

From the Rector

Dear Friends,

On numerous occasions recently I have had people comment on what a remarkable church Saint Matthew's is. I agree wholeheartedly.

But I am also careful to say that I see that "remarkableness" firmly rooted in our church family, not in me. I, like the people making the comment, simply count it my great privilege to be associated with this community as priest, pastor, and friend.

I was at a meeting last night, for instance, that started with "kudos" for jobs well done. I'm not sure how it started exactly, but after we acknowledged something someone had done, we all began clapping. And once we started looking for kudos, we found the list of things to celebrate surprisingly long, clapping together again and again and again.

But perhaps the best part of it all was that not one of those kudos went to me. What a thrill it was for me to see the way that others had embraced God's call upon their life to serve here in this time and place, and to see how quick God has been to bless their offering of life and time and energy.

Or I think of the Vestry. I think of how marvelously they have stewarded Saint Matthew's finances, and how that has made an abundance of ministry possible. I think of how it has enabled us to give increasing amounts of money away, directly to those who need it, without any thought or concern of whether or not there is any benefit to ourselves.

I think of all the energy that just flows from this place, of how Sunday mornings somehow keep continuing to swell as people are attracted to what God is doing in our midst, of how we have now sent over 50 people (!!!) on mission trips this year (two years ago that number was 0).

I think of . . . well, I trust you get the point. What a year 2005 has been, so very full of God's good blessing. Thank you for opening your hearts as faithful followers of Christ to the working of God's Holy Spirit. May we continue to do so in 2006, pushing ever forward towards accomplishing our mission of knowing and sharing God's love!

Deeply blessed,
Rob†

From the Youth Minister

As you may know I went down to Mississippi this past Thanksgiving with 9 youth and 11 adults to help out with the relief effort there. The first night we arrived at about 9:30 with only 30 minutes to get settled and find a place to sleep before lights out. So we all scrambled around trying to find an open cot while nodding to those we saw already set for bed. There just wasn't much time to meet the people there.

Wednesday morning we headed out to work sites with a crew of about 20 (mostly college students from Lock Haven University in Pennsylvania) to retrieve any valuables we could find beneath the rubble of one woman's home. While this was very sad work, we all very quickly got to know one another. We passed the time exchanging stories of our lives and just enjoying the shared company.

Later that day some of the youth from our group came out and helped

sift through and move even more boards and personal belongings. I can't tell you how amazing it was to see high school students getting along immediately with the other adults around us.

I saw Michael Vereb and Matt Tracy especially good at mixing together. Matt and Dave (from Lock Haven) hit it off immediately and were working together lifting and moving large portions of roof out of the way. At the same time Michael really hit it off with Abby and Amber. They were swapping stories and helping each other move things around. Returning to the work camp brought an even more incredible sight.

The high schoolers and college students all mingled as one group immediately. During dinner it was hard to find a group of youth that didn't have a couple of college kids with them, and vice-versa. It was so moving to see everyone joining together as one group so quickly.

I quickly forgot which adults were from Saint Matthew's and which were from other groups since everyone was together all the time. In the evenings at dinner we were one large group of 170 people. After dinner the spoons came out, and we had two or three tables playing spoons for hours. Nate (who is otherwise very shy) consistently went flying over, around, and under the table until he kept knocking into other tables. When is the last time you relaxed that much in a room of relative strangers?

The other thing which really surprised me was how quickly our youth changed. One example there was with Bethany and Rachel Hansberger. Before this trip I'd probably spoken more to their younger sister, Amanda, than I had to both of them combined. Our first breakfast there something just clicked, and they both opened up. By

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From the Senior Warden

During Thanksgiving, my family and I went to New York City to visit my sister. We had a great time. In addition to visiting with the family, we did some of the New York "stuff" - went to the Broadway musical *Spamalot*, saw the Macy's Thanksgiving parade (at least some of us stood out in the cold and watched it), and took a backstage tour of *Wicked*.

Another New York "thing" we did was going to the Christmas Spectacular at Radio City Music Hall. Believe it or not, and you probably would not simply by its name, but I found this show to be very moving.

Of course, a Radio City Music Hall show would not be complete without the Rockettes, so they had a big role in the first part of the show. In fact, the entire first part of the show was very secular with musical numbers about toys on Christmas morning, shopping in New York, and the Nutcracker. There were ice skaters on stage and a moving orchestra. It all seemed to emphasize the commercial aspects of holidays, not Christmas as the name of the show would suggest.

