

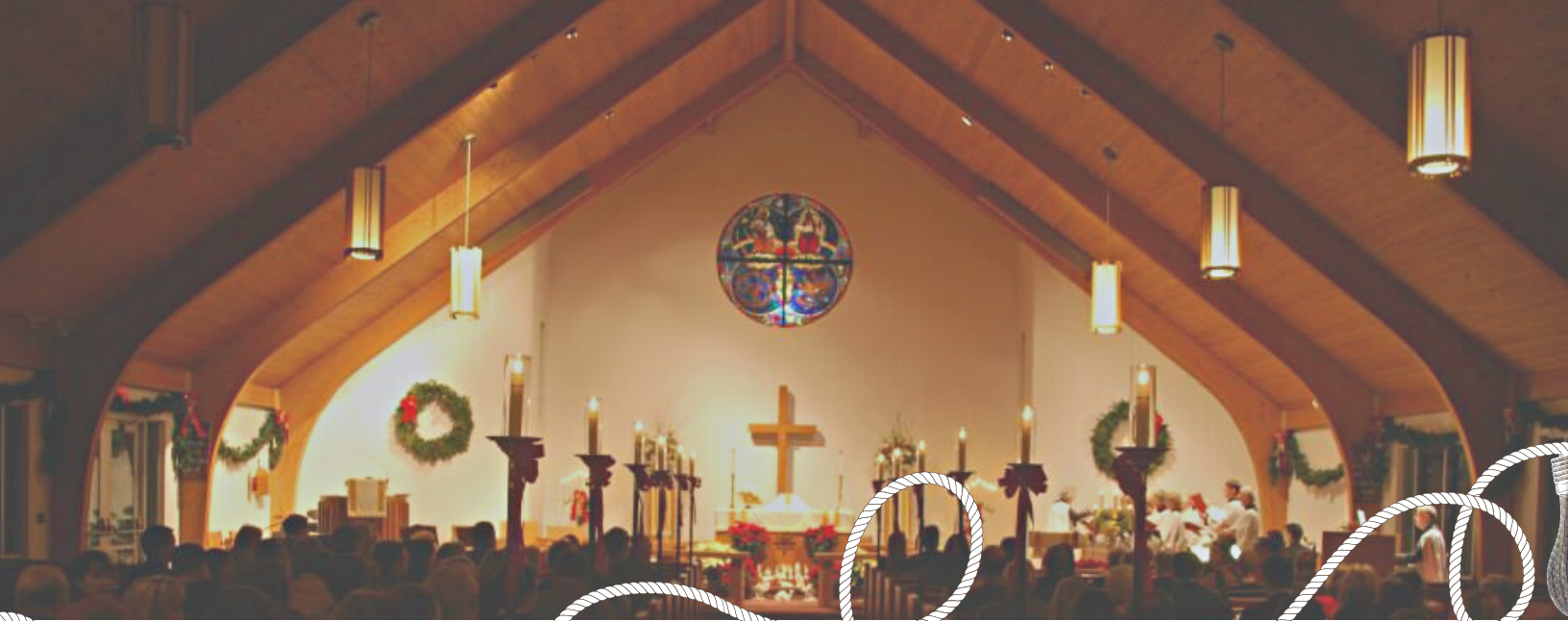
the
O R A C L E
A D V E N T 2 0 2 1

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Isaiah 9:2

A seasonal publication of
SAINT MATTHEW'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
MAPLE GLEN, PENNSYLVANIA





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And [Jesus] unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:16-21

St. Matthew's Family,

During the open forum at our recent annual meeting, a parishioner asked me a very relevant question. "What is your vision for St. Matthew's moving forward?" The Scripture passage above came to mind, as my reply centered on a long-standing (but I believe too often overlooked) description of the Church as a 'spiritual hospital'.

It is rather significant that the main action of Jesus Christ's ministry among us before his crucifixion and resurrection was to heal, to bind up the broken-hearted, to restore to wholeness - to build us up into the image of God originally placed within us. As the Church, as St. Matthew's, our witness is to do no less. I encourage you to look at the passage above that Jesus read from Isaiah once again but change each use of 'me' to 'us'. That is our calling as followers of Christ, a calling that must be at the heart of our mission and ministry as a parish, the fulfillment of which is desperately needed in our troubled and divided times. This will be a continual emphasis of our interactions within our church family and our outreach to others as well.



A LETTER FROM OUR RECTOR

REV. RODNEY ROEHNER

It is a common practice in December to do a reflection of the previous year as we pray and anticipate the new one. By the grace of God, we have been blessed in so many ways as a parish family in 2021. We have rebounded wonderfully. So many, whether in-person, virtually or newcomers, have brought a vibrant vitality to our common life. Familiar aspects have returned and new ones added. Overall, there is an enthusiasm and anticipation to what the Lord has in store for us.

