

St. Mark's United Methodist Church

601 Eighth Street | Laurel, Maryland 20707

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"We come together at St. Mark's to praise God, celebrate His love for us, and grow together in Christ by equipping the people of God to implement and spread His Word to the world."

Rev. Eugene W. Matthews, Pastor

443.257.2730 | reveugene@comcast.net

Rev. Dr. George F. DeFord, Pastor Emeritus

Bishop LaTrelle Millet Easterling

Baltimore/Washington Conference

Rev. Sarah Schlieckert

District Superintendent

for the Southern Annapolis Region

Welcome, as we gather here to worship!

Sunday, December 31, 2023

“First Sunday After Christmas”

Ushers:

*Eli Coffen, Jeremiah Laguerre,
Chandler and Christian Tindal*

Order of Service

Thomas Matthews, Worship Leaders

This is a service of African American congregations that began as people anticipated “watching out” the last year of slavery. The service of watching and waiting continues. Watch night (day) worship is a time for reflections, testimonies, and songs of God’s grace. It is the period when we voice our determination for the gift of a year to come. Usually an intergenerational service, both youth and seasoned saints can play an important part. History meets the future, tradition faces hopes. The God of the years is constant. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

10:00 – 10:30 AM — *Hymn, Prayers & Testimony Time*

PreludeRev. Henry Tindal

Lighting of the Candles Usher

Gathering Song.....St. Mark’s Choir/Congregation

“Sweet, Sweet Spirit”

There’s a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place, and I know that it’s the spirit of the Lord; There are sweet expressions on each face, and I know they feel the presence of the Lord. Sweet holy Spirit, sweet heavenly Dove, stay right here with us filling us with your love; and for these blessings we lift our hearts in praise; without a doubt we’ll know that we have been revived when we shall leave this place.

Greeting/Call to Worship Brother Thomas Matthews

This is The Day That The Lord Has Made

Leader: Why do we gather on this (day) night?

People: **We gather to remember our enslaved past.**

Leader: Why do we gather this (day) night?

People: **We gather to celebrate God’s keeping powers.**

Leader: Why do we gather this (day) night?

People: **We gather to recall God’s mercies in the midst of oppression.**

Leader; Why do we gather this (day) night?
People: We gather to celebrate our God who journeys with us, year by year.
All: Thanks be unto the ever faithful and true God.

Hymn of Praise.....St. Mark's Choir / Congregation

"Thank You, Thank You Jesus"

Prayer of Remembrance and Assurance (*Unison*)

We gather this day to remember our past, O Lord, and to celebrate God's keeping powers.

How grateful we are to recall God's mercies in the midst of all the uncertainties of this past year. We gather, also to celebrate the God who has journeyed with us, for these 365 days and has not left us. Thank you for your goodness, your love, and your mercy that has kept us as a people and especially as a congregation. Through your presence we know our sins of the past have been swept away and we now stand on the threshold of a new and un-trying year. HOLY are you! Holy are You! THANKS BE TO GOD FOR YOUR GREAT PRESENCE WITH US!!

The Lord's Prayer (*sung*)

The Invocation..... Brother Thomas Matthews

Song of Meditation St. Mark's Choir

The Prayer of Illumination (*In Unison*)

Thank you God, for allowing us once again the opportunity for hearing your word read amongst us. Fill us with gratitude, with open ears, open minds, and open spirits to hear you speak to us once again this year. In Jesus name. **Amen.**

Scripture Reading #1 Brother Thomas Matthews
(*Isaiah 61:10–62:3, Common English Bible*)

¹⁰ I surely rejoice in the Lord; my heart is joyful because of my God, because he has clothed me with clothes of victory, wrapped me in a robe of righteousness like a bridegroom in a priestly crown, and like a bride adorned in jewelry. ¹¹ As the earth puts out its growth, and as a garden grows its seeds, so the Lord God will grow righteousness and praise before all the nations.

62 For Zion's sake I won't keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I won't sit still until her righteousness shines out like a light, and her salvation blazes like a torch. ² Nations will see your righteousness,

all kings your glory. You will be called by a new name, which the Lord's own mouth will determine. ³ You will be a splendid garland in the Lord's hand, a royal turban in the palm of God's hand.

Scripture Reading #2 Brother Thomas Matthews
(*Romans 16:25–27, Common English Bible*)

²⁵ May the glory be to God who can strengthen you with my good news and the message that I preach about Jesus Christ. He can strengthen you with the announcement of the secret^[a] that was kept quiet for a long time. ²⁶ Now that secret is revealed through what the prophets wrote. It is made known to the Gentiles^[b] in order to lead to their faithful obedience based on the command

of the eternal God. ²⁷ May the glory be to God, who alone is wise! May the glory be to him through Jesus Christ forever! Amen.

Selection St. Mark's Choir

Acknowledgement of Visitors /

Announcements Brother Thomas Matthews

Blessing of the Offering Brother Thomas Matthews

Offertory Invitation: (*The Giving of Ourselves*)

Leader: Through the year God Has been faithful. Our generous response through our sharing is how we say "Thanks!!".

People: **Beneficent and Gracious Savior, we cannot pay for one second of the year you have brought us through. Yet, we offer these tokens in humble appreciation that as others watch and wait in the coming years, these doors will be open to receive their grateful hearts. In the name of Love we pray Amen.**

Offertory (*Unison*)

All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee. **Amen.**

Scripture Reading #3 (Gospel)..... Brother Thomas Matthews

(Luke 1:26–38, Common English Version, please stand)

²⁶ When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" ²⁹ She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. ³¹ Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. ³³ He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?"