But then something happened. The show changed from what I am calling part one to part two. The show was only 90 minutes so there was not an intermission, but the show changed. I

was very proud of Radio City Music Hall for the change in the show. Part two was about the birth of Jesus.

In today's "politically correct" society it would have been very easy for Radio City to not even mention Jesus. After all, they might offend a paying customer. But they not only mentioned Jesus, they told the story of Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem because of Caesar's tax decree; not finding room at any hotel and having to stay in, and give birth in, a barn; and the wise men seeing the Messiah's star and traveling to the place of his birth. They used live animals, camels, donkeys, sheep, and more, in the story to add realism. I thought it was very well done. For me it brought the Christmas back into the Christmas Spectacular.

At the very end of the show, as the wise men arrived to worship the baby Jesus, Radio City showed the following on a screen while the narrator read the words.

He was born in an obscure village.

He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty.

He then became an itinerant preacher.

He never held an office.

He never had a family or owned a house.

He didn't go to college.

He never wrote a book.

He had no credentials but himself.

He was only thirty three when the tide of public opinion turned against him.

He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial.

He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

While dying, his executioners gambled for his only earthly property - his coat.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as this one solitary life.

I left there feeling Radio City had truly defined Christmas. They did not take the easy, "I do not want to offend anyone" way out. They said this is Christmas, and this is what it means and why it is so important. This is a lesson we all need to be reminded of from time to time.

Wishing you all the best in your walk with Christ,

- Richard Leach

From the Lay Ministry Coordinator

You can't help others if you don't stay well yourself...so take care of you! Maya Angelou once said that better than surviving is "to thrive with passion, compassion, and style."

This Native American legend also gives us a helpful image. "Everyone is a house with four rooms—a physical, a mental, an emotional, and a spiritual. Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time. But unless we go into every room every day, even if only to keep it aired, we are not a complete person."

What a vivid metaphor for health and wholeness! If we're serious about staying well, we'll find time for the following.

- Do the necessary housecleaning to rid our rooms of clutter. "Never stumble on anything behind you" is the ad-

vice of a quadriplegic friend of mine.

- Know our own needs, and be able to name them. Don't expect others to guess what they are. Your needs aren't more important than other people's, but they're as important.
- One last thing about our personal houses—be sure to not only visit each room every day and houseclean, but slowly and lovingly furnish your rooms with things that nourish and replenish you and give you joy. Ask God to guide you in your choices.

Taken from an article by Marlene Wilson.

- Jodie Leach

Youth Minister *continued from page 4*

the end of the trip we couldn't stop Rachel from talking, and Bethany was telling stories and cracking jokes with the best of them. I can't tell you how awesome it was to see Bethany smile and laugh out loud at something said in the group.

Father Rob and I were walking around the work camp one night talking about the community around us. He mentioned that this is close to what Christ wants the world to look like. He wants a place where strangers welcome you in, tell you their names,

and share their lives. He wants people who selflessly work together to make a difference in the lives of people who may not even know your name. He wants us to live in a community where we can feel completely safe with those around us (I often left my laptop or camera just lying out on a cot through the day).

God was evident in so many places, but the two most important things he showed me were these.

We need friendships with people outside work and family. People we can trust and be open with (I talk more

about this in my blog at tlbignerd.blogspot.com).

God's plan for us is something we can come so much closer to attaining. When we come together as a family under the Father we can achieve some truly great things. You begin to see the world differently, caring for each person whose only purpose is to help you and follow him. I will do everything I can to make people in the world realize and live this.

Peace,
†Tom

Sunday School News

Classes continue every Sunday beginning at 10:20 a.m., when we gather in the parish hall. We break into five exciting age-appropriate classes for students from four-year olds through eighth grade. The focus of the lessons during January will be the life of Jesus.

As a side note, while I have thoroughly enjoyed administering the Sunday School program, I would like to move into the area of community and focus on lay ministry. A recent email from Church Volunteer Central held good advice.

"New commitments mean new demands. If there's going to be an addition to your list, there must be a subtraction. Encourage volunteers to decide what to let go of before taking on a new task."

