

# ST. MATTHEW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



PARISH PROFILE † SEPTEMBER 2016

*Oh, Ye Frost and Cold  
Bless ye the Lord;  
Praise Him and Magnify Him Forever.*

*St. Matthew's Church Bell*

*To all who are joyful and thankful  
To all who mourn and need comfort  
To all who are weary and need rest  
To all who are friendless and wish friendship  
To all who pray  
And to all who do not, but ought  
To all who sin and need a Savior,  
And to whoever will  
This church opens wide the door  
and in the name of Christ the Lord says--  
Welcome.*

*Carved on the Church Door*







## *Welcome to St. Matthew's!*

*It is with a glad heart that we welcome  
you in your search*

Our parish profile is presented here as the representative voice for our people. In it, we hope that you will find those qualities about St. Matthew's that we love about ourselves: the love of worship, the love of family, the love of (a little!) silliness, the love of storytelling, the love for each other. You'll also see some of the ministries that are important to us. If you read closely, you'll also get a sense of where we've been and where we'd like to go.

We're searching for a full-time rector who has a lot of love to share; someone who possesses a keen intellect, a good sense of humor, and the ability to be flexible. We are a far-flung congregation with a need for ministering, nurturing, and encouragement for growth. We'll need support and guidance about maintaining and growing our ministries with the homeless and our youth. We're especially concerned about the development of our youth - both growing that part of our congregation and educating them. Another important ministry is continuing to grow our relationships beyond Fairbanks into the Interior of Alaska. Through all of this, you'll understand how much we all lean on one another and realize that "we're all in this together" as the body of Christ.

Know that we pray with you during your time of discernment. We are calling someone special who will thrive in the extremes of the far north, warmed by the love of Christ and the care of the people of the parish. It's a tough job, but one of the most rewarding things you could ever do. We are calling; are we calling you?

# AN INTRODUCTION TO FAIRBANKS

Fairbanks is Alaska’s second largest city. Known as the “Golden Heart City”, it is located at 64 degrees 50 sec N latitude, near the confluence of the Tanana and Chena Rivers. Elevation of the city is 450 feet above sea level. Fairbanks was founded in 1903 during early gold rush and riverboat days and is a place of rich historical interest. Habitation of the area dates from migration into the New World between 9,000 and 25,000 years ago. A transportation and service center for the 200,000 square mile Interior of Alaska, it is a region rich in natural beauty and resources. It lies midway between the rugged Brooks Range to the north and the majestic Alaska Range to the south. Denali, the tallest mountain in North America, is visible 154 miles to the southwest on clear days.

The climate of Fairbanks is continental, with extreme seasonal differences. Temperatures occasionally reach 90 degrees F in the summer and can plummet to -60 degrees F in the winter. Daylight lasts almost 22 hours on the Summer Solstice (June 21) and only about 3 1/2 hours on the Winter Solstice (December 21).

The population of Fairbanks is over 32,000 within city limits. The Fairbanks North Star Borough comprises nearly 8,000 square miles with a population of just under 100,000, including Fairbanks, the community of North Pole and



military personnel at Fort Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base.

Fairbanks today is a modern community with the amenities of cities several times as large. An excellent public school system is offered along with church-affiliated schools. The University of Alaska Fairbanks campus, the central campus of the state university system, has an enrollment of

almost 6,000 students, with additional students enrolled in the School of Career and Continuing Education. In addition, Hutchison Adult Career Center offers an apprentice training facility operated by the school district.



Fairbanks is served by Fairbanks International Airport with eight airlines (some seasonal); a fully accredited hospital with over 1,300 employees; over 50 dentists; shopping malls; six television stations (with options for cable and dish); many FM and AM radio stations; more than 70 churches; the Alaska Railroad terminal and yard; industrial parks, and small, neighborhood parks. There are

many banks with several branches (Wells Fargo and Key Bank are two examples), many credit unions, brokerage firms, a number of insurance companies, real estate brokers, architectural and engineering firms, and attorneys. In addition to a Pioneer Home retirement facility, Fairbanks has several senior citizen housing complexes.



Nearby Chena Lakes Recreation Area offers several hundred acres for picnicking, skiing, fishing and boating. There are excellent outdoor and indoor recreational outlets for all ages: swimming; ice hockey; figure skating; curling rinks; cross-country skiing trails; three small downhill ski areas within 15 miles; rifle ranges; bike paths; riding stables; soccer and football fields; numerous baseball and softball diamonds; an archery range; military and private golf courses; and both indoor and outdoor tennis courts. There are also exceptional opportunities for fishing, canoeing, hunting, hiking, berry picking, flying, boating, snowmobiling, dog mushing, and skijoring.

Fairbanks offers access to some of the most remote terrain in North America. It is the southern terminus for the Dalton Highway which parallels the Trans-Alaska Pipeline to Prudhoe

Bay. The road is open to the public as far as Deadhorse on the Arctic Coast, and offers access to the Yukon River, superb backcountry hiking, camping, backpacking, skiing, snowmobiling, boating, fishing, recreational gold mining, wildlife viewing, and magnificent scenery.

