

St. Matthew the Apostle Mission Team Reports for 2023

Altar Servers

Serving in God's holy house is a privilege, and the mission of the altar servers is to serve in a spirit of reverence and worship. St. John Chrysostom said that servers must minister with honor and dignity. The servers represent the Angels who are the heavenly servants of God as they serve where the bread and wine become the precious body and blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As such, we serve with fear, reverence, and with a glad heart of serving Father and assisting him in everything he needs during services.

With that goal in mind, the servers met over the summer and retrained on our steps, our movements, the services, with the hope of training new servers better, and giving the seasoned servers more consistency. Since then, we have had two new servers join us, Marcus and Evan. The seasoned servers are helping in special services, Saturday vespers, and reading.

We hope to have 2-3 new servers in 2024, and invite those interested to talk with Father and consider joining us. With a steady group of 8 or 9 servers, we will alternate more often, and serve the Parish better.

Respectfully Submitted,
Maurice Velasquez

Bookstore Report

The bookstore is up and running and doing well. We've been able to get more product in, receive digital payments through the iPad and create excitement in the parish to purchase from the bookstore knowing that the proceeds are going to the building fund. This next year's focus will be to continue to provide items to help build home prayer corners, find better items for the kids in the parish, as well as to clear our shelves of stock that's been with us for far too long. We also look to create more creative opportunities to raise money for the building fund. That may include selling handmade items, painting etc.

Respectfully Submitted,
John McFarland

Choir Report

St Matthew's Choir continues to be blessed with dedicated and talented singers who have been faithful over this past year. Thankfully the liturgical schedule continues to be full and robust for a mission of our size and midweek Feasts continue to be frequently celebrated with the direction of choir assistant John McFarland. The choir also continues to hold a brief but consistent rehearsal on Sunday mornings which especially assists with preparation for Lent, Feasts, and special events. We also added approximately five Resurrectional Matins during the last year. In the coming year we will continue to build music resources for services with 1) a focus on 2-part settings to accommodate a small group and 2) completion of the Menaion. Also, we will continue to solidify the skill of singing the hymns from pointed text especially for

new members. We will hopefully continue to add singers and educate those who are interested in learning more about our liturgical music tradition.

Respectfully Submitted,
Maushka Heather

Church School

This year, the church school team has worked through difficult challenges and restraints. Our biggest achievement, I believe, has been to keep the elementary and pre-school meetings weekly and consistent. Alina and Ericha have been incredible in planning and teaching weekly and deserve the recognition for their efforts and dedication. (That isn't to say that the rest of the team hasn't been wonderful as well. I just wanted to single them out for their desire to go above and beyond.) With the help of the whole church, we have a growing program that is doing exceptionally well for the restrictions that we have in our extremely limited space and time.

Since I think about the church school program as a school year rather than calendar, it's a little difficult to pinpoint exactly what I want to strive for in the coming year. A rather vague goal is to add to and develop the older students church school ministry. Of course (as with all of the teams I am sure), the one thing that would allow great growth to the program would be a dedicated classroom space that can be set up and allow for more than 10-15 minutes of instruction once a week. I would like to make the request that the building we seek out in the coming year have dedicated classroom space that can be utilized by our pre-school, elementary, and high school church school programs.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gabrielle Neyland

Coffee Hour

The coffee hour is an important opportunity for members and visitors to St. Matthew to connect with one another and build our community. It's what Father has often referred to as "the second table." We are very thankful for serving in this ministry and hopefully be a blessing to everyone in these areas:

1. **Provide a welcoming atmosphere:** The coffee hour should be a place where all feel welcome.
2. **Encourage conversation and connection:** provide a relaxed setting to connect with one another
3. **Offer delicious meals:** Provide food to show hospitality.
4. **Sense of community:** Where everyone feels a sense of belonging with one another and where we can extend our greetings and fellowship to guests and visitors.

Our ministry is made up of four groups with 4-5 families in each group, who provide the meal one week out of the month on a rotating cycle. Each group manages itself and coordinates the food for that week between them.

Accomplishments in 2022 - we restructured our teams to have team leads for each team to provide more direction to the teams. We served approximately 2,050 meals for the whole year

for parishioners and visitors on Sunday liturgies, Presanctified liturgies, and the deanery retreat this year. We also shifted how we serve the meals by creating a single line and “serving station”. That has improved the flow and speed of things greatly!

Challenges and opportunities - One of our bigger challenges is keeping the cost down while serving more parishioners.

Goals for 2024 - For the coming year, we will streamline the coffee hour team to having simple, cost effective meals with a planned menu bank to choose a meal. We will have a donation box for those that do not want to cook to give money to the teams to use to make/supply the food. We will continue to have the Presanctified meals during Great Lent with the hopes of this liturgy and meal time being well attended. We will be re-organizing the teams within the early part (February) of the year.

