the ST. MATTHEW'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

UPDATE

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OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2026



Stories, events & *what's ahead!*









questions@stm-umc.org 601-856-9581 7427 Old Canton Road, Madison MS 39110

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ST. MATTHEW'S
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

a note from REV. RICKY

The next three months are, honestly, my favorite time of year! The weather turns a bit cooler, football season is in full swing, and we have tons of activities here at the church. But I also know it is the busiest time of year. Hopefully, this magazine will give you a glimpse at our plans for the upcoming season so you can go ahead and mark your calendars!

It is also a chance to celebrate all that has happened this past summer. We had lots of fun events and activities, which make me grateful to be part of a congregation that is full of life. Take some time to review how much you accomplished as a church family over the past three months!

Lastly, after you've spent time with this little magazine, let me give you a challenge: take a copy to a friend. Maybe it's a member of the church you haven't seen in a while. This would be a great opportunity to reconnect and let them know they've been missed.

Maybe give it to a neighbor or coworker as a way of inviting them to visit us! We've got some great upcoming community events like Fall Fest and the Christmas Music Program which are great opportunities to invite visitors. You never know the difference you can make in someone's life by a simple invitation.

See you this Fall!



Rev. Dr. Ricky James
Senior Pastor

We're glad you're here!

ST. MATTHEW'S
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

OCTOBER upcoming EVENTS

04 **WORLD COMMUNION SERVICE & CHURCHWIDE POTLUCK**
Join us for a combined worship service at 10:30 a.m. in Hart Hall to celebrate our unity in Christ. Potluck to follow!

04 **CHARGE CONFERENCE**
Our annual business meeting with other area churches will be at 3:00 p.m. at Parkway Hills UMC in Madison.

04 **UWF**
The United Women in Faith will gather to plan next year's activities, mission projects and programs

04 **MEN OF FAITH**
Join this men's bible study open to all, meeting the same time as UWF!

09 **YOUTH: DANIEL MOVIE IN THEATERS**
Our youth will take in the latest movie on the character of Daniel! Stay tuned for more info on time and location.

11 **KID'S PUMPKIN DECORATING**
Calling all 3rd - 5th Graders for an afternoon of pumpkin decorating fun! 3:00pm - Perry Hall - Bring your own pumpkin!

11 **TOWNHALL**
At 9:15 a.m. in Hart Hall, come hear a report on the positive state of our finances and what's next for St. Matt's.

11 **PET BLESSING**
Bring your furry, feathered, or scaly friends for a Pet Blessing at 2:00 p.m., on the front lawn. All pet's welcome!

12 **COLUMBUS DAY (OFFICE CLOSED)**
The church office will be closed. Weekday Preschool teachers will have in-service, AA and Art Class will meet.

12 **YOUTH ARCADE TRIP**
The youth will head to Party Safari in Flowood for games and fellowship; 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

13 **SEASONED SAINTS**
Join us for lunch at noon in Hart Hall, as we welcome our friends from the Webster Animal Shelter. Cost is $10.

14 **TOWN HALL**
At 6:00 p.m. in Hart Hall, come hear a report on the positive state of our finances and what's next for St. Matt's.

18 **CHILDREN'S SABBATH & GRANDPARENTS BREAKFAST**
Join us for a breakfast during the Sunday School hour at 9:15am to celebrate all Grandparents & Grandparent figures. Children will also sing and assist in worship service.

20 **PILLOWCASE PALS**
Meets at 1:00 p.m. to make pillowcases, blankets, bibs and pillows for shelters, retirement homes, & children's home.

24 **KID'S HOMEBOUND TRICK-OR-TREAT**
Meet at St. Matthew's and ride church vans together to our local nursing homes to Trick or Treat! Wear your costume & bring your bucket! Parents will come with children.

25 **COMMITMENT SUNDAY**
During worship we will begin to receive our commitment cards supporting the 2027 Church Budget.

25 **FALL FESTIVAL**
A community wide Fall Festival on the front lawn from 4-6pm. Games, Music, Rides, Inflatables, Food Trucks, and much much more!

