

Social Justice at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church



December 2024

Social Justice at St Matthew's

Here at St Matthew's we take seriously St. Teresa of Avila's statement that Christ has no hands and feet on earth but ours. As the Body of Christ, we do not just come together to worship and develop our own spiritual lives, but we come together to be fed in the Eucharist in order to go out into the world and serve those in need as we seek to live out the gospel in the time and place in which God has set us.

The Way of Jesus calls us to share our many blessings in generous hospitality with all our neighbors regardless of race, class, economic status, gender, sexuality and physical ability, by partnering with local and global nonprofits that provide food, affordable housing, education or reconciliation of racial or political differences. Our hopes are to expand participation in our ministries throughout our congregation, enabling more of our members to feel the power of God's love moving through their community's heads, hearts, and hands as we affirm all our neighbors, no exceptions.

As part of our commitment to Simplicity, one of the hallmarks of Way of Jesus here at St Matthew's, we consider it important to focus on these key areas where we can make a difference, rather than dispersing our gifts too broadly—discernment is deciding what not to do as much as it is deciding what to do!

We encourage you to consider prayerfully which areas of outreach you might be called to join in with, by giving your time, financial resources and your prayer. Here we detail our core areas of activity, the ways in which you can get involved and when, as well as the opportunities available for the younger members of our community. And please feel free to join us whether or not you also come to our services!

The Rev. Christopher Rogers
Rector, St. Matthew's



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Blue House Uganda

Blue House Uganda (blue-house.org), sponsored by Hope Multipurpose, Inc. (HMI), is a small orphanage in rural Kazo, Uganda. The orphans and vulnerable children, live in a safe family-like home with nutritious food, clothing, health care, mentoring, and support for education continuing through the vocational or university level. The organization was founded by the late Beatrice Garubanda (pictured), a Ugandan-American member of St. Matthew's, in 2003. St. Matthew's members Cindy Howard and Karen Dickson serve on its board.



The Blue House Boutique is one of the fundraisers for the Blue House. St. Matthew's has helped sponsor the boutique with direct and in-kind funding since it was founded. The boutique is held every year on the first weekend in December and uses the fellowship hall, library, two classrooms, and kitchen.

All items we sell are handmade and donated, so there is ample opportunity to get involved. Before the sale, you can create items (household goods, clothing, gardening, jewelry, etc.) and make/bake food items. We have ideas for the items that sell well!

We always need help on the days before the sale, setting up tables and displays, and pricing all the donated items. During the sale we need cashiers, help in the kitchen, greeters, customer helpers, and shoppers! After the sale, we need help with the clean-up. Children, their parents, and teens are always welcome and we can suggest the roles that would be most appropriate and fun for them.



Please get in touch with Linda López for questions or to volunteer at LindaBLopez@gmail.com.



Braver Angels

A national citizens' organization co-founded by Dr. Bill Dougherty at University of Minnesota, Braver Angels addresses the problem of toxic polarization by developing effective methods at the grassroots level that overcome stereotypes, building mutual understanding and strengthening democratic life. Braver Angels at St. Matthews has taken national leadership by adding a focus on Christian reconciliation and love of neighbors, nonviolent philosophy, and skills like story-telling and relational meetings. This year the group is adding a rural-urban conversation. We generally meets once a month and there is a strong emphasis on intergenerational connections and involving young adults.

For more information please contact the Braver Angels team at stmattsbraverangels@gmail.com

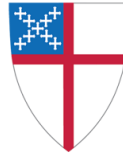


Braver Angels



Casa Maria

St. Nicholas Episcopal Church in Richfield, MN meets the needs of immigrants from Mexico, South and Central America as well as others in need in the surrounding communities. Through Casa Maria (www.saint-nicks.org/casamaria), they provide healthy food, shared meals, health clinics, advocacy for immigrants' rights, networking for employment and social services, and mentoring to over 350 families each month.



ST. NICHOLAS
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
RICHFIELD, MN

St. Matthew's has been involved in this ministry since 2022 contributing food, donated clothing in good condition, and household items. Especially needed items include bags of pinto beans, white rice, cooking oil, disposable diapers (any size), personal care items, and laundry detergent. Items are needed throughout the year.

Casa Maria can also use gift cards from Target, Cub, Aldi, or a gas station, or financial donations. Money is used to help pay for rent, medical care, and bus passes. Make checks out to St. Nicholas Episcopal Church with Casa Maria in the memo line, and send them to Rev. Julie Luna, St. Nicholas Episcopal Church, 7227 Penn Ave S, Richfield, MN 55423.

This ministry is something the whole family can be involved in. Have your children help you shop for the items listed above and talk about why you are doing this and the people who will be receiving it. Have your children go through their toys, books, clothing, or items that they would want to donate. Have them bag donated items and write St. Nicholas on the bag. Have them help you carry the donated items into church. This is a wonderful opportunity to put our faith into action.