Although Fairbanks is geographically isolated, the way of life here is anything but provincial; we offer creative and performing arts such as the Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra, Fairbanks Light Opera Theatre, the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival, Opera Fairbanks (the northernmost opera company in the United States), the Fairbanks Concert Association, and the Fairbanks Drama Association. The concert offerings range from classical to bluegrass and folk to rock & roll. There are also various community dance groups, ranging from contra, folk, and square dancing to ballet. The Nutcracker Ballet and Sing-It-Yourself Messiah are Christmas traditions in Fairbanks. Cultural opportunities abound for children as well with the Fairbanks Suzuki Institute, Fairbanks Youth Symphony, FLOT Jr., North Star Ballet, and the UAF Summer Music Academy just to name a few. Children also have many sports camps to choose from. The public library serves both as a community and regional library and offers media services and space for community events. The University of







Alaska Fairbanks Rasmuson Library is a world depository for information on land, sea, space, and people of high latitudes. The University has nationally recognized research institutes in Geophysics, Marine Science, Arctic Biology, and Mining, to name a few. The people of Fairbanks and Alaska have established relations with sister cities in Siberia, Japan, and Italy, and have hosted scientists, doctors, civic leaders, and visitors with growing common interest.

One modern jewel in the Fairbanks landscape is the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center. This spacious facility on the south bank of the Chena River welcomes its visitors with beautiful architecture and interesting, informative displays which celebrate Interior Alaska's people, land, and culture. The center also promotes economic development via tourism, with an emphasis on rural Alaska, while at the same time acts as a community gathering place, where diverse cultures come together to understand, appreciate, and respect one another.

Many Fairbanks opportunities are unique. The North American Open Dog Mushing Championship and the Yukon Quest are

professional dog mushing events which capture the attention of the entire community and are frequently mentioned in the national news. The Yukon 800, an annual 800 mile speed boat race is held on the Tanana and Yukon Rivers. The World Eskimo Indian Olympics brings teams from Canada and Alaska together in competition. Every two years the Alaska Federation of Natives Annual Convention is held in Fairbanks. This event is the largest of its kind in North America offering special speakers, expert

panels, special reports as well as the Alaska Native Customary Art Show and several evenings of cultural performance known as Qujana Nights. During summer months the Riverboat Discovery and the sternwheeler Tanana Chief offer excursions on the Chena and Tanana Rivers. Easy boating opportunities are found right in downtown Fairbanks on the Chena River. Many choose to float the Chena in kayaks or other small boats.

The residents of Fairbanks are multi-ethnic and represent more than 70 languages and cultures. This is in addition to the many Alaska Native tribal members from the Interior villages that think of Fairbanks as their second home. Some of the ethnicity is represented in Italian, Mexican, Greek, Thai, Chinese, and Vietnamese restaurants. Over 400 civic, social, and cultural organizations serve almost every interest - among these organizations you'll find Rotary, Lions, Elks, Moose, and Masons. People are independent and outspoken in the frontier tradition, proud and generous, self-reliant and dependable. Fairbanks is a lively, friendly and exciting place to live, work, learn and raise a family.

# THE PEOPLE OF ST. MATTHEW'S

The people of St. Matthew's come from every walk of life and every part of the social strata. At this time, we are in the midst of identifying those parishioners who consider themselves "members" of St. Matthew's. We are contacting everyone in our church directory, those who've been married here, those who've had someone baptized, and those who've donated. After this project is complete we'll have a better idea of how many members we have, who they are, and where they live. Due to our on-going mission to reach out to the people of the Interior, not all of those who consider themselves parishioners live in the Fairbanks area. We regularly have about 100 parishioners between two services on a typical Sunday.

Pride, optimism, confidence and sharing express our general outlook. We are pleased with our parish accomplishments yet are searching for improvements in programs and management. Often plans and programs are not matched by increased individual participation. Parishioners strive for greater outreach to those in need in Fairbanks and outlying villages, and for nurturing



faith among members of St. Matthew's.

St. Matthew's greatest strength is continually identified as "the people." We consider ourselves an open family in which all members can be secure together and encourage each other in daily life and spiritual growth.







## SERVICE

The heart and soul of any parish is the service it performs for others.

The heart of St. Matthew's can be heard beating in not only the local region, but throughout the Interior. As the center of a large community, our parish

extends itself to be a visible and viable part of Fairbanks. Our clergy participate in special services in various locations to commemorate both happy and sad occasions. Examples include celebrating the first Episcopal service in Fairbanks and remembering those who have been murdered without resolution. Our clergy have been tapped to say opening prayers at City Council meetings, Borough Assembly meetings, and Alaska Native Events. They have written articles for the religion page of the Daily News Miner, and participate with inter-faith meetings in the city. St. Matthew's plays a vital part in the lives of Fairbanksans, and those living in the outlying villages, as a central hub. The church has served on many occasions as the headquarters for Search and Rescue missions to locate the victims of drowning in the Chena River. Interior village residents have received a warm and caring welcome, along with financial assistance and warm meals, as they escape their flooded homes during break up. The Parish has been a place of social activism for causes such as the freeing of The Fairbanks Four.