25 **WAGS**
Meets at 2:00 p.m. to take our docile pets to share God's love to friends in area retirement homes.

28 **YOUTH PUMPKIN CARVING**
The youth will gather to carve pumpkins and make s'mores on the South Property.

30 **WEEKDAY TRICK-OR-TREAT**
Our daycare children will parade through the Narthex in their best costumes & recieve candy. Feel free to join the fun and bring candy or prizes to share!

NOVEMBER upcoming EVENTS

01 **ALL SAINTS**
Join us for worship as we observe All Saints Sunday, remembering those in our congregation who have passed away during this past year.

05 **HOMEBOUND COMMUNION & CARD CARE**
Card Care meets at 9:30 a.m. to write cards to members and visitors.

The Holy Sacrament is offered each month to hospitalized friends, homebound, or those living in area retirement homes. Servers meet at 1:30 p.m. for prayer at the church prior to distributing the elements at 2:00 p.m.

08 **UWF**
The United Women in Faith's monthly meeting will welcome our guest, Mollie James-Vickery, Chief Operating Officer for UWF.

08 **MEN OF FAITH**
Join this men's bible study open to all, meeting the same time as UWF!

10 **SEASONED SAINTS**
Join us for lunch at noon in Hart Hall, as we welcome our special guest, Byron Brown. Cost is $10.

15 **MADCAAP TURKEY DAY FOOD COLLECTION**
Help stock MadCAAP's Thanksgiving food pantry by donating boxes of stuffing for local families in need.

17 **PILLOWCASE PALS**
Meets at 1:00 p.m. to make pillowcases, blankets, bibs and pillows for shelters, retirement homes, & children's home.

18 **WNL THANKSGIVING MEAL**
Join us for a Thanksgiving themed Wednesday Night meal and fellowship around the table.

20 & 21 **CHRIST CUPBOARD THANKSGIVING MEAL**
Volunteers prepare meals in the church kitchen and drivers deliver these meals to offer comfort and communicate's God's love. Food donations and delivery help are always appreciated!

29 **ADVENT BEGINS & ST. NICK'S SUNDAY**
On the first Sunday of Advent we usher in our preparation to celebrate Jesus' Birth. On this first Sunday of the season, in the spirit of St. Nick, we invite you to bring food for our Christmas collection for MADCAAP.

29 **MOVING NATIVITY**
Mary, Jospeh, and the donkey begin their journey on the church's front lawn. Watch the progression as more figures are added each week.

29 **WAGS**
Meets at 2:00 p.m. to take our docile pets to share God's love to friends in area retirement homes.

DECEMBER upcoming EVENTS

02 **WNL PROGRAMS END**
Wednesday Night Live ends for the season with a blood drive and final night for regular programming.

03 **HOMEBOUND COMMUION & CARD CARE**
Our Card Care ministry will meet at 9:30 a.m. and our Communion servers will meet at 1:30 p.m.

06 **COOKIES WITH SANTA**
Santa's coming to town! Invite your friends and neighbors for an afternoon of pictures, cookies and crafts!

08 **SEASONED SAINTS**
Join us for lunch at noon in Hart Hall, as Maura McIntosh offers a program of Christmas music. Cost is $10.

09 **ELEMENTARY CHOIR PROGRAM**
Our young singers will share the Christmas story as they present the musical, "The Mystery of the Manger." 6:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

10 **WEEKDAY CHRISTMAS PROGRAM**
Our Preschool friends will offer an precious program of Christmas joy for their family and friends.

13 **SANCTUARY CHOIR PROGRAM (COMBINED SERVICE)**
Come enjoy a service featuring beautiful arrangements of Christmas Carols and other songs celebrating the birth of Jesus.

13 **UWF & MEN OF FAITH**
UWF & Men of Faith will meet at their regular times for program and study.

16 **BIRTHDAY GIFT FOR CHRIST WRAP NIGHT**
Join us to pack food boxes, wrap christmas gifts, and prepare deliveries for Trinity and MadCAAP families.