³⁵ The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God's Son.

³⁶ Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled 'unable to conceive' is now six months pregnant. ³⁷ Nothing is impossible for God."

³⁸ Then Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be with me just as you have said." Then the angel left her.

The Gloria Patri – "Glory Be to the Father" (Hymnal, #71)

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. **Amen.**

Hymn of Preparation St. Mark's Choir

Inspirational Message Rev. Eugene W. Matthews

“A Surprise Message”

*“⁹ But this is precisely what is written: God has prepared things for those who love him that no eye has seen, or ear has heard, or that haven’t crossed the mind of any human being
(1 Corinthians 2:9, CEB)*

Watch Night Litany

Leader: O God, as was a customary of our parents and ancestors , we come to this Watch Night vigil to be with you , in your house , as we usher out the old year and welcome the dawning of a new year.

People: **We come , thanking you for your guidance and direction , Go before us, O God, and draw us into the future where you are.**

Leader: Our slave ancestors watched that night long ago for the signing of the Emancipation proclamation . lord , keep us awake and alert as we follow in the light of your word , searching for the good news of the gospel , and the comforting signs of your love in this world.

People: **We thank you for watching over us and caring for us through the old year , as we walked in the light of your love. We thank you for your promises of peace , healing and justice.**

Leader: We give you praise , O God, for your goodness and mercy; for life health and friends, and for the many blessings you always send. Above all, we thank you for Jesus Christ, who lifts our hopes, guides us in the way, in this new year, and in the years to come.

All: **All praise, honor, glory, and thanks to you, our God, through Jesus Christ and risen Savior and Lord.**

Invitation / Altar Call Rev. Eugene W. Matthews

Call to Prayer for the New Year : This year is almost over. Our elders taught us to bow on our knees before the Almighty. Kneeling conveys our humble attitude before God. Kneeling is a symbol of our grateful hearts before the throne of Grace. Let us now prepare to kneel in prayer as we watch for the New Year. Let us praise God together on our knees.

Benediction (*Pastor shall lead*)

Leader: The old year has passed and the New Year has arrived.

People: **We have a new beginning.**

Leader: The Lord of fresh starts has given us a brand new slate.

People: **We leave to write a new history with our Amazing God.**

Leader: Go in the peace and power of the God who holds yesterday, today and every tomorrow. Remember, you are blessed signs of God’s renewing promises as you go your way rejoicing!

ALL: **AMEN! AMEN! AMEN!**

Announcements

Wearing a mask while in the sanctuary is at your discretion.

Worship Attendance — 12/24/2023	
In-Person	45
YouTube	12
Total	57

Pray Daily at Noon

Please remember to pray daily at NOON. Some areas to include in your prayer can include the pandemic, racial healing, government leaders, educational challenges, our youth and most importantly for our sick and shut-ins and each other.



Much thanks and appreciation to the St. Mark's family for the gifts, cards and special love extended to our family during the Christmas holidays.

*Pastor Matthews, and family.
Be Blessed!*

Tuesday Women's Roundtable (6:30 p.m.) — Join Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84500345294?pwd=TUR4ZGpySU5ub0E1blhUQVNnQW9YQT09>, Meeting ID: 885 7118 4455; Passcode: 459563

Wednesday Night Experience (7:15 p.m.) — This is our weekly Bible Study, based on the Wednesday reading in Upper Room. Call in #267.807.9611; Access Code: 331960.

Thursday, January 4th (6:30 p.m.) — Choir rehearsal

Attention Women: Roundtable Recharge Retreat, April 25th–April 27th at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum. For additional information, please **Nena Hughes**. \$100 deposit will hold your reservation.

Note from Finance: First, thank you to all that have been giving. This is a reminder that there are several ways to get your offering to the church:

1. You can drop it off at the church and place it in church mailbox
2. You can mail it to the church (601 Eighth Street, Laurel, MD 20707)
3. You can use on-line giving (Give–St. Marks — <https://www.shelbygiving.com/app/giving/stmarkslmd>)



***“Proclaiming Christ to the generations...
Equipping disciples to transform the world”***

Special Prayers / Sick and Shut-In List: If you hear of anyone that needs special prayer or is taken to the hospital, please contact: Rev. Eugene Matthews (443.257.2730), reveugene@comcast.net.

Judith James, Isabella Dustin, Joseph Ballard, Robert (Bobby) Marshall, Oscar Johnson, Harold (Bubby) Awkward, Jr., Tyrone Awkward, William (Jimmy) Scott, Charles Gregg, Rev. Henry Tindal, Rev. George F. DeFord, Janet Carey, Lafayette and Elaine Harvey, All branches of the Military, Bernice Jackson, Brenda Jackson, Shawn Settles, Floyd Hughes Sr., Jannette Shuford-Reeves, Phillip Reese, Naomi Williams (Ms. Cynthia's Mom), Leah Henry, Sonja Smith, Marvin Hebron, Eric Smith, Gloria Thomas, Wanda Dumas, Tyrone Mundell, Ernestine Gibson, James Matthews, Birdie Walker, Paul Browder, Lamar Payne, Kevin Miller, Hannah Polk

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