Please bring donated items to St. Matthew's and leave them on the bench by the office downstairs. Please write St. Nicholas on the bag. Elaine Eyre will pick the donations up and deliver them to St. Nicholas. If you have any questions, contact Elaine at 651-341-0304 or eelaineeyre@gmail.com.



CCEC (Community Conversations Ecumenical Consortium)

Led by parishioners at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, this small interdenominational planning committee meets every month or two to organize community events on topics related to racism in the St. Paul community. Some events are film screenings, while others are presentations; all events include some discussion. All members of the community are invited to the events, and young people are especially welcome to attend. Current plans include events on Native American issues related to race in Minnesota. You can get involved by joining the planning team or simply attending the events.

Congregational contact: Elaine Tarone eetarone@gmail.com



HAMLIN CHURCH
UNITED METHODIST



St. Matthew's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Cooks' Night Out

Cooks' Night Out originated during the construction of the Green Light Rail along University Ave. in 2011 where numerous immigrant-owned restaurants faced challenges due to disruptions in traffic, parking and access. The struggling businesses inspired us to take a monthly break from our kitchens and support these establishments. Over the years, we have explored various eateries along University Ave. and St. Matt. neighborhood.



We meet every 3rd Thursday of the month and announce the event in the Tidings. This is a social activity where you give and at the same time receive and learn the various ethnic foods of our community. To learn more please contact Rosa Uy at rosauy@aol.com.



Faithful Hospitality



Faithful Hospitality

Faithful Hospitality (interfaithaction.org/what-we-do/projecthome/faithful-hospitality) provides 24/7 shelter and wraparound support for homeless asylum-seeking families in St. Paul while they wait for processing. Families get services in a day center at Central Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, and travel to monthly overnight shelter in churches and synagogues. St. Matthew's hosted families during July 2024, and St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church hosted them during August, September, November, and December 2024 with many St. Matthew's volunteers. Get involved as individuals:

- Sign up to be an overnight volunteer. When St. Matthew's is hosting, some slots require you to be a keyholder with Safe Church training. Other churches that participate have different requirements. There are usually slots available for people outside of the hosting church. Check stmatthewsmn.org/faithful-hospitality for the most current signups.
- On the first of each month, families move from one congregation to another to stay overnight; volunteers are often needed between 8:00 am and noon to help move foldable cots and supplies. Contact Annessa Ihde at aihde@interfaithaction.org.
- Provide one to one tutoring at the Day Center. Contact Annessa Ihde at aihde@interfaithaction.org.

Congregational contact:
Elaine Tarone
eetarone@gmail.com





Feed My Starving Children

A couple of times a year, our children and youth have the enriching opportunity to volunteer at Feed My Starving Children, a testament to our community's commitment to service and compassion. This experience not only helps in providing much-needed meals to children across the globe but also instills a sense of responsibility and empathy in our young volunteers. It's more than just a day spent packing food; it's a lesson in gratitude and the impact of collective action towards a greater good.

Children as young as five years old can help which allows the entire family to join in this volunteering opportunity. Stay tuned for upcoming dates on our website and join us in this heartfelt initiative as we endeavor to nurture caring, global citizens within our church community. Please contact MiaLisa Millares at kids@stmatthewsmn.org for further details.





Habitat for Humanity

Handy people of St. Matthew's have an opportunity to give back to our community by volunteering to supply the labor for Habitat for Humanity Rehabilitation projects. We work in a crew of eight on houses every few months. There is no building skill requirement as they promise to get us trained up and competent and provide all tools required.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Tom Eyre at tweyresr@gmail.com.





Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul

Interfaith Action (interfaithaction.org) mobilizes hundreds of volunteers from faith and spiritual communities across St Paul and its suburbs, through three projects that help address the causes and consequences of poverty in our community.

- The Department of Indian Work (interfaithaction.org/diw) supplies free food and clothing to empower American Indians towards self-determination, while respecting cultural and spiritual diversity.
- Opportunity St. Paul (interfaithaction.org/opportunity) directs volunteers to city-wide tutoring and job coaching needs. Specific initiatives under the OSP umbrella include:
 - Power Up (interfaithaction.org/powerup) provides free legal assistance.
 - School Tools (interfaithaction.org/school-tools) offers free backpacks and school supplies to K-12 students in need, including those in Project Home and partner agencies.
- Project Home (interfaithaction.org/projecthome) provides shelter and meals for families with children. It has two branches, the Provincial House which provides temporary housing for families experiencing homelessness, and Faithful Hospitality providing a mobile shelter for asylum-seeking families.

St. Matthew's has sent volunteers to almost all these projects, but our primary engagement is with Project Home, Faithful Hospitality, and School Tools (see the individual descriptions and congregational contacts in this handbook).

