

September 21, 2022

Blessings to all,

As your Administrative Council servant leader, I have made a goal to do a better job of communicating the state of the church in a series of letters which you will receive over the coming weeks. **Our church is healthy and vibrant, and it's up to each of us as individuals to answer the calling of invitation to friends and neighbors so that new people can learn about Christ's love!** I'm excited about what is happening in our church: 60 people joined during the last four new member classes, 22 people are in the fall new member class, 24 first-time families checked in between August 1 - September 11 for in-person worship, 3 new Sunday morning adult groups just launched, and 180 people participated in September's Family Worship!

Recently, during an [Our Path Forward](#) gathering, which is our Information Sessions concerning the Protocol/Postponement of the 2022 UMC General Conference, a church member asked me to share the "**definition of success**" for Matthews UMC. I recognized their genuine concern and possible frustration around what seems like low in-person worship attendance as they added, "I have been coming to this church since before our current campus was built. I now come to church and the pews are not full and friends of ours are not attending or they have left the church." **I responded with the following and wanted to share it with you as well.**

Our definition of success has changed over the past two-and-a-half years because of the tremendous impact Covid has had on all of us. In addition to averaging around **490 folks in person in the Sanctuary** on Sundays, our online metrics show an average over **450 views on livestream** on Sundays and an additional **600+ views on average throughout the week on demand**. With the number in the Sanctuary and views online, this equates to over 1,500 in attendance which is near pre-Covid numbers when our combined in-person attendance was between 1,200-1,500 for all four Sunday services. We are now in a **hybrid world** created by necessity to allow members of our church to join in worship in the safest way they feel possible. Our Church staff and Pastoral team have done a wonderful job of adjusting to this new reality and continue to spread the Word in a compelling way. Our online metrics and check ins are all we have to count those worshipping from home, and we all know that the feelings are real, the love is real, the hardships are real...and the people viewing online are REAL-- online presence matters. Covid has not diminished our worship attendance but led us to reach more people in different ways. **That is our new definition of success.**

We need your help to ensure that you are checking in for worship, no matter when or where you join. Our staff has exciting plans to launch mobile check in to worship through the **Realm Connect app** soon. ([Download the FREE app on your mobile device here.](#)) Several "test" groups are already utilizing this simple yet powerful technology! Go ahead and make sure you have downloaded the Realm Connect app, our church community connection tool, on your phone or device to take advantage of this simple two-step process. **When you check in, we know you are here** which in turn lets us know **when you are not here**, so staff is then able to provide proper congregational care and the ability to connect. Thank you for allowing our pastors and staff this opportunity of personal connection!

There are many wonderful things happening here at Matthews. Stay tuned for future letters where I plan to share about the wonderful things that are occurring based on Our Faithful Next Steps initiatives, the state of our mission field and outreach, the amazing things happening in Age-Level Ministries, and our positive financial health as a church. **In many ways we are thriving, it's just happening in different ways.**

Humbly,  
Jon Pollack  
Matthews UMC Administrative Council Servant Leader

October 12, 2022

Dear Church,

Many of you may be wondering what the state of our Mission field is at Matthews UMC and if Covid has impacted our ability to Reach people in need.

I can confidently report that our **commitment to Missions has never been stronger!** Global Impact added **four new mission partners** this year: **South America Missions, Brave Step, The Males Place** and **Common Heart**. We now support 33 local, regional/national and international partners.

Here are some highlights from the first nine months of this year:

- Global Impact delivered **500 lbs of beef** from a local farmer to four local ministry partners
- Volunteers gleaned fields and delivered **128 lbs of bell peppers** to Common Heart for their food pantry
- Home2Home picked up over **800 pieces of furniture** and **delivered over 550** items to new owners of Habitat homes, refugees in our community from Ukraine and Nepal, and others needing assistance in our community ([Read more about Ukraine assistance.](#))
- Feed the People shopped for, bagged, and delivered over **600 bags of groceries** to the Union County Crisis Assistance Center
- Our volunteers have **logged hundreds of hours** at Matthews HELP Center, Turning Point, COSKids, Greenway Park Elementary, Hoskins Park and many other ministries in our community
- Three years of support have been completed for our first Zoe Empowerment Group with **94 Youth now self-sufficient, raising siblings and running small businesses** in Kenya!
- Funds to Global Impact helped send **61 youth on mission trips** this past summer
- Global Impact hosted our first **Poverty Simulation for 65 participants** that was facilitated by Common Heart last February
- **Disaster relief funds** were sent to Canton, NC and Kentucky for flood relief
- Kidron Valley ministry received funds for a **new tractor** to grow food for the Orphanage in Uganda
- A **new shed was donated** to The Males Place for their garden that was **built by MUMC volunteers**
- Global Impact hosted an **educational event in Spanish for 30 women** from Centro Cristiano Hosanna with **Brave Step**, a new ministry partner who inspires and empowers adults in conversations about sexual violence
- **1,000 pounds of donated potatoes** were picked up and distributed to seven local mission partners
- **Over \$100,000** has been distributed to our ministry partners thus far in 2022

Two upcoming opportunities of interest include the [community-wide October 20 viewing at 6:30 pm in The Commons of an HBO documentary for Changed Choices](#) about "the girlfriend problem" where mandatory sentencing is given to perpetrators AND the exciting news that after a two-year hiatus, the [Arts & Crafts Extravaganza will be held on November 19 from 9am - 3pm](#) to benefit the Matthews HELP Center and United Women In Faith here at MUMC. Also, be on the lookout for information around our **mission trip to Bogotá, Colombia in March 2023** to support The Wájaro Foundation! An [interest meeting will be held tomorrow \(October 13th\) at 6:30 pm](#) in the Conference Room next to the Chapel.