19 **BIRTHDAY GIFT FOR CHRIST DELIVERY**
Help deliver gifts and food to MadCAAP families while loading the U-Haul with gifts for Trinity families

17 **PILLOWCASE PALS**
Meets at 1:00 p.m. to make pillowcases, blankets, bibs and pillows for shelters, retirement homes, & children's home.

18 **CHRIST CUPBOARD CHRISTMAS**
Volunteers prepare meals in the church kitchen and drivers deliver these meals to offer comfort and communicate's God's love.

20 **BLUE CHRISTMAS**
An evening worship service offering space to acknowledge grief, honor loss, and seek God's comfort before the holidays.

20 **TRINITY CHRISTMAS DELIVERY**
After worship, we'll drive the U-Haul of Trinity gifts and food to the mission center in Forest, MS.

24 **CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES (4PM & 6PM)**
Join us for two beautiful services of candlelight, carols, and Communion as we gather in the Sanctuary to celebrate the birth of Jesus!

24 &25 **OFFICE CLOSED**
Church offices will be closed on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Please contact a pastor for any emergencies.

27 **COMBINED SERVICE**
Join us at 10:30 a.m. for one service of worship in the Intersection worship space in the South Property.

27 **WAGS**
Meets at 2:00 p.m. to take our docile pets to share God's love to friends in area retirement homes.

music MINISTRY



One of St. Matthew's UMC's favorite worship services is our annual Patriotic Musical. The altar setting included the Army jacket of Fred Titus (Korea), the folded flag of Robert H. "Hot" Rigby (Korea), and the Army jacket of Brent Grantham (currently serving in the Army Reserve).

The musical selections included "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Salute to the Armed Forces," "America the Beautiful," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and many more. Soloists were Jordan Gibbs, Katherine Herring, and Amy McArthur, and our narrator was Kelly Julkenbeck.

The choir was accompanied by a small instrumental ensemble along with our very talented Frank Laney and Allen Hart. We also had great sound support led by Randy Young and Keith Julkenbeck. What a great day to worship God and thank Him for the incredible ways He has blessed America.



Tim Rigby
Music Minister



INTERSECTION
WORSHIP
ST. MATTHEW'S UMC

Over the past several months, Intersection Worship at St. Matthew's United Methodist Church has continued to grow as an important part of our church's ministry. Each Sunday, people from our congregation and community come together to worship, build relationships, and find a place to connect at St. Matthew's.



Creating a Culture of Welcome

One of the newest additions to Intersection is our Hospitality Team. These volunteers welcome guests each Sunday, answer questions, introduce visitors to others, and help them discover ways to become involved at St. Matthew's. Guests also receive welcome bags with information about the church and its ministries. After worship, our team follows up with handwritten cards to let visitors know how grateful we are that they joined us.

Connecting Beyond Sunday

We've also expanded Intersection's digital presence through social media and online outreach. These efforts give people another way to discover Intersection, stay connected, and learn more about the life of St. Matthew's throughout the week.

A Growing Community

Since the beginning of the school year in August, Intersection has seen consistent attendance, along with new faces and returning guests each week. We've welcomed new members to St. Matthew's, while others have expressed interest in learning more about the church and becoming more involved. We've been especially encouraged by increased youth attendance and participation. Our young people are becoming more involved in the worship service itself, while Intersection continues to bring together children, youth, adults, and older adults in one worshiping community.

Looking Ahead

We're thankful for the volunteers who make Intersection possible, those who faithfully worship each week, and every guest and new member who has become part of the St. Matthew's family.

Intersection is one of the ways St. Matthew's is creating opportunities for people to worship, connect, and grow in faith. We're grateful for what God is doing through this ministry and look forward to seeing what comes next.



Rev. Brian Johnston
Associate Pastor

children's MINISTRY







What a huge hit our Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS was this summer! We praised God through laughter, song, science experiments, and play with an amazing group of children and adult leaders. We held VBS during the day for our weekday children's ministry and again at night for our church-wide and community children. Each day, we embraced our Scripture challenge: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." — Philippians 4:13

A heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who supported, loved on our children, volunteered, and helped make VBS possible. We are so grateful for our wonderful church family!