Congregational contact: Elaine Tarone eetarone@gmail.com

Keystone Food Shelf

With food insecurity a growing problem for many of our neighbors, the Minnesota Foodshare March Campaign (begun by churches in 1982) has become the largest grassroots food and fund drive in Minnesota.

Each Sunday during March, we collect non-perishable donations which will be delivered to the Keystone Community Services Food Shelf on University Avenue. There they are directly available for clients each weekday or put on a food truck which travels to other area locations. Monetary donations are also encouraged.

Please contact Gwen Odney at gnodney@icloud.com for further information.



Loaves and Fishes

In partnership with the Loaves and Fishes organization (loavesandfishesmn.org), we cook and serve people in need of a hot meal.

Four times a year, we purchase, prepare, serve, and clean up a full dinner for about 350 people. The members of the Loaves and Fishes Leadership Team take turns coordinating the meals. Cheryl Olman currently serves as the point of contact for the team.

Meals take place at the Dorothy Day Center, Catholic Charities' main shelter for homeless adults in St Paul; shopping takes place at Restaurant Depot; the congregation also bakes 50–60 dozen cookies for dessert. Adults can volunteer for a two-hour shift shopping (2 needed), prepping (10 needed), and/or serving (10 needed).

At the Dorothy Day Center, all participants must be at least 14 years old; anyone under the age of 18 must be supervised by an accompanying adult. Youth under the age of 14 can participate by baking cookies or helping with shopping at Restaurant Depot.

For more information about participating in Loaves and Fishes, please contact the head coordinator Cheryl Olman at cheryl.olman@gmail.com.





Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing

MICAHA (www.micah.org) envisions a metropolitan area where everyone, without exception, has a safe, decent, accessible, and affordable home. MICAHA has five chapters in various parts of the Twin Cities. All the chapters work to improve local, state, and national housing issues and policies affecting the lives of neighbors who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness. MICAHA's board includes currently and recently homeless individuals. The organization collaborates with national groups like Homes for All and the Poor Peoples' Campaign, which meets at SAP Lutheran. Individuals can get involved by:

Monthly Zoom Meetings: Attend monthly Zoom meetings of a chapter to learn about local issues. The St. Paul chapter meets the third Thursday of each month from 5:00 to 6:30 pm on Zoom, for mutual support, learning, to interview guests.

Annual Legislative Breakfast: Organize and attend annual Zoom meeting with city, county and state elected officials to pursue an annual agenda to improve affordable housing and shelter in St Paul.



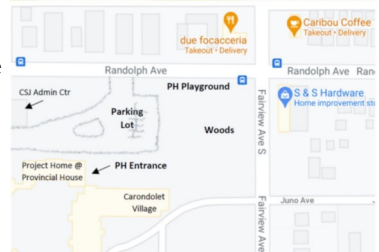
Summer barbecues: Help with monthly summer barbecues attended by homeless and verge-of-homeless individuals, as well as elected officials in the Twin Cities.

Congregational contact:
Elaine Tarone
eetarone@gmail.com



Project Home at Provincial House

Project Home (interfaithaction.org/projecthome/provincial-house) supports homeless families with children by providing 24/7 shelter, meals, and developmentally appropriate activities and helping them rapidly find and move into more permanent, safe, affordable housing. Location: Provincial House, 1880 Randolph Avenue, St Paul. Here are some ways to get involved:



- Help serve lunch and dinner at Provincial House in teams of 2–4 any Saturday or Sunday year-round; supervised older children and youth welcome. St. Matthew’s signs up in the middle of each month, or you can also serve on your own; contact Elaine Tarone for details.
- Provide supplies for families working with the Rapid Rehousing Team to move into more permanent housing. You can donate gently used housewares (e.g. plates, pots and pans, utensils, towels, shower curtains, sheets, and blankets) by leaving them at St. Matthew’s labelled “Project Home,” or you can order new items on the wish list at www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/19A5QY9QR0KDI/ref=hz_ls_biz_ex.
- Participate in the Winter Gear Adopt-a-Family Drive to ensure that all the children and caregivers in one family have warm outerwear and boots for the winter. Sign up and get details at tinyurl.com/WinterGearSignUp.
- During December, donate gifts for children and volunteer at the Holiday Dignity Shop. Learn more and sign up at tinyurl.com/DignityShop2024.



Congregational contact:
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School Tools

Interfaith Action's School Tools drive (interfaithaction.org/school-tools) takes place each summer. From July 1 to August 19, we collect badly needed new backpacks and school supplies to support families with school-age children engaged in a range of programs, including Project Reach (St. Paul Schools), Hallie Q Brown Community Center, Project Home, Faithful Hospitality, American Indian Magnet School. Items needed include backpacks, binders, paper, notebooks, pencils, pens, markers, hand sanitizer, and reusable masks. Each year a volunteer at St Matthew's collects the donations and delivers them to a designated site.



Congregational contact: Courtney Billing
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St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

A Neighborhood Church with a Worldwide Community

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