We are currently searching for a dynamic person who could support the Sunday School teachers by ordering the supplies and keeping the program running smoothly. If you are interested in a new challenge, contact Jodie Leach, 703-421-6310.

The Biggies

We all want to make the most of the new year. Nobody starts a new year planning to just let it slip by, or to just drift through it aimlessly and without purpose, or to spend the new year in destructive and often hurtful behavior. Nobody wants to come to the end of 2006 with sorrow and regret.

But to make the most of the new year, to perform at the highest levels in all areas of our lives, there are certain things we must do. These are "The Biggies." These are what our sermons in this series will address, seeking to provide insight and very practical steps as to how we can make 2006 our best year yet.

Come to the Table

Communion Class: January 14 and 21, from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Saint Matthew's is offering a class for all ages of children through middle school years to learn more about what it means to receive the Eucharist. The focus of the lessons will be centered around a meal and joining together as a community of believers. The classes will be taught by Dr. Debbie Bowers. If your child has questions about the meaning of taking communion, or you would like your child to understand the sacrament of communion, join us on two Saturdays, January 14 and 21, from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. We will be meeting in the parish hall. If you have questions, please contact Jodie Leach at 703-421-6310 or via e-mail at jodieleach2@aol.com.

THE G FORCE - New Middle School Youth Group!

Beginning January 8, Middle School Youth Group, THE G FORCE will meet from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Special activities are planned just for the *Magnificent Middle Schoolers* of Saint Matthew's. If you have any questions, please contact Ann Ritonia at 571-233-5880 or Mar4kids@aol.com. **G FORCE, G FUN!!!!**

WatCH

Join us for Wednesdays at Church, 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., with a light meal from 7:00 - 7:30 p.m. and the study from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. The winter WATCH will run seven weeks from January 11 through February 22.

Elementary School Bible Study

Large group activities will be the focus during this "study" which includes essential Biblical stories through cooking, crafts, songs, drama, and fun projects!

Middle School Bible Study

Led by Ann Ritonia, this study will focus on the parables. Most people love stories, and Jesus used stories to teach people about God's Good News. We will even write our own parables!

High School Bible Study

High Schoolers will work through subjects like prayer in schools, euthanasia, and the separation of church and state. Led by Tom Leary and Melissa Young, there will be discussions on what the Bible has to say and about how that fits into our own lives and those of our friends. Join us for some pretty deep and interesting discussions.

Adult Bible Study

Becoming a Person of Good and Godly Influence

Whether it is as a parent, on your job, at church, or even as a good friend, we all want to be a good influence; a person who helps move things in a positive direction and make the world a better place to be. This seven week course is designed to provide inspiration, motivation, and practical instruction on how to do just that.

Using DVDs from Willow Creek's 2005 Leadership Summit (many of you will remember the Erwin McMannus DVD from our church retreat two years ago) and handouts with session outlines and discussion questions, this course should be a great way to ensure continued spiritual growth and personal development.

Also, an adult Bible study on 1 Thessalonians will be led by Richard Leach.

ANNUAL MEETING

"A vision without a task is but a dream.

A task without a vision is drudgery.

A vision and a task are the hope of the world."

Our 2006 Parish Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 29, beginning at 1:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Senior Center in Cascades, and all parishioners are invited to attend. Main dishes and drinks will be provided, and congregants are asked to bring a side dish or dessert.

The annual parish meeting is an excellent way to learn more about the operations of the church. The topics covered at this meeting will include an update of our strategic plan and an overview of the church's 2006 budget. In addition, a main business function of this meeting is to elect new vestry members. All adult members of Saint Matthew's are entitled to vote for vestry members at this meeting.

I urge each of you to attend this meeting and to bring your questions so they may be addressed.

- **Richard Leach**, Senior Warden

G3 HAPPENINGS

Retreat – On February 12, during our parish retreat, there will be some great fun events for middle and high schoolers. This will be an awesome time to learn something different from the adults and still have good food! Sign up now if you haven't!

Sunday Nights – This January, starting on Sunday the 8th, we'll be changing the format for our Sunday meetings. Middle school students will now meet from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. High school students will continue to meet from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Come on out and invite friends!

Starbucks – We continue to meet every Thursday night at Starbucks in Cascades from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. to hang out and talk about life. Through the winter we'll meet inside Starbucks, letting some of the brave and crazy souls who prefer the cold talk outside.

