers will grace the altar from Christmas Eve through Epiphany.

## Opportunities to help at Northridge

Northridge School has some neat opportunities coming up and is looking for extra hands to make things a success. If interested in helping, please fill the form for a background check required to help. The background check is valid for 3 years. This is fairly simple.

<https://www.usd373.org/community/visitor-volunteer-information>

### Holiday Shop

[https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0A49AFA72FA5F94-60451390-holiday#/?](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0A49AFA72FA5F94-60451390-holiday#/)

The holiday shop is coming to Northridge School in December. Help is needed with setting up on Monday, December 8, evening and then selling/wrapping gifts throughout the week. Wrapping includes putting the item in a bag and taping it closed. This is a special time for kids, as they can buy gifts for special people in their lives. We will be set up in the front conference room.



January 6 marks the day of Epiphany, when the wise men (who were Gentiles) came to worship Jesus and bring him gifts. During the church-year season of Epiphany, we remember that God's Son is the Light of the whole world.

To celebrate Epiphany, we will be having our annual St. Matthew's Epiphany Party on Sunday, January 4. Please join us for a "white elephant" gift exchange, snacks and Chalking of the Door. More information will be made available at a later date. But, plan to bring a "white elephant" wrapped gift and join in on the fun. And bring your favorite snack to share. We will also be "chalking the door" to bless the church for another year.



## Book Review by Jeremy Kitto

Johnson, Dru. *Understanding Biblical Law: Skills for Thinking With and Through Torah* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2025).

Biblical Law is unlike anything the world has ever seen, either ancient or modern. Its distinct presentation, "legal texts mixed in with narratives, poetic song, and ritual instruction, all intended to be read side by side" (p. 10), demands readers to develop skills that help them to reason with and through such instruction. Johnson's recent publication equips students of the Bible to meet these demands.

The book begins by orienting the reader to its contents and learning objectives. The content is then divided into three distinct yet progressive parts: "Reorienting to Biblical Law," "Exploring the Genius of Biblical Law," and "Thinking with Biblical Law." Woven through the fabric of this publication is a fictional story, with seven distinct episodes of a potential murder, that demonstrates how the Law might have functioned in ancient Israel.

The first part, "Reorienting to Biblical Law," is designed to expose the reader's current understanding of Law in order to redirect one's understanding towards Biblical Law. Johnson addresses several inferences and myths that modern readers of the Law have, which are unhelpful. He then provides alternatives that are more helpful and foundational for the book's subsequent parts.

The second part, Exploring the Genius of Biblical Law," engages with the unique presentation of the Laws in the Pentateuch/Torah. The "Genius" Johnson refers to pertains to "innovated modes and methods of literary thinking" that "[play] off the legal norms and social concerns of their day" (p. 84). The authors composed the Law as instruction, "not as rules to BREAK or KEEP" (p. 107). Rather, the Laws were composed for "Principle-and-Instance


Reasoning" (p. 111). Differentiating between these two kinds of reasoning is essential and it is not always an easy task. Yet, Johnson, building upon the foundation laid in the first part, walks the reader through select Biblical Laws to demonstrate how to tell the difference.



The third and final part, "Thinking with Biblical Law," invites the reader to engage with the Biblical Law directly. There are seven opportunities to practice the skills developed throughout the book. These skills are applied to reading laws in their ancient context, in their literary context, and in their theological context. Following each practice, Johnson expands upon the passages engaged with.

*Understanding Biblical Law* is designed to help the reader learn and develop the necessary skills to read the Law as it was intended, namely as instruction/Torah. The learning objectives Johnson presents at the beginning of his book, five in all (p. 4), can be attained by the reader as engagement with the practices in the third part ensue.

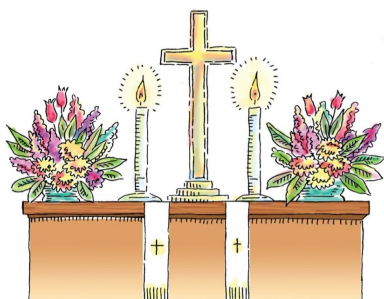
?? ? Bible Quiz ? ?



Who told Mary that her child would be called "the Son of the Most High"?

- A. Zechariah
- B. Gabriel
- C. Simeon
- D. Joseph

Answer: B (See Luke 1:26-32.)



*Altar Guild*

**Altar Guild Team for December**

Margie Knupp, Chris Simmonds,  
Katie Reese, Elizabeth Hill

**Altar Flowers for December 2025**

**December 7**

Margie Knupp  
"For blessings received."

**December 14**

Twila Lockaby  
"For blessings received."

**December 21**

Margie Knupp  
"In loving memory of Ted and Lucena Sills"

**December 28**

Christmas Poinsettias

If you have any questions regarding Altar Guild or  
Altar flowers please contact Margie Knupp at  
316-284-1790



Please join  
Deacon Barbara Gibson  
and company  
for Evening Prayer  
every Wednesday  
at 6:00 pm in the  
St. Matthew's Covey Chapel.  
Or join us on Facebook.  
Everyone is welcome.  
Come take  
a few minutes to end your  
day with prayer.