On behalf of my family, I pray that all of you have a most blessed upcoming Christmas and New Year. As I have now been with St. Matthew's for a year, I am increasingly thankful for your Christian witness and who you are as a congregation. Let us rejoice with grateful hearts for the gift of serving our loving Lord and Savior, who has come among us to raise us up, to make us whole. May we do likewise in our own ministry, and may God so strengthen and guide us that we may boldly proclaim those same words as Jesus, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

With love in Christ,

Rodney + 3

ADVENT and CHRISTMAS

A T S A I N T M A T T H E W ' S

Journey alongside family, friends, and neighbors who are awaiting the joyful arrival of the Light of the World.

Advent IV | 12.19

11:30 AM

Greening of the Sanctuary

Christmas Eve | 12.24

3 PM

Children's Pageant
and Family Service

5 PM

Contemporary
Service with the
Arise Band

8 PM

Traditional
Service with
Choir and Organ

Christmas Day | 12.25

10 AM

Rite I Traditional Service



Christmas I | 12.26

7:45 AM

Rite I Traditional
Service

9 AM

Contemporary
Service with the
Arise Band

10:30 AM

Lessons and
Carols with
Choir and Organ



◆ ADVENT HAPPENINGS ◆

Christmas Flower Offering

Saint Matthew's greens its sanctuary and decorates its campus each year during the holidays. If you wish to contribute toward the festive Christmas decorations at church in memory of a loved one or in thanksgiving, please go to <https://tinyurl.com/SMEC-Flowers> .



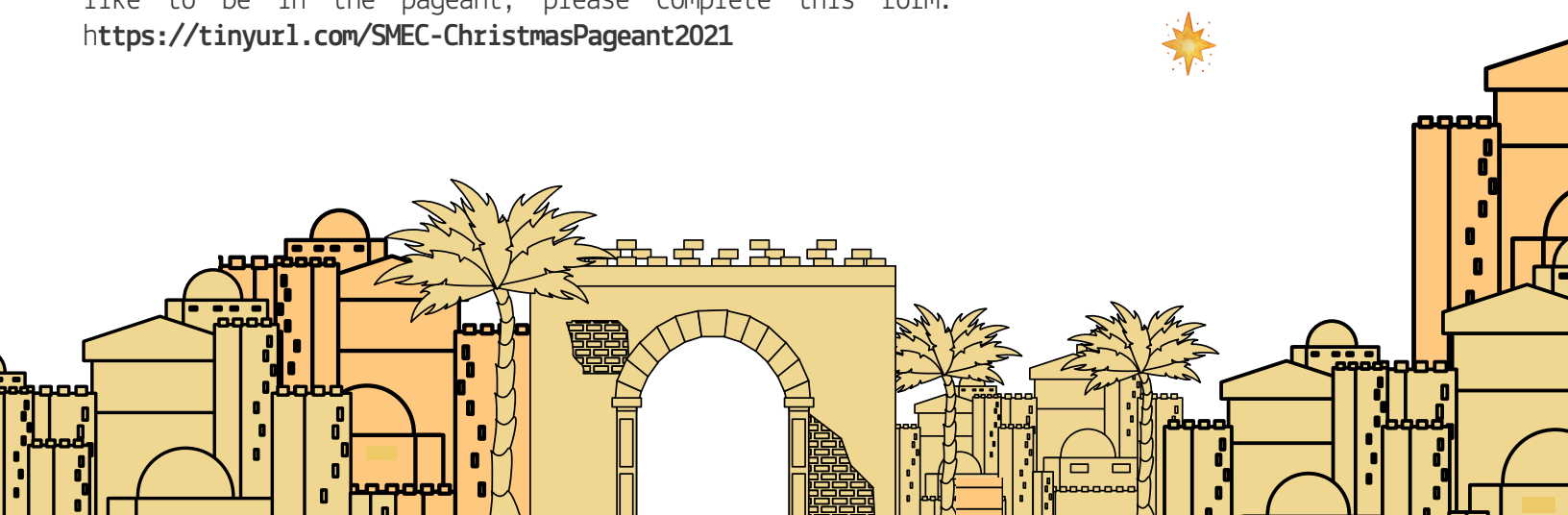
Operation Bear Hug

Operation Bear Hug has been collecting and delivering new teddy bears to residents in our local care facilities for nearly two decades. Steered by parishioner Lisa Walsh, this year's collection is off to a great start with over 250 bears donated so far! With Christmas Eve only weeks away, ~80 more bears are still needed to meet the needs of our community. We invite you and yours to contribute by:

- **Purchasing** a teddy bear of your choosing and drop it off at Saint Matthew's in the bins near the narthex. You can also purchase a bear, or many bears, via tinyurl.com/Amazon-Bears-21 . During check out, be sure to select the shipping address labeled *Lisa Walsh's Gift Registry Address*.
- **Donating** funds to the project through Tithe.ly tinyurl.com/Tithe-OBH .