Saint Matthew's Third Annual Parish Retreat

Save the date! The next Saint Matthew's Annual Parish Family Retreat is February 10-12, 2006! It is a wonderful time for the parish family, with lots of fun together as well as worship, prayer, and teaching for youth and adults, and childcare for young children.

Vestry Highlights - November

The meeting opened just after 7:00 p.m. with prayer and a reflection on the need for sustainability in our spiritual life as individuals and a congregation.

Next, the treasurer reported on the church finances as of the end of October. The general fund balance was down about 15%. There was discussion about the mission and relief fund balances. It was clarified that the mission fund is a general fund for mission, not for relief. The relief fund is distinct, and consists of funds specifically for relief efforts. With this in mind, the vestry voted to send funds for Pakistan relief and for Saint Patrick's Episcopal Church in Mississippi. The financial report continued with income - pledge was about 2% over budget for the month; plate about 21% over budget for the month. Pledge and plate income remain over budget about 8% year to date. Expenses continue to run under budget year to date. With respect to the 2006 Stewardship Campaign, there was consensus around the need to follow up with another letter to encourage people to return a pledge.

Next, due to space constraints in our parish hall, it was decided to hold the 2006 annual meeting at the Cascades Senior Center, 1:30 p.m., on Sunday, January 29.

The vestry then reviewed certain aspects of the draft proposed budget for 2006, including personnel. This included vestry agreement that Melissa Young should be approached about being hired as youth minister for 2006. Turning to vestry membership, a question was raised whether a teenager could serve on the vestry. There was discussion about the pros and cons of this. Nothing was decided at this meeting.

The meeting closed at 9:20 p.m., with the next full meeting of the vestry scheduled for Tuesday, December 13.

Outreach Report

Whew! We made it through the holidays! Helping all the different needy people sure can be tiring. My, how your Outreach Committee stayed on top of it all with the outpouring of love and gifts from Saint Matthew's. The Outreach Committee would like to thank each and every one of you who helped or contributed to the following programs during this past Holiday season.

1. Gently used coats and blankets - helped needy Loudoun residents stay warm.
2. Thanksgiving in Mississippi - helped the Hurricane Katrina victims.
3. Love Boxes for Mississippi - made 100 children smile.
4. LINK Holiday Food Program - Gave a week's worth of groceries for over 1,000 families in the Herndon and Sterling area.
5. Love Boxes for Mountain Mission School - 225 boxes of gifts to the children.
6. Cindi Hailu Christmas Presents - Our daughter at Mountain Mission School that Saint Matthew's supports.
7. LINK Food Pantry - Long time pantry director, Roberta, was seriously ill, so Saint Matthew's stepped up to run the pantry.
8. Star Tree - Supplied toys and clothing for several families of Loudoun County.
9. Christmas Dinner - Supplied a hot meal for 75 people at the homeless shelter.

As tiring as it is to do all the aforementioned projects, the payback is worth every aching bone. That smile on the child's face as they receive a present from someone who doesn't even know them, or the individual receiving a hot meal on a cold night at the shelter. Remember the words of your wise Father Rob's sermon a few weeks ago, "Do you want to sit on the right or left side of the Father when the time comes." Those of us who reach out to help others less fortunate know which side we want to be on. God bless you all!

2006 Mission Trip

Parents' Meeting on January 4

The planning for the 2006 mission trip is underway. The details thus far are as follows.

- We will attend a YouthWorks mission trip (YouthWorks is a youth mission organization created to serve youth, communities, and the church).

- The mission trip is open to anyone who will be entering the 9th grade in the 2006/2007 school year (i.e., anyone currently in 8th grade) through anyone who will have completed the 12th grade during this school year.

- The week we are taking the mission trip is the week of July 9, 2006.

- The destination of the mission trip is Toronto.

- To attend the 2006 mission trip, we need you to sign up and provide a \$300 deposit (scholarships are available).

- To sign up, please contact Richard Leach (703-421-6310 or rpleach1226@aol.com).

There will be a parents' meeting on Wednesday, January 4, 2006, at 7:00 p.m. at the church. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the overall cost of the trip, to answer questions, and to discuss fundraising opportunities/plans. The meeting will be helpful for the parent(s) of those planning to attend and those considering attending this summer's high school mission trip.