We can't wait to see what God has in store for us for the rest of this year! Be sure to plug in and join us for our fall events.



Laura Rivera
Children's Director



SM
STUDENTS



Student Ministry: Growing Together, Serving Together

This summer, St. Matthew's Student Ministry hosted a book drive benefiting Seaside Mission in Biloxi. Thanks to the generosity of our church family, our students collected a tremendous number of books and delivered them to Seaside on July 13, helping provide resources that will serve Biloxi's unhoused community for years to come.

The project was a reflection of what continues to shape our growing youth ministry: relationships, service, and a desire to live out our faith together. St. Matthew's now has one of the largest United Methodist youth groups in the area, but what matters most is the community being built within it.

Our students genuinely prioritize their relationships with one another. They show up, invite friends, build connections across age groups, and continue creating a space where young people feel known and welcomed.

As our ministry grows, we are grateful not only for more students in the room, but for the ways they are growing together in faith, friendship, and service!



Rev. Mary Beth Davis-Ashley
Youth Pastor

weekday MINISTRY






As we welcome the beautiful Fall season, St. Matthew's Weekday is bustling with activity, new faces, and exciting learning opportunities. The past few months have been filled with wonderful memories, and we are looking forward to all that the new school year will bring.

May brought a special milestone as we celebrated the graduation of 20 preschool students. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate how much these children had grown and learned during their time at St. Matthew's Weekday. We are so proud of our graduates and excited to see what adventures await them as they begin their next chapter.

Our summer was a busy and exciting one, with more than 50 school age children participating in summer camp. The children enjoyed a summer filled with hands-on experiences and plenty of opportunities to learn through play. They explored nature by getting their hands dirty, discovering worms, planting, and learning about the world around them. Creative activities were also a big part of the summer, with lots of art, movement, and dance keeping our campers active and engaged.

In August, we welcomed the beginning of a new school year. St. Matthew's Weekday is enjoying a full house, with several new children joining our program along with new members of our teaching staff. We are excited to welcome these new families and teachers into the St. Matthew's Weekday community.

In September our children had the opportunity to learn about an important topic: safety. We were excited to welcome members of the Madison Fire Department and Gluckstadt Police Department, who spent time with our children teaching them about fire and personal safety. Visits like these provide valuable learning experiences and help children become familiar with the community helpers who work to keep us safe.

As we move into Fall, there are many more learning adventures ahead. Our classrooms will soon be exploring the sights, sounds, and discoveries of the season. The children will learn about pumpkins, colorful leaves, and farm life, incorporating these themes into hands-on activities, stories, art, music, science, and play. We will soon begin practicing for our Christmas play and music program for our 2–4-year-olds.

At St. Matthew's Weekday, we believe some of the best learning happens when children can explore, create, move, ask questions, and experience the world around them. From dirt and worms to pumpkins and leaves, every season brings something new to discover!

We are grateful for our wonderful children, families, and staff and look forward to a fun-filled Fall of learning, growing, and making memories together at St. Matthew's Weekday!



Cindy Casteel
Weekday Director

congregational CARE









Our Congregational Care volunteers share Christ's love in meaningful ways throughout the week. Through WAGS, volunteers and their furry friends bring joy to nursing home residents in and around Madison. Every Monday, our floral ministry arranges and delivers flowers to members who are sick, hospitalized, or in nursing homes. Christ's Cupboard volunteers prepare meals that are ready to deliver whenever a church member faces illness or hospitalization.

Want to get involved? Whether you love dogs, arranging flowers, preparing meals, or simply caring for others, there's a place for you in Congregational Care! Contact the church office to learn how you can serve.