Christmas Pageant

All children - nursery school through middle school - are invited to be a part of our Christmas pageant on Friday, December 24 at 3:00 PM! Performed during our Family Service on Christmas Eve, the pageant gives children an opportunity to participate in a centuries-old tradition, a wonderful celebration of the nativity. If you have children who would like to be in the pageant, please complete this form: <https://tinyurl.com/SMEC-ChristmasPageant2021>



P A R I S H H A P P E N I N G S

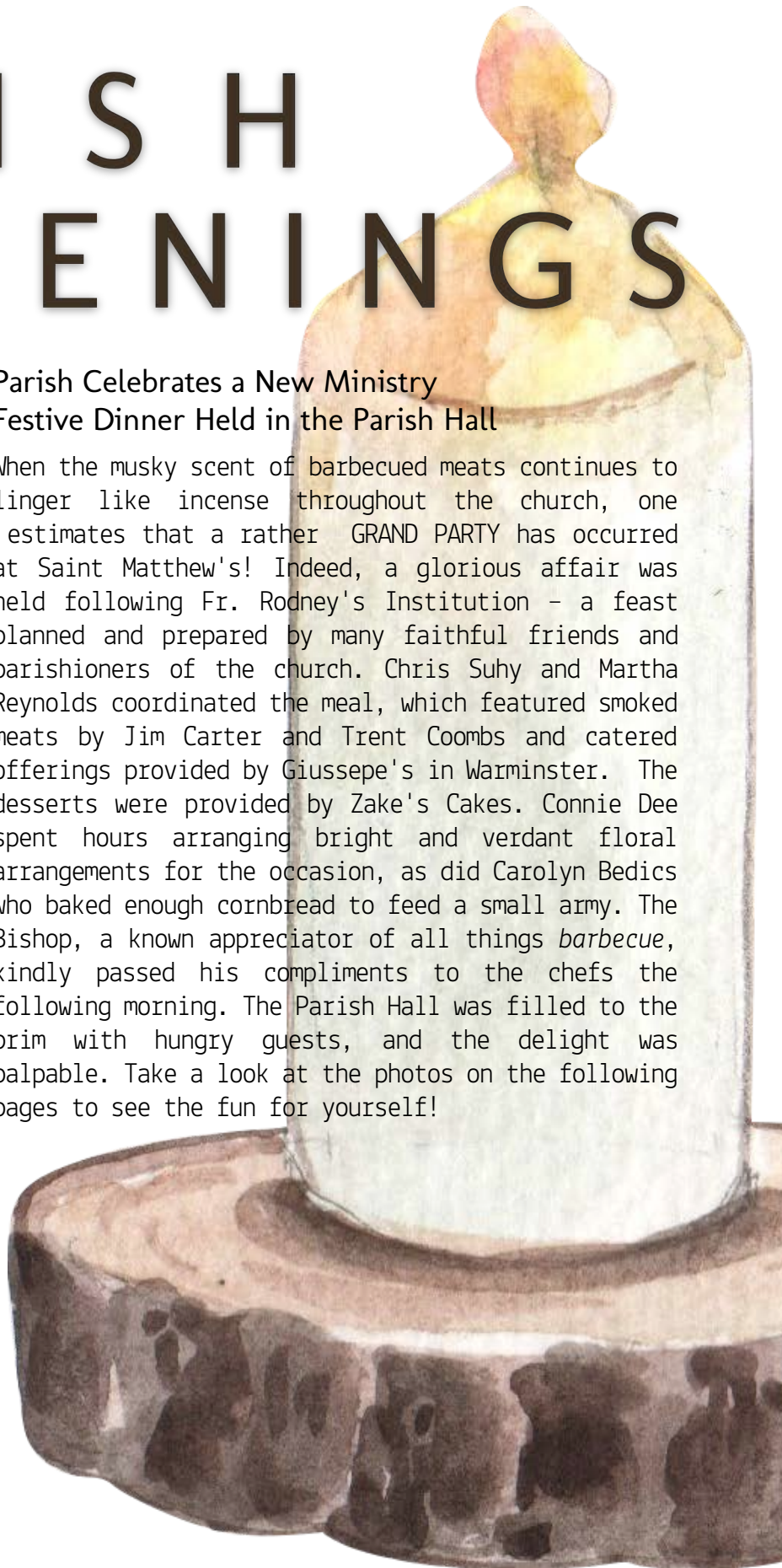
Fr. Rodney Roehner Instituted as Rector of Saint Matthew's