Our parish hall provides consistent meeting places for several Alcoholics Anonymous groups, a Narcotics Anonymous group, and an Overeaters Anonymous group. It is a gathering

place for wedding receptions, parties, and funeral teas and receptions.

Along with the services provided within the church, members of the congregation give many hours of their personal time to the many and varied service organizations in the Fairbanks area. You will find us among the volunteers at one or more of the following: hospice, Fairbanks Food Bank, Love INC, the hospital, various nursing homes, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, the Housing First Project, Stone Soup Café, Red Cross, the Carol Brice Center for Family and Children, health fairs, and others.

St. Matthew's has not remained stagnant in its service development. As times change, and society adjusts, new urgencies surface. Vibrant discussions have been held regarding presentations on and assistance with many areas of service. Some topics covered in these discussions have been: criminal justice reform, early childhood development, pollution, providing purpose for young men in the villages, homeless day care, thrift shops, parenting education, developmental disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ communities. There will always be a need for service. We pray for enough people willing to fill the need.





## WORSHIP

The people who make up the body of St. Matthew's are a diverse group that enjoy coming together to worship. Our worship takes many forms but follows the Book of Common Prayer.



the choice of a Rite I or Rite II service provides both the comfort of language learned decades ago and the easily understood modern English.

Some of our traditions are also “home-grown”. Following the encouragement of

### *Weekly Services*

We currently have four services per week in St. Matthew's. Two services are held on Sundays (8 and 10:30 am) and two services are held on Wednesdays (10:30 am and 7 pm). The 8 am service on Sunday is a solemn, reverent, quiet service, usually without music, using the rich language of the Rite I order of service. The 10:30 service (Rite II) can be a happily boisterous gathering with organ, choir, congregational singing, guest musicians, and children as they come back from Sunday school. Our Wednesday morning service is a service with prayers for healing. Wednesday evening brings a quiet respite during the busy week with a Rite II service usually without music. All weekly services at St. Matthew's enjoy the sacred feast of the Eucharist.

The traditions and the consistency of our services are deeply important to us. As we progress through the church year, many of us enjoy the symbolic changing of colors of the vestments, the additional candles, different rituals, and the reminders of why we keep these traditions. Having

our bishop to incorporate indigenous languages into our services, we regularly sing the Doxology and say the Lord's Prayer in Gwich'in when we have a leader who speaks that language. A guest fiddle player has been known to get a jig going during the service. Occasionally guest musicians will sing in their language as part of the service: Gwich'in, Inupiat, Koyukon, and others. Easter services have been known to end with a reminder to “keep looking up” and a (gentle) tossing of candy. Visitors who have come the farthest and introduce themselves have been given a can of Spam. Weather permitting, a portion of our Pentecost service is celebrated outside.

While some of our traditions are not strictly from the Book of Common Prayer, they are from the Book of Common Sense. Having a celebrant who is mindful about helping everyone keep their place in the prayer book and the hymnal is something that is greatly appreciated - both by newcomers and long-time parishioners. No one wants to get left behind. Someone who is good at getting parishioners as involved as possible with aspects of the liturgy will help those parishioners

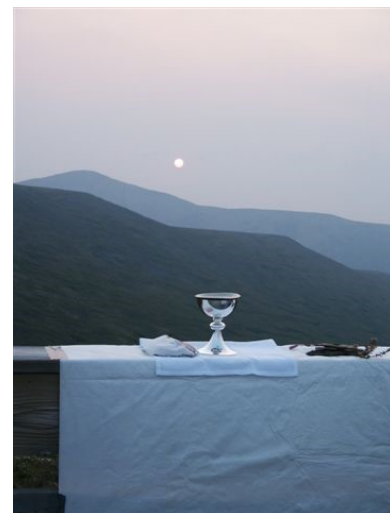
develop a connectedness to one another and to what is going on around them. We read some of the gospel texts (Palm Sunday is one example) like a play with parts handed out prior to the service. There are times that the scriptures appointed for the day can seem impenetrable. Take the time to explain some of the deeper mysteries to us.

### *Special Services*

Typically, we celebrate the usual “special” services of Christmas Eve & Christmas Day, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Tenebrae, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Great Vigil of Easter, Easter), Pentecost, and All Saints.

However, services don’t happen only within the confines of St. Matthew’s church. For many years we’ve celebrated a Summer Solstice service at midnight on Eagle Summit - not only to celebrate our Lord but also to celebrate and remember the connection St. Matthew’s has with the town and people of Circle. Eagle Summit (elev.

3,685 ft. ) is 107 miles from Fairbanks along the Steese Highway on the way to Circle. This service brings together Episcopalians from Circle, Fairbanks and beyond. We regularly walk and pray for justice and peace - for the wrongly imprisoned, for those touched by suicide and domestic violence, and for those murdered by persons unknown. We say prayers where and when we need to; for example, at the site of the first Episcopal service in Fairbanks (using parts of the 1892 prayer book) which is the middle of a downtown sidewalk.