Kaye Herring
Congregational Care

older adult MINISTRY





Older Adult Ministry is structured to facilitate small group opportunities for faith and fellowship. Current activities include: **weekly Wednesday morning breakfasts** at an area restaurant. Location rotates monthly with participants choosing the establishments. **Game days** are held on the first and third Monday afternoons. These afternoons include conversation, shared snacks, a variety of games selected by those in attendance and a lot of laughter. **Ladies Night Out** is held the last Friday of the month at an area restaurant. Location is selected for the following month by those attending. Whenever possible, those who may not drive at night are provided a ride. **Fabulous Friday**s are the third Friday of every month. We generally meet at the church and carpool to a group selected restaurant. Day trips are planned when transportation is available. Locations are selected based on interest. Special attention is given to mobility/accessibility needs of those attending. **Recent trips -** Two Mississippi Museums, the Grammy Museum in Cleveland, MS, Camp Shelby, Laurel, West Point/Starkville – Jubilations Cheesecake and Clock Museum at MSU; MS Museum of Art and Lake Tiak-o'khata. Fuel charge is shared by those participating.

In the planning stages: Millsaps Singers Lessons and Carols; New Stage production; Celtic Fest. Community opportunities and a monthly calendar are posted on the bulletin board across from Room 116

Participants are encouraged to invite a friend to join in the fun. Activities are organized based on interest and suggestions are always welcomed. Persons willing to help with organizing activities are needed.

Joyce Titus & Kay Varner

Rise AGAINST HUNGER



Members of St. Matthew's UMC work together to package more than 10,000 meals during our August Rise Against Hunger event.

For more than 15 years, St. Matthew's United Methodist Church has partnered with Rise Against Hunger to help provide nutritious meals to people facing hunger around the world. This August, members of all ages once again came together for our annual meal-packing event and packed more than 10,000 meals.

The room was filled with energy as volunteers measured ingredients, filled bags, weighed and sealed meals, packed boxes, and kept everything moving. It was a wonderful time of hands-on mission work, but it was also a time of fellowship. We worked side by side, shared plenty of conversation and laughter, and saw what our church community can accomplish when everyone contributes.

Rise Against Hunger was founded in 1998 by Ray Buchanan, a United Methodist minister who believed it was possible to build a world without hunger. The organization began its volunteer meal-packaging program in 2005. Each meal includes rice, soy, dehydrated vegetables, and a packet containing essential vitamins and minerals.

The meals packaged by volunteers are distributed through Rise Against Hunger's international partners and often support school feeding programs, early childhood development centers, and communities experiencing food insecurity or crisis. Rise Against Hunger currently serves communities in countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe, including Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala, Kenya, Liberia, the Philippines, South Africa, Ukraine, Vietnam, Zambia, and many others.

These meals provide more than nourishment. In many communities, school meal programs encourage children to attend school regularly and give them the nutrition they need to learn and grow. Rise Against Hunger also works with local partners on education, economic empowerment, agriculture, and other long-term programs that help communities become more food secure.

Our August event was one more chapter in St. Matthew's long commitment to this important ministry. Every bag filled, every box packed, and every hour volunteered helped carry God's love beyond the walls of our church and into communities around the world.

Thank you to everyone who participated, supported the event, and helped us pack more than 10,000 meals. Together, we shared fellowship, served with purpose, and made a meaningful difference.

in other NEWS

Seasoned Saints





The St. Matthew's Seasoned Saints is a group of adults age 50+ who meet on the second Tuesday of each month to enjoy table fellowship, a great meal, and special guest speakers. We gather in Hart Hall at 11:30 for coffee and visiting prior to the meal at noon. The cost is $10. Check your church emails and announcements for information regarding upcoming meetings, programs and reservations. Come join us. We love making our circle wider!

Worship Committee Activity Report

St. Matthew's UMC is blessed to have a wonderful and active group of participants on the Worship Committee who work mostly behind the scenes to enhance the worship experience for the congregation of the traditional service! During the third quarter of 2026, we completed the weekly tasks of preparing the altar table and lecterns with the appropriate color paraments each Sunday, refilling candles and lighters with oil, and changing banners to the appropriate color. Flower arrangements were watered and placed on flower stands.

The communion subcommittee members prepared the elements for communion and dressed the altar table appropriately for the communion service on the 1st Sunday of each month. We are also tasked with recruiting servers for each communion service.

Additionally, St. Matthew's hosted two funerals during the quarter and prepared the sanctuary, using white paraments and banners for the services. On July 5th, there was a combined service welcoming Ricky to St. Matthew's!