We are pleased to announce that, on the cusp of his one year anniversary of hiring, the Rev. Rodney Roehner was instituted as Rector of Saint Matthew's on Wednesday, December 8th at 6:00 PM. As a light snow began falling on Maple Glen, nearly 120 worshippers gathered in the warmth of the Sanctuary for a most elegant and energetic celebration of new ministry. Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez, accompanied by Canon Arlette Benoit D. Joseph and assisting clergy, presided over the service and eucharist. Elders of Saint Matthew's presented Fr. Rodney with myriad gifts – tools and symbols that will aid in the flourishing of his ministry for years to come. The joyful atmosphere was made complete by the superb musical selections offered by Phil Lefevre and choir, and Martha Reynolds and the Arise Band.

To celebrate with us from a distance, consider viewing the recorded service on our Facebook Livestream.

Parish Celebrates a New Ministry Festive Dinner Held in the Parish Hall

When the musky scent of barbecued meats continues to linger like incense throughout the church, one estimates that a rather GRAND PARTY has occurred at Saint Matthew's! Indeed, a glorious affair was held following Fr. Rodney's Institution – a feast planned and prepared by many faithful friends and parishioners of the church. Chris Suhy and Martha Reynolds coordinated the meal, which featured smoked meats by Jim Carter and Trent Coombs and catered offerings provided by Giuseppe's in Warminster. The desserts were provided by Zake's Cakes. Connie Dee spent hours arranging bright and verdant floral arrangements for the occasion, as did Carolyn Bedics who baked enough cornbread to feed a small army. The Bishop, a known appreciator of all things *barbecue*, kindly passed his compliments to the chefs the following morning. The Parish Hall was filled to the brim with hungry guests, and the delight was palpable. Take a look at the photos on the following pages to see the fun for yourself!



Year- End Finance Update from our Outgoing Treasurer

Budgeting in the midst of a pandemic has certainly been a challenge over the past two years, but I have to thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for continuing your faithful support of our parish. As you can see from our YTD numbers, we are well ahead of budget for both the Nursery School and Operations and are entering 2022 in a healthy financial position. I have been honored to serve as your Treasurer for the past three years, and now pass the torch with great confidence to Jim Garrison.

Sincerely, Karen Randall

	<u>YTD Actual</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>	<u>Actual Better Than Budget</u>
Nursery Sch Income	\$293,345	\$269,731	
Nursery Sch Expense	(331,421)	(331,425)	
Net Total	(38,076)	(61,693)	23,617
Operations			
Pledge and Plate	340,328	303,692	
Other Income	81,109	82,434	
Total Expenses	(393,045)	(401,180)	
Net Total	28,392	(15,054)	43,446

Fr. Rodney will Bless Your Home this Epiphany

Fr. Rodney invites individuals and families to participate in the annual blessing of homes in the season of Epiphany (early January). It is an ancient tradition that places God at the entrance of the home, and its residents under God's care and protection. If you'd like, and with a piece of blessed chalk, Fr. Rodney will inscribe symbols 20+C+M+B+22 over your doorway mantle. This sign represents all three kings who visited the infant Christ, plus the numbers of the current year. The "C, M, B" also stands for the Latin blessing **christvs mansionem benedicat** which means "Christ bless this house". If you would like to receive a blessing at your home, please indicate your interest by going to bit.ly/SMEC-Epiphany



Thank You, Outgoing Members of Vestry

Our grateful and heartfelt thanks extend to those members who are now transitioning off our Vestry; **Chris Suhy, Tim Walsh, and Karen Randall**. Saint Matthew's has been blessed by their leadership during most complex and challenging seasons, including the assembly of our parish profile, overseeing our clergy transition, and discerning the path during a global pandemic.

New Leaders, Welcome

It is with great excitement that Saint Matthew's welcomes new Vestry members, Diocesan Delegates, and Alternates.