Services are also held at Denali Center (a long-term resident care facility), the Pioneer Home, and at the Fairbanks Correctional Center.

These are performed by both lay ministers and priests associated with St. Matthew’s as frequently as schedules will allow.

Our church participates in the Tanana Valley Council of Churches to better collaborate with clergy from other local congregations. Our associated clergy will celebrate at joint services, usually for Good Friday, Lent, and other special occasions. St. Matthew’s has sponsored some of these ecumenical services in the past.





## ***Prayer Life***

Our church is a body of people connected by a common faith. Part of this faith comes through the power of prayer. To assist with this part of worship we have a “prayer chain” and three ministries: Prayer Shawl, Daughters of the King, and the Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna. Our prayer chain is an informal affair - it is usually an email from our office staff relating the particular prayer requests. One needs to ask the office to be added to the email list. The Prayer Shawl group crochets and knits prayer shawls which are then blessed and given away. The Daughters of the King meet to gather in prayer for one and all. The Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna is a group of elders that have been recognized for long years of service to the church.

One thing that has been long associated with faith is the expectation of healing. Priests and lay persons regularly go to our hospital and long-term care facilities to sit in prayer with those in need. While we are very fortunate to have several priests associated with this ministry, we would like to grow our corps of Lay Eucharistic Visitors so that all who request prayer and communion may obtain them.

## ***Caring for our people***

One of the many ways to care for someone is to ask, “Have you eaten?” and around here, we

do plenty of eating! Potlucks in the parish hall are frequently held to celebrate baptisms, in honor of visitors, birthdays, etc. Potlucks also play a part in grieving too as our parish hall is utilized as a place for “tea,” which is a tradition of being with family and friends, eating, and remembering someone who has passed away. The “tea” generally happens sometime in the days prior to the funeral.

## ***Moving into the future***

Four regularly scheduled weekly services at St. Matthew’s provide a variety of worship experiences, however there is also room for trying additional services at different times with different worship content. Simply having an occasional High Church service would be a benefit to some parishioners. Cycling regularly through the different Eucharistic prayers is appreciated. Adding to the variety of music might be something to try. Mention has been made of having more services in Gwich’in. Having more opportunity for morning and evening prayer would be welcomed. Putting together occasional special services like Evensong has been suggested. Preaching sermons that incorporate local issues with a storytelling aspect to them is appreciated.



For the Sunday service at 10:30, music is a large component of the service; not only as part of the liturgy, but also as a reason for people to attend that service. In the past we’ve enjoyed “traditional” choir anthems (we currently enjoy the services of a small volunteer choir with director most Sundays at the 10:30 service from the Feast



We are blessed with many Fairbanks-based clergy who may be called upon to assist or preach. This is wonderful in that we get different points of view, different speaking styles, and a bit of a “change.” One suggestion, in the spirit of a revival, is to invite a dynamic speaker from outside of the

of St. Matthew in September through Pentecost), small vocal groups and soloists, handbells, fiddle music, solo banjo, solo guitar, and even an accordion. We’d like to especially embrace this diversity and be open to other ways of “making a joyful noise” without changing the reverent nature of the service into “entertainment”.

Fairbanks area to visit and preach once a year.

Other activities could encompass more outdoor worship opportunities such as sidewalk services, a walking tour of Fairbanks, a hiking club with bible study, etc. while at the same time maintaining the traditional outdoor components of Pentecost and Palm Sunday services.

Getting more youth involvement in all aspects of our worship life is a strong theme throughout most conversations - whether they be involved as acolytes, crucifers, or lay readers - we need to have more youth actively involved with the church. Having a church service (led by an appropriate adult) with the children doing most of the work is yet another way of getting them involved.

Fairbanks is the hub of the Interior - shopping, medical services, connections to the “Outside” - and many folks from around the state come to St. Matthew’s when they’re in town. Many regular visitors feel that they are parishioners of St. Matthew’s. We encourage these connections, and strive to maintain and strengthen our ties to the people and churches of the Interior.

Many aspects of our church life can be conducted by the laity, and St. Matthew’s has a growing number of parishioners who have taken up a licensed ministry. Conducting regular training of interested lay people, and mentoring those who are taking on a new ministry, will help take pressure off of the incumbent to be everywhere at once. Having the office staff track who has what training, as well as when any licensing would lapse, would be a desirable addition.







## EDUCATION

Realizing that Christian Education is an important component of growth into Christian maturity, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church has an obligation to help nurture and guide its membership in this growth process.