As always, we have enjoyed all of the delicious dishes that are served every week.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leah Velasquez

Men's Group

The men of St. Matthew's have enjoyed a monthly breakfast fellowship this year that has led to great conversation and an even more tight knit group. We were honored to visit the homes of a few guys in the parish as well for a fantastic meal. We men like to eat. This next year I'd like to focus a bit more on our spiritual life together. That could look like reading a book together to discuss at our monthly breakfast or even committing to a monthly early morning liturgy as the Church begins to offer them. Lastly we were able to offer help to a few members of the parish with cleaning their homes as well as moving and we've helped clean up the land for the Church. It's been a great year.

Respectfully Submitted,
John McFarland

Phosphora Bakers

We have a dedicated group of bakers that have stepped up to our increasing number of Liturgies. St. Matthew's is very fortunate to have these devout women in the parish. It is my honor and privilege to coordinate this wonderful ministry.

We are always open to new bakers. If you are interested or just have questions, please talk with me or anyone on the team.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ellen Grout

Readers

The readers are responsible for chanting at the liturgical services throughout the year. Though our numbers have fluctuated over the last few years, we have a dedicated team of six readers who make themselves available for weekend and weekday services. One goal for this year is to add 2-3 additional readers into the rotation as this helps to lighten the burden throughout the year but especially during those liturgically busy times such as Holy Week. If you are interested in chanting for our services, please see Fr. Joshua.

Respectfully Submitted,
Fr. Joshua

Sunshine Team

We were grateful to begin 2023 by supporting three families as they welcomed their newborns. We also collaborated with the Women's Fellowship in a cooking event to stock the freezer. As the year progressed, we struggled to fill Meal Train sign-ups but were able to rely on our freezer inventory and donations. For 2024, we hope to add 4-5 people to our team who are committed to helping fulfill the Meal Trains. We have also decided to expand our outreach to include visitation sign-ups in the new year. Please talk with me if you are interested in participating.

Respectfully Submitted,
Caroline Velasquez

Temple Beautification

The beautification team has enjoyed a more organized year thanks to Father's calendar and the wisdom of experience. We are thankful for the way our parish shows appreciation for beauty and supports our efforts with kind comments and occasional forced labor. In 2024 we hope to expand the team and harness more talent from our community.

Thank you all!

Respectfully Submitted,
Julie Dreher

Welcome Team

At the beginning of 2023, we formed the "welcome team," in response to receiving many visitors. I asked Frank and Clarissa to join, and they agreed. Maurice was very helpful in getting us started.

We began right away by having official "greeters" who open the entrance doors and offer warm welcomes. Notably, Clarissa has been very consistent in doing this, and we've received multiple compliments. We've had over a dozen new visitors this past year!

We've assisted these newcomers by showing them around our (not-so-orthodox) Orthodox building, answering questions, and introducing them to the priest. Additionally, we have gathered their information on welcome cards and have added it to a database, which also includes information on visitor frequency and follows their "journey". (This journey includes everything from the first visit, to returning and talking with the priest, to becoming a "regular," and to becoming an official member of the parish—and other important in-betweens).

We have also collaborated in establishing the official St. Matthew's Directory, and we continue to make edits and add information as needed. Frank is in charge of keeping the stored information up-to-date, but I also make edits. Frank has been key in assisting with newcomers and in storing important information.

A few months ago, the welcome team had a very productive meeting where we discussed goals, ideas, and expectations. I presented this to the mission council, and we are still in the works of making improvements.

One idea approved at a mission council meeting was the project of putting together a welcome packet. Completing that would be a big goal for 2024. I also want to improve newcomer engagement. I want to "smooth out the wrinkles," as it can still be challenging to keep track of each newcomer. Another goal for next year is to expand our team by one more member.

I know it is not up to the welcome team, or our job, to keep visitors coming back, but it is challenging getting to know so many new faces, only for them to never return (or not come back after a few months). That has been hard. Every month, the team updates our visitor spreadsheet. If someone hasn't been in a while, one of us "checks in" through text. We haven't gotten many responses.

Overall, in the second half of the year, my presence greatly decreased as my family traveled and became sick on multiple occasions. Because of these things, the welcome team has remained pretty stagnant (on our new ideas). Thank you Frank, Maurice, and Clarissa! You have been AWESOME. Father Joshua and the mission council have been very helpful and supportive, as well. I am excited to build some momentum and work towards meeting our goals for 2024!

Respectfully Submitted,
Madison Loper

Women's Group

The ladies did well this year with keeping up with consistent gatherings. We had a variety of generous ladies in our parish help with hosting and planning our gatherings, and I am so grateful for the work our ladies put into both hosting and attending!

We've been blessed with many babies in recent years, which affects our many mamas in the parish, so I will continue to work to have our gatherings include busy mamas and ladies with other constraints.

I want to especially thank Beth Fussell for her support as co-captain of the women while I took a maternity break!

I'm hoping for 2024's focus to be more on experiences and less on hosting to relieve the pressure on some of our ladies who work or have kids. In light of that, I'll be planning our gatherings at different restaurants and parks with the goal of having about 10 gatherings for the year.

Respectfully Submitted,
Eleanor Ward