Mission trips are very rewarding from both an outreach and spiritual formation perspective. Mission trips can be life-changing events by allowing individuals to be the hands and feet of Christ and to see God in a new way. All high schoolers are encouraged to participate.

- **Richard Leach**

Just Wondering

A question-and-answer column where you can get the answers to questions you've always wondered about.

Q “Why in the Prayers of the People, are there prayers for the dead?”

A In the Prayers of the People in our *Book of Common Prayer*, we find language whereby we remember the dead before God. Why? We regularly pray for the living. We bring family, friends, and even strangers before God. Why, however, would we pray for the dead? Is there any point in bringing them before God in prayer? Indeed, is it appropriate to pray for the dead? These are challenging questions, touching some very deep and mysterious matters about life, death, God, and prayer. While we cannot explore fully in this space all that deserves consideration, perhaps we can begin to understand in a new way why we may remember the dead in the Prayers of the People.

What is prayer? Prayer is essentially a form of communication and communion with God. Prayer is both very simple and very complex. Sometimes it simply consists of intentionally turning our heart and mind to God for a moment or two with a few thoughts or utterances. Sometimes it involves entering intimately, deeply, and awe-fully, with words and without, into the very heart and mind of God, an encounter from which we cannot remain the same as we were before. Whether simple or complex, prayer can take a variety of forms. The catechism in the *Book of Common Prayer* lists these kinds of prayer: adoration; praise; thanksgiving; penitence; oblation; intercession; and petition. We might add that prayer even includes just plain old listening to God!

If prayer consists of communication and communion with God, and if it encompasses several ways we interact with God, it is natural that everything in us should come before him. In fact, God knows our hearts and minds whether or not we consciously open them to him! If, apart from prayer, we have feelings and thoughts about people who are dead, it would be natural, indeed honest, to bring them into God's presence in prayer. It would, indeed, be a little strange if

God invited us to be real and intimate with him in prayer, but precluded all feelings and thoughts of this kind. God opens himself to us in prayer, and he entreats us to open our self to him.

We may grant this, yet retain some uneasiness about certain types of prayer for the dead. Specifically, perhaps prayers of intercession may seem dubious. Intercessory prayer consists of bringing the needs of others before God. Is it possible or proper to bring before God the needs of those who have passed out of this life? Some further thoughts about why we pray at all may help us understand even more richly and deeply the dynamic of prayer. This may give us a context for bringing before God those who have passed out of this life.

Why do we pray? Most fundamentally and rightly, we pray to know, love, and serve God better. Prayer is far less about influencing God than it is about God influencing us. God knows everything any way! When done in a right spirit, our intercession with God for others shows we love and entrust them to God. Thus we can know, love, and serve God in them better.

Yet God does not call us to perfect prayer. God calls us to *perfecting* prayer. So do not worry about offering perfect prayer. Seek perfecting prayer. Bring both the right and good *and* the dubious to him in prayer. God can handle it! Bring the good and the dubious, and God will perfect the good and sort out the dubious in us.

All of this makes sense with respect to prayer for the living. We pray in many ways for them. Again, we do this not so much to influence God as to show our love for them and to entrust them to God's love, mercy, and power. Even when we pray with less than right motives, God can handle it! It is better to pray for others than not, because it is better to bring our self and others into God's presence than not. In prayer, God can strengthen the good and sort out the dubious in us.

Much the same holds true when we remember the dead in our prayer. We may thank God for them or express penitence for wrongs toward them. We may not be able to serve them in Jesus as we could have done when they were alive. Still, we serve them by remembering them, and especially by remembering them in prayer. We may even intercede with God for their needs. But what needs can they have? The truth is we cannot know, not specifically. Yet, we know they still need God – need his love, mercy, and power. Death does not end our need for God.

Here we come upon one of the great mysteries of life, namely, the mystery of death. Death is not the utter cessation of personal existence. In death, we pass not into the oblivion of nothingness, but into another sphere of existence. There has been much speculation in Christian thought about the nature of life after death, especially in this time between the first coming of Jesus and the second coming of Jesus, when God will consummate history and establish a new heaven and earth. Whatever the nature of that reality, God tells us that ultimately it involves being translated into new existence after death, either joined with him in incomprehensible glory or separated from him in incomprehensible abjectness. For those in glory, that new life is not static, but dynamic. We continue to grow in God's love and in all good things God intends!