### *Adult Education*

At the present time, Education for Ministry (EfM) is the only formal education program available at St. Matthew's. This is a four year certificate program in theological education. In the past, adult education has included adult Sunday school, bible study, Lenten bible studies with a light meal provided by participants, inquirer, and adult confirmation classes. Other types of education for adults has included Health Ministry

presentations on wellness, disease prevention, and chronic illnesses. Recently, Gwich'in language study and church services, Takudh prayers, and chilig have been taught to those in the congregation who are interested. Prayers in Gwich'in are recited at the 10:30 service many Sundays. Bishop Lattime has given trainings at Deanery meetings for Lay Eucharistic Ministers. Safe Church trainings have been given for those working with children. Altar Guild training for new members is done on an 'as needed' basis. Counseling programs in the past have included: Beginning Experience (for people experiencing divorce/death of spouse or breakup of relationship), Marriage Encounter, Engaged Experience, and Retrouvaille.

Looking forward, people have expressed interest in an adult bible study. There has been discussion of having a bible class between the 8:00 am and the 10:30 am service on Sunday. An enthusiastic leader or leaders would be needed for such a program. Another option or a second class could be the Lenten soup studies. Several 6 week studies during the year and a "Pub or Coffee" theology discussion group have been suggested. Included in these various studies could be a program on Prayer Book/Bible navigation.

### *Youth Education*

Since the loss of the Youth Minister position, St. Matthew's has no formal youth education program. Youth education is important to prepare the youth for their adult Christian life. Confirmation is offered to the youth for a minimum of six weeks. In the past, Youth programs have included educational opportunities such as bible study, fellowship, movie nights, and youth helping in other ministries as well as participation in local, state, and national youth

conventions. Future youth programs might include past programs as mentioned. Family Bible study is another option.

Another suggestion for youth programming is inviting Dancing With the Spirit back to St. Matthew's. Dancing with the Spirit is a travelling music ministry devoted to building self-esteem in youth by connecting elders with youth through music instruction. This award-winning ministry, headed by the Rev. Belle Mickelson of Cordova, teaches basic skills on fiddle and guitar using Gospel and bluegrass tunes. It continues to serve many towns and villages in Alaska.



### ***Children's Education - Sunday School***

Children aged 3 to 13 years of age meet with teachers during the 10:30 am Sunday service, meeting in the Church and leaving after the Collect. The children return to their families after the Lord's Prayer for Holy Communion. Currently "Godly Play" materials are being used for the telling of our sacred stories. The "Weaving God's Promises" curriculum is used as a supplement for activities which reinforce the lessons.

### ***Vacation Bible School***

St. Matthew's has not had a VBS session for the past several years due to lack of available/interested adults to manage a session. In previous years, the VBS programs at Fairbanks Lutheran and First Methodist Church have invited our children to attend their programs. One possibility might be to have "Dancing with the Spirit" hold a week long session at St. Matthew's during the summer.





# EVANGELISM

At St. Matthew's we are a group that is not limited to the confines of the church building. You see our name in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner newspaper periodically. We participate in building relationships with churches around the world. We have a sister church in England. We also have a website that reaches far and wide around the globe. The website serves to reach out to people who have left home but still want that connection to St. Matthew's. Once you're a member of the St. Matthew's family you are loved forever.



Around the community of Fairbanks, Alaska, St. Matthew's is known for its supply clergy. Our clergy get called on to officiate at weddings and funerals in Fairbanks and most of the communities in the Interior of Alaska. St. Matthew's brings church services to those who are incarcerated not only across the State of Alaska but to those who are imprisoned around the nation. We have clergy who visit the various assisted living homes in Fairbanks. Our clergy have been called

on to lead services in other churches, e.g., Lutheran, Unitarian, when they find themselves without clergy.

At the actual church property of St. Matthew's we serve the community by making space available to various 12 step groups, holding small meetings or workshops to support non-profit events, and welcome the homeless to come in out of the cold in the winter. We have held community meetings in our parish hall to discuss the challenges of the homeless situation and their high rate of death, resolving to be a part of the solution instead of the problem. We have allowed

groups to have fundraisers in the parish hall to support families who lost their loved ones and need extra funds for funeral expenses.

During SWEEPS meetings we received many comments in support of all the things mentioned above and that everyone would like St. Matthew's to continue all programs. There were comments in support of more men's groups at St. Matthew's.

## PASTORAL CARE AND PARISH LIFE

Our church experiences an active parish life. Although activities change as society changes, our mission remains the same. The dedication of St. Matthew's to all God's people is rooted in its devotion to reaching out, sharing, listening, caring, playing, and praying over its 112 years of existence.

Our pastoral ministry is a shared ministry with our clergy and our people, much like a marriage. We look after each other for richer or poorer, for better or for worse, in sickness and health, and endeavor to follow God's commandments in our concern for all.

We have an active prayer chain which is updated constantly to include those who are sick, infirm, in the hospital, or who have other concerns for which they wish shared prayer. We welcome and provide to those experiencing tough times without a place to stay a warm refuge in our parish hall during the day while the church is open, offering snacks and warm beverages. During the Christmas holidays, St. Matthew's provides gifts to community families whose resources are limited. To enrich our Advent journey, we draw names of those in our parish to pray for, and/or to provide small gifts or cards letting them know a Secret Advent Friend cares about them.