**LET'S FILL UP THE  
ST. MATTHEW'S FOOD  
PANTRY/BLESSING BOX**

Don't forget that you can add items  
to the Blessing Box anytime. Just an  
extra can or two when you are at the grocery store is  
appreciated. Please keep the weather in mind when  
donating an item. It is getting colder.

Thank you for doing your part to help our neighbors.





St Matthew's  
Annual Parish Meeting  
Sunday, January 18, 2026

11:30 AM

*Almighty and ever living God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

All committee chairs are asked to submit their Annual Reports to [office.stmatthewsnewton@gmail.com](mailto:office.stmatthewsnewton@gmail.com) or leave with Charlie in the church office as soon as possible. It is requested that all reports be submitted by January 5, 2026.

One agenda item is election of new Vestry members and convocation delegates. The nominating committee will be meeting to name a slate of nominees for Vestry and a convocation delegate. Please prayerfully consider serving if asked by the nominating committee.

Being a Vestry member is an important leadership position. Working with the priest, the Vestry is responsible for the financial and spiritual health of the church community.

Convocation delegates and alternate attend three or four meetings per year of the SW Convocation. The delegates attend the annual Diocesan Convention in October, which will be in Topeka in 2026. The alternate is encouraged to attend meetings of the SW Convocation to learn about the responsibilities of the delegates and attend the convention if the elected delegate cannot attend.

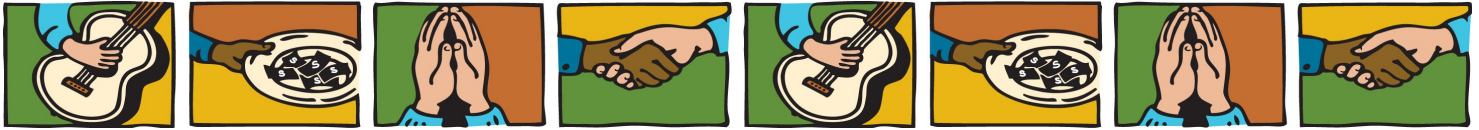
Please plan to attend the Annual Meeting as we look at what was accomplished in 2025 and as we plan ahead for 2026.

All members of St. Matthew's are encouraged to attend this important meeting of our church. Each committee will have their report for 2025, the budget will be discussed, and plans for the new year will be talked about and voted on!

Of course we will also be planning a Potluck Lunch along with the Annual Meeting!

**Please bring a dish to share.**

**ANNUAL  
MEETING**



Here is the worship schedule for December. Please let the office know if you would like to sign up to read, usher and/or count. We can always use more hands! ***If you are unable to serve when you are scheduled, please find a substitute.*** Thanks for your service!

	December 7	December 14	December 21	December 24	December 28
<b>Season</b>	2nd Sunday of Advent	3rd Sunday of Advent	4th Sunday of Advent	Christmas Eve	1st Sunday after Christmas
<b>Service</b>	<b>Holy Eucharist</b>	<b>Holy Eucharist</b>	<b>Holy Eucharist</b> <i>Lessons and Carols</i>	<b>Holy Eucharist</b>	<b>Holy Eucharist</b>
<b>Leaders</b>	Fr. Mike Loyd Deacon Barbara	Fr. Mike Loyd Deacon Barbara	Fr. Mike Loyd Deacon Barbara	Fr. Mike Loyd Deacon Barbara	Fr. Mike Loyd Deacon Barbara
<b>LEM&amp; Acolyte</b>	Maggie Snow Elizabeth Hill	Karen Wall Chris Iserhardt	Ruth Cooper Elizabeth Hill	Ruth Cooper Fred Schroeder Karen Wall	Fred Schroeder
<b>Lector— Lessons</b>	Jeremy Kitto	Mary Upton	Bonnie Jones	Ruth Cooper	Ruth Cooper
<b>Lector— Psalm</b>	Elizabeth Hill	Darlene Hall	Elizabeth Hill	Elizabeth Hill	Mary Upton
<b>Ushers (2)</b>	Mary Upton	Maggie Snow	Rick Glover	Jeremy Kitto	Melissa Keenan
	Rick Glover	Melissa Keenan	Mary Upton		Mary Werner
<b>Counters (2)</b>	Twila Lockaby	David Simmonds	Fred Schroeder	Margie Knupp	Margie Knupp
	Margie Knupp	Fred Schroeder	Mary Upton	Twila Lockaby	Twila Lockaby
<b>Altar Flowers</b>	Margie Knupp “For blessings received.”	Twila Lockaby “For blessings received.”	Margie Knupp “In loving memory of Ted and Lucena Sills”	Christmas Poinsettias	Christmas Poinsettias
<b>Coffee Hour Hosts</b>	Open	Open	Lessons and Carols—Bring Snacks		Melissa Keenan
<b>Organist Flutist</b>	Chris Teichler Sarah Teichler	Chris Teichler Sarah Teichler	Chris Teichler Sarah Teichler	Chris Teichler Sarah Teichler	Kelli Glann Sarah Teichler

**December 25—Christmas Day—Morning Prayer at 10:15 am**

**Evening Prayer:** every Wednesday night at 6:00 pm in the St. Matthew's Covey Chapel