Vestry

David Brock
Antonia Greene-Edwards
Jim Garrison

Diocesan Delegates

Connie Dee
Pam Dunlap
Jeanne Garrison

Alternates

George Bishop
Judy Groben

Parishioners Build Little Pantry, Donations Saught

Notice anything new as you pull into the parking lots? Recently, members of St. Matthew's have built a Little Pantry to support friends and neighbors of the community who might be going through hard times. A small but mighty stock of groceries and essential items are now hosted on the campus, and donations are being accepted. Organizers are currently seeking **feminine hygiene products, toothpaste, bars of soap, shampoo, and conditioner** for the pantry. Individuals can label and leave these items in the parish kitchen when the church offices are open. We kindly ask that you do not place offerings directly in the pantry and that you spread the word about this resource to those who may be in need.



Nursery School Registration is Open

On December 6th, registration opens for church members and alumni. Church members who are interested in our preschool program should call (215) 646-4466 or email nurseryschool@saintmatts.org. We encourage new families to come in and visit the school with their children. Due to COVID-19, tours are scheduled at 3:15 p.m. when the school day is over. **Registration for families in the community begins on December 13.** If your friends or neighbors are interested, please have them call or email the school. Registration forms can be accessed at tinyurl.com/Register-NS



BRIGHTEN DARK DAYS WITH

Winter Floral Arrangements

CONNIE DEE

Brighten the dark days of winter with a classic white and green floral arrangement! Think: first snow, starry nights, and the light of Christ!

Greens foraged from your yard and long lasting budget friendly flowers can be purchased from your grocery store or Produce Junction.

The key to keeping it interesting is to provide a variety of scale and texture. Mix broad leaf evergreens like cherry laurel, boxwood, magnolia, or holly with needled evergreens like white pine, juniper, or arborvitae. Incorporate a variety of green shades using cream, chartreuse, or sage to brighten the dark greens.

Arrange the greens in your vase first to establish the height and width of your arrangement and to provide some structure to hold the flowers in place. If you are making a low centerpiece arrangement you will need floral foam or chicken wire to hold the flowers upright or you can use a series of small silver or glass cups marching down the table center.



Flowers should be conditioned for arranging by recutting the base of the stems, stripping all leaves below the water line, and placing them in warm water mixed with the floral food.

Vary the scale and shape of the flowers, using larger lilies with star mums (long thin petals look like stars), white or pale green roses, white and green alstroemeria, carnations (large and mini), and stock or snapdragons if you want some flowers for a tall arrangement.

Finish your creation with some green hypericum berries or seeded eucalyptus and a few white birch branches to add an ethereal texture. Flowers will last longest in cooler temperatures between 40 and 60 degrees, so if you're making them ahead for an event, you may want to store them in your garage or a basement to extend their life. Check each day to keep them well watered.

SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM THE NURSERY SCHOOL

Jackie Anderson, Director

It's beginning to look a lot like . . .

Christmas! The halls and classrooms are adorned with Christmas decorations and there is excitement in each and every little voice as we prepare for the season. In addition to all of the fun surrounding elves, stockings, and presents (oh, and Santa too!) the children are very much aware that we are approaching Jesus's birthday.

This year we are thrilled to have our **Christmas Concerts on December 21st and December 22nd**. Mrs. Reynolds, our music teacher, is working with the children during music class preparing and rehearsing them for the big day. Typically we have parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles in attendance but this year with the COVID-19 pandemic still around, each family will be given two tickets. We plan to livestream the concerts for extended family to see both near and far.

Now, we are excited to announce that registration for the Nursery School is in full swing! Existing families in the school may **register children from November 29th until December 3rd**. **On December 6th, registration opens for church members and alumni**. Church members who are interested in our preschool program should call (215) 646-4466 or email nurseryschool@saintmattsec.org

Church members are also encouraged to come in and visit the school with their children. Due to COVID-19, tours are scheduled at 3:15 p.m. when the school day is over. **Registration for families in the community begins on December 13**. If your friends or neighbors are interested, please have them call or email the school.

As a reminder, the school will be closed for Christmas break from December 23 until January 3.

With love,

Jackie



SHINING A LIGHT ON Ms. Bridget Wiley



Although this is Mrs. Bridget Wiley's second year teaching at St. Matthew's, she is no stranger to the Nursery School. She was a member of the first Pre-K class back in 1992-1993, and she is also the first alumna to work in the Nursery School. The apple did not fall far from the tree as her mother is a long-time 2 1/2's and Pre-K teacher, Mrs. Karen Griffin. In June of 2021, the baton was officially passed from mother to daughter as Mrs. Griffin retired.

Bridget does a phenomenal job of educating the whole child. She nurtures her students and works hard to ensure each child has a wonderful school day. During "S" week in Mrs. Wiley's class, the children had a fun sensory experience by playing in "snow" that they helped make. They also are making a Santa advent calendar to count the days until Christmas! St Matthew's is very fortunate to have Mrs. Wiley.





SAINT MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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