It is important to keep our spiritual leader happy and healthy. Our priest needs to be available for an indeterminate number of hours during the week, aside from scheduled church services. There are hospital visits, weddings, funerals, house blessings, service preparation and



home visits for the infirm. However, our priest needs time to refresh and be ministered to as well. Our congregation is growing through its training in Licensed Ministries, enabling folks to take communion to shut-ins, to lead services, and to perform trainings in various aspects of church life. Because of this, the parish priest should have more time for personal and/or family endeavors.

St. Matthew's is fortunate to have a number of active ministries including Health Ministry, Altar Guild, Prayer Shawl Ministry, and Daughters of the King. Education for Ministry has been thriving for a number of years and a number of elders have been inducted into The Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna.





We have been blessed with a wonderfully mixed congregation (split about evenly half Alaska Native/Native American and the other half non-Native) giving St. Matthew's an opportunity to share in and learn from different cultures. The Fairbanks church is the hub for Interior village Episcopalians who frequently fly to town for a number of reasons and attend Sunday morning services. Over the years the Alaska Native population has grown locally. As a result, we have been able to experience prayer and services in Gwich'in, assist with the development of a book of prayer and songs in Koyukon, share with an Alaska Native choir performing chilig, experience new foods, and embrace the feeling of spirituality during Alaskan Native funerals.

And, we work and play. Over the years, a number of construction tasks, renovations, repairs, gardening, and decorative improvements have been accomplished because of work parties. A number of highly skilled members have provided their computer skills to help with newsletters, the

website, office upgrades and providing communication improvements to include hooking up speaker systems and in-house TV so that those in the parish hall can participate in the services.

Once the work is done it is time to kick back. We are a church of potlucks, birthday celebrations, Easter egg hunts, family nights, game nights, story nights, picnics, Thanksgiving dinners, music performances, Shrove Tuesday pancake suppers, coffee hours, bake sales, and Booyah.

We are a welcoming church but there is always room for improvement and growth. Plans are in the works to develop training for ushers, greeters, and lay readers to assist with the Sunday services. The Parish Directory is being updated so that it is a more efficient and up-to-date document.

Pastoral care and parish life illustrate the health of the church. St. Matthew's is vibrantly healthy.





## STEWARDSHIP

The goal of any successful stewardship ministry is to make the best use of the resources at hand for the benefit of the greatest number of parishioners. While it might be a difficult topic for some, stewardship is more than just asking people for money - it involves taking care of our people, our buildings, as well as our finances. We recognize that the people in our congregation are our greatest resource so it behooves us to cultivate and grow our congregation. One of the challenges to our stewardship efforts is the shrinking of our congregation. Anecdotally, we can tell that our congregation has been dwindling over the span of many years. At one point, three Sunday services were held and all were well attended. Now, two Sunday services (8:00 am and 10:30 am) are held with the later service regularly having approximately 40 to 60 congregants, making the church comfortably full. With that in mind, it is even more important to recognize and nurture the benefits from the “treasures” of knowledge, skill, and experience that each of our people possess. This is an important first step to building a successful stewardship ministry.

One of the ways we’ve explored the idea of “our people are our best resource” is through our “I

Have a Story” nights. Elders have been asked to talk about themselves - their lives, experiences, insights, etc. around a free-will offering dinner. These have been successful in helping us get to know one another better as well as by raising a little money.

At the beginning of the church year we have bulletin inserts asking parishioners to share of their “time, talent, & treasure” with St. Matthew’s. The results of these pledge sheets are used to see what we’ll have to work with in the upcoming year. The “treasure” in this case is what you estimate your tithing will be during the year. We also offer parishioners the ability to give via PayPal. Those that have time and talent are kept in mind for special projects throughout the year.

While there are always jobs to be done around the church, some are larger and more involved. This is one place where the “time & talent” comes in handy. We’ll get work parties together to clean-up the church yard, refinish the parish hall, or tackle whatever else comes along. A general announcement is put out and those with talents that would be particularly useful are specifically contacted. Work parties are a great time for getting to know each other better as well as getting some things done!

One of the ways we’re able to support special projects locally and into the Interior is through our Endowment Fund. The fund was created through the efforts of generous, forward-thinking parishioners over 25 years ago. A volunteer elected board is responsible for managing the investments and vetting any proposals for funding. The goal of the fund is to enhance the worship, ministry, and mission outreach of St. Matthew’s by considering non-



recurring expenses for items or projects not covered under our operating budget. Awards in the past have included support for outreach projects, including starting a soup kitchen in Tanana, programs like Dancing With the Spirit, helping youth attend summer camp, purchasing special materials to develop Sunday School curriculum, and responding to needs of churches within the Interior.

Since our people are our greatest resource, it makes sense to rely more on our lay ministers. There are dedicated people currently serving in various lay ministries - and there is room for more. Getting more of the laity involved in church life is one way to practice good stewardship with our clergy; taking some of the burden off of them when appropriate. These ministries could benefit from more training opportunities being offered on a regular basis to attract new members.