And here we come upon another of the great mysteries of life, namely, time and space. As created beings, we are embedded in time and space, with all the constraints therein implied. God acts in time and space, but he is not embedded in time and space. The constraints we experience do not constrain God. Our prayers are, so to speak, embedded in time and space. God interacts with us and our prayers in time and space, but not embedded in time and space. It could

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be said that – as Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are both in time and space and trans-time and space – so our prayers are in time and space for us, but trans-time and space for God.

One of the great realities of the Church consists in this mystery of time and space. We call it the *communion of saints*. We experience the communion of saints in this life, in time and space, through worship, prayer, and fellowship. Yet we also experience the communion of saints beyond this life, beyond time and space, in the Holy Spirit, especially in worship and prayer. The

communion of saints signifies continuity between followers of Jesus in this life and followers of Jesus in the next life. It is a great mystery, but one we experience every week when we worship and pray together. By God's love, mercy, and power, through the Holy Spirit, the Church on earth and the Church in heaven join in communion with God and with each other; and we know one glory, both in and beyond time and space. Prayer, for the living and the dead in Jesus, is both taste and foretaste of this glory.

- **Gregory Strong**

JUST WONDERING

Is there a question about the Bible that has always puzzled you? Have you always wondered about some aspect of Christianity but didn't know where to get the answer? Well, this is the place to ask those questions. Members of the Spiritual Formation Committee will answer one of those questions each month. If you have a question, you can submit it to Mark Vereb either by email at VerebM@mail.nih.gov or by phone at 301-496-1895 (during the day) or 703-450-6050 (evenings and weekends). Questions will be published anonymously. So if you have a question, ask away! Chances are, others are wondering the same thing!

Community Update

I have fallen a little behind in my updates to the activities going on in the Community area, but thanks to my trusted Community team you have been hearing all the news. As we start 2006 I would like to take a moment of your time to reflect on the activities under the Community umbrella and to welcome Jodie Leach who takes over as leader for this important area of Saint Matthew's operations.

The purpose of the Community ministry is to establish a welcoming and supportive environment for our church members. This takes many forms, including the preparation of this wonderful newsletter, for example. Looking back at 2005 here are some of our achievements and the leaders that made them happen. I want to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to those who help in so many ways.

Our 2005 achievements include the following.

- Establishment of two new Community Small Groups: a book club led by Richard Henry, and a crafts club led by Barbara Dennis.
- Creation of the Helping Hands program led by Miriam Turner. This is a program to help our fellow church friends and families in their time of need. This can take many forms, such as providing meals or other assistance, and it is a great way to be there for each other.
- Updated the Newcomers Program to include a folder of information on the church and the activities that people can participate in.
- Social events including pizza and game nights, a children's picnic organized by Jodie Leach, our annual picnic and Easter and Christmas events organized by Sandra Gentry.
- Sunday service coffee hour led by Mary Peterson.
- Newsletter and advertising led by Angela Brittain.

I know that Jodie will bring her extensive energies to the Community Committee and lead us on to new and exciting ways to feel part of the Saint Matthew's family. As we have seen from the challenges that have hit both Florida and the Gulf states, community is very important, and sometimes this is one of the few things we get to rely on. I believe that in this Northern Virginia area, where so many of us are from somewhere else, that this is very important. We need to create at Saint Matthew's a place where we are all looking out for each other and welcoming all as if they were family because we are all family in the eyes of the Lord.

In the season of Christmas it is always the giving that provides the most happiness, and I thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve you.

- **Ann Lowden**

Everyone Can Use a Helping Hand

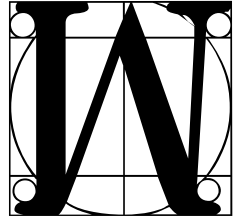
Do you know someone who could use a hot meal or some help around the house? Let **Saint Matthew's Helping Hand** know, and we'll reach out to help. Want to cook a meal for a neighbor, deliver meals, or do you have other ways to help out? **Saint Matthew's Helping Hand** would appreciate your help. Contact us at helpinghand@stmatthewssterling.org.

Start 2006 with Saint Matthew's!

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Deadline for submission to this newsletter is the first Friday of each month. Content may be submitted by hardcopy to the newsletter mailbox in the church office or e-mailed to Newsletter@stmatthewssterling.org.