One key to all of this is good communication. While the Sunday bulletin is one great place to make announcements, there needs to be more. Our presence is now felt on Facebook. Our revamped website, <http://www.stmatthewschurch.org/home> also hosts our newsletter (O Ye Frost and Cold) which has been revived and publishes every two months. Working with these and other appropriate tools is vital to keeping our far-flung membership part of the same flock. We have a communications committee that coordinates these different aspects. Delivering relevant information and connecting to one another are elements of good stewardship, too.

Our stewardship committee, after a hiatus, is becoming active again. As we move forward, they will assess and recognize those

aspects of stewardship that we're already doing well. Our fundraisers that seem to be more successful are garage sales, Indian taco feeds, and the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend "fill-up station." One large-scale idea put forward was to encourage Alaska Native artisans to make and donate some of their art at an Alaska Native language service. This artwork would then be sold for the benefit of St. Matthew's.

Many suggestions reflected the ideal that "our people are our greatest resource." A request for a Caring Committee was discussed on more than one occasion. This committee would focus on reaching out to parishioners in good times as well as bad to foster the sense that we are truly all in this together. This could be something as simple as a quiet conversation over coffee, a card, or flowers. A ministry to specifically welcome and encourage new members could be a calling for some. Asking for more, and more frequent, training for lay positions was a recurrent theme. This would serve many purposes: it would refresh the corps of those doing the work, it would invite new members into service, and it would also give those interested a chance to try something new. Invitations to these trainings should be extended to those throughout the Interior so these skills will be taken home and the connection with St. Matthew's further strengthened. Lastly, the more ways we can involve the youth in service the better for all.



## VESTRY AND STAFF

As the management team of the parish, the Vestry provides strong, creative leadership in working with clergy to set the tone and direction of parish life and in managing corporate property. Our vestry consists of nine people; vestry members serve 3-year terms, with one third elected each annual meeting in January. Regular meetings are held once a month on Monday evenings.

Services at St. Matthew's are currently led by interim rector Rev. Liz Simmons with the occasional assistance of clergy associated with St. Matthew's. During the search for an interim rector many of our associated clergy, including Bishop Lattime, helped fill the gap. Non-stipendiary clergy living in Fairbanks are generous with their help when needed. Visiting clergy from outlying villages often participate in services.



the services and other events. We also have a sexton who lives on-site and cleans the church and parish hall. Our music department is staffed by a paid organist with a volunteer choir director and choir. Volunteers also keep the lawns and flower beds looking nice during the summer, as well as clearing the walks of snow in the winter. A bimonthly parish newsletter, *O Ye Frost and Cold*, is also a volunteer project.

## PARISH FACILITIES

St. Matthew's is located on one acre on the south bank of the Chena River six blocks west of the downtown business district. The church is of log construction built in 1948 on the site of the first mission church which burned. It is 1,900 square feet in size and seats 145 persons, although more than 200 have squeezed in on occasion. The church is open daily for prayer and quiet meditation. Our organ, a 1995 Allen two manual electronic organ, provides the music for most services. The parish hall has an upright Kawai piano.



We're fortunate to have a paid part-time parish administrator assisting in coordinating all



# FINANCES AND BUDGET

The budget is presented to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting held in January. This statement of anticipated income and expenses was approved at the Annual Meeting in January, 2016.



## St. Matthew's Church Budget Overview - 2016

### INCOME

Offering	12,000.00
Altar Guild	2,500.00
Sunday School	100.00
Newsletter	175.00
Sacramental Donations	4,000.00
Pledged and Unpledged Support	226,814.00
Pledged Permanent Fund Dividend	20,000.00
Church Supplies	500.00
Parish Hall Users	500.00
Stewardship Donations	100.00
Fundraisers	20,000.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>286,689.00</b>

### EXPENSES

<b>Salaries and Related Expenses</b>	
Clergy Salaries	53,512.00
Staff Salaries and Wages	43,605.00
Pension Plan Contributions	16,952.00
Employee Benefits – not pension	24,488.00
Housing Allowance	13,500.00
<b>Total Salaries and Related Expenses</b>	<b>152,057.00</b>
Payroll Expenses/Taxes	3,452.00
Office Operations	9,936.00
Computer Hardware and Software	770.00
Newsletter	1,445.00
Website	359.00
Custodial	1,200.00
Utilities – Maintenance Rectory	10,548.00
Utilities – Maintenance Church	20,295.00
Choir Music	150.00
Christian Education	300.00
Costs of Fundraising/Sales	1,800.00
Diocesan Convention and Deanery	2,250.00
Diocesan Tithe	57,338.00
Insurance	19,056.00
Staff Development	200.00
Worship Publications	586.00
Liturgical Expenses	4,972.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>286,689.00</b>

## DIOCESE OF ALASKA

The Missionary District of Alaska was established in 1895 and the Diocese of Alaska in 1971. The Diocese has 49 parishes and missions. Our congregations are found in rural villages, small coastal communities and large urban cities, the majority existing in small communities of fewer than 500 people. Geographically, the Diocese includes the entire state of Alaska and is divided into four regional deaneries. St. Matthew's, though located in Fairbanks, the second largest urban setting in Alaska, has a historic and important connection to the ministries of our rural Interior village communities. The relationship of St. Matthew's to the Interior villages provides unique opportunities for being a resource for leadership development, pastoral care, and Christian formation and education for our remote communities. As the Diocese moves forward with Bishop Lattime's vision to raise-up, train, and empower leadership through the licensed ministries of the Episcopal Church, St. Matthew's will play an important role in supporting and developing this work in the Interior Deanery.

The Diocese is served by Lay leaders and about 70 clergy (priests and deacons). The majority of the clergy are nonparochial and nonstipendiary. St. Matthew's is one of only six parishes in the Diocese served by a full-time stipendiary Rector.

The Right Rev. Mark Lattime, our present Bishop, has served since 2010 as the 8th Bishop of Alaska. As the Diocese of Alaska covers the entire state, Bishop Lattime is frequently traveling among the many churches from the Arctic Coast to Southeast.

Because of the size of the Diocese, this also means that the annual Clergy Conference and Convention moves around the state. In 2017, St. Matthew's is scheduled to host these annual events.

The Diocesan office and Bishop's staff are located several blocks away from St. Matthew's. Current staff include Ginia Love, Bishop's Assistant; Suzanne Krull, the Canon for Finance and Administration; and Lynnette Winfrey, the Administrative Assistant. For more information, please refer to the Diocesan website at <http://www.episcopalak.org/>

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. MATTHEW'S

Fairbanks in 1903 was a boisterous, active frontier miner's community responding to the discovery of gold in the surrounding valleys. Episcopal services were first held by a visiting minister from Circle in the Fairbanks Saloon, the first public building. Within a year Bishop Peter Trimble Rowe and Archdeacon Hudson Stuck established a mission in Fairbanks with a small chapel and a hospital to serve miners. The first service at the mission was held October 16, 1904.

A log building for St. Matthew's was built





on the banks of the Chena River in 1906, followed in 1909 by the establishment of a reading room (the predecessor of the public library). A small rectory was built in 1911 and was later used as the parish hall. The first rector of the parish was the Rev. Charles Betticher. The hospital closed in 1915 with the establishment of St. Joseph's Hospital (which was later replaced by Fairbanks Memorial Hospital). As gold rush activity declined over the next fifteen years, the church quietly expanded its role of support to those who decided to settle in Fairbanks and to missions established by the Missionary District of Alaska in outlying mining camps and Alaska Native villages on the Tanana River. Renewed mining activity in the 1930's stimulated slow but steady growth in the parish. A new rectory was constructed in 1931, and expanded in 1938.



World War II brought substantial changes to Fairbanks and St. Matthew's. The completion of the Alaska Highway connecting Fairbanks to the

drawing members from students and staff of the university, Alaska Native families, construction workers, and the growing business community.

outside world, the construction of Ladd Field (now Fort Wainwright), and the growth of the University of Alaska brought new members. In 1945 we became self-supporting with over 100 persons listed on the church rolls. A fire destroyed the original church building in early spring of 1947, prompting construction of the present-day church. The project was supervised by the Rev. Albert Jones, rector from 1943 to 1951. Services were held in the new church Christmas Eve 1948. During the 1940's, new Episcopal missions were established in many of the villages in Interior Alaska. St. Matthew's became a home base for priests and volunteer workers serving these missions. The Missionary District of Alaska moved its office from Nenana to Fairbanks in 1948. Bishop William Gordon established his office adjacent to St. Matthew's parish hall in 1952.

Parish rolls grew to over 200 persons during the 1950's,

Rectors of St. Matthew's during this period were Roy Sommers, Gordon Charlton, Norman Elliott and Dick Lambert.

The 1960's saw membership increase again under the rectorship of the Rev. William Warren. National emphasis on social action was reflected at St. Matthew's in the operation of a residential rehabilitation program for alcoholics, in partnership with other local churches. This service was transferred to the city of Fairbanks in 1968. Fairbanks soon became the center for construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, the world's largest private construction project. The Rev. Donald P. Hart was rector from 1973 to 1983 and guided the parish to 350 active members. He assisted in the expansion of outreach activities to the community and supervised the first stages of renovation and expansion of the parish hall. St. Matthew's

celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1979.

Following the Rev. Fred Smythe as interim rector, the Rev. Roger Williams served as rector from 1984 to 1989. This period saw continued parish growth and physical changes including rectory and parish hall remodeling. Exterior siding was also replaced on the parish hall. Serving in succession as interims from June 1989 through 1990 were the Rev. Lewis Hodgkins, the Rev. Luke Titus, and the Rev. Richard Simmonds.

From 1991 through 2015, we were blessed to have the Rev. Scott Fisher as the Rector of St. Matthew's. His unique style of leading worship brought people in to hear the Word as recognized through Rev. Fisher's storytelling. The cultural diversity of our parishioners reflects Rev. Fisher's ties to the people of the Interior and his ability to minister to all.