**Your giving, serving and loving has enabled our commitment to Missions to grow and expand. Together, we are truly doing God's work...thank you!** If you would like to become more involved, please check out [globalimpactmumc.org](http://globalimpactmumc.org) (serve "Beyond the Walls" on our site), contact [Beth Merchant](#), our new Global Impact Servant Leader, or [Amy DeVore](#), our Director of Missions & Justice Ministries who would love to help get you connected.

Blessings to all,

Jon Pollack  
Administrative Council Servant Leader

October 26, 2022

Dear Matthews UMC,

We learned a lot from "Our Faithful Next Steps" efforts. One of the major findings was to increase connections both within the church and with our community at large. As Covid hit, church leadership discussed how we could continue to work towards that goal despite the challenges the pandemic threw at us. We decided to double down on the ***things that we do really well at MUMC***...and use our strengths to move forward.

One of those areas was our wonderful **Music & Worship Arts Ministry** under the direction of Craig Estep. Craig was challenged to think about how our Music Ministry could continue to bring our congregation together and create more connection opportunities that would reach out to the greater community we serve. What Craig presented was an amazing calendar of events. These community concerts started last year and will continue through this holiday season and beyond. Here are some highlights:

1. Dawn Anthony performed a jazz and spiritual concert last January for **over 200 people in the Sanctuary**, which was so successful that we brought her back October 16 in our morning services and for an evening concert in the Sanctuary. [Watch a clip here!](#)
2. The **High Point University Choir** joined us for a great evening of choral music. This drew a large audience of folks who are not currently members of MUMC.
3. **Melody Makers** presented a Spring Concert with approximately **300 retirement facility residents** in attendance. It was so popular that we will have a Melody Makers Christmas concert this year and we will repeat the spring event in 2023!
4. The **Good Friday Service** in April featured the Sanctuary Choir supported by a hired orchestra to perform Dubois' ***The Seven Last Words of Christ***.
5. The **Queen City Ringers** gave a concert in May that brought many people from the community into our church.
6. In July, we shared a **Broadway Showcase and Ice Cream Social** in our gymnasium. **Over 300 people were in attendance**, and the money raised will pay for the instrumentalists that will be a part of our Christmas worship.
7. Our **Contemporary Praise Team recorded a song** to be a gift to the Matthews community as a reminder that we are a church of action and people with a fire in our souls for God. You can use the song and video as a time of meditation and connectivity to God. [Watch & listen here!](#) *This video is also uploaded along with our Welcome Video and a featured GodStory to the Matthews UMC flash drives that are handed out at community events.*

We have a phenomenal music ministry and are so lucky to have Craig and his team leading the way. Their ability to overcome all the challenges that Covid has posed and take our worship experience to another level -- both in person and online -- has been inspiring. Their amazing efforts to create opportunities to reach out to our community has been very exciting to see. Let's look forward to more of their great work to come.

It's through your gifts and generosity that our Music Ministry can continue to thrive. Thank you all for your support now and into the future.

Humbly yours,

Jon Pollack

Administrative Council Servant Leader

November 2, 2022

Dear Church,

One of our key objectives coming out of our Covid coma was to re-engage with our community in and around Matthews. Our Faithful Next Steps document called on us to build connections both within our congregation and to also Reach outside the church.

For the last year and a half that's exactly what our Communications Ministry has been doing under the leadership of Shannon Williams. I want to share with you some of the amazing ways we have been reaching out and increasing engagement.

We have invested in community partnerships with the Town of Matthews, the Matthews Chamber of Commerce, and the Matthews Athletic and Recreation Association (MARA). This has allowed the Communications Ministry to reach a wide demographic of newcomers, young families, and people of all ages. Here are just a few of the efforts thus far:

1. Matthews UMC was a viewing location for the Town of Matthews Fourth of July fireworks event. **Our outdoor space on campus was packed with people!** With the help of Young Adult & College-Age Ministries we were able to create a fun atmosphere, show our MUMC hospitality, and hand out invitations to worship. Glow sticks were given to children, frisbee/fans featuring our Kids & Youth Ministry were a big hit (especially with the heat), and branded items provided quick access to our church website. Invite cards included summer happenings, back-to-school events and more.
2. If you attended one of the monthly Beats 'n Bites we sponsored with live music and food trucks at Stumptown Park, you likely saw our **welcome tent advertising our worship times and age-level ministries.** Live announcements were shared from the music stage for Matthews UMC while volunteers in "We Are Matthews" t-shirts handed out invitations and church swag with our website address. We met someone at the first event who now regularly attends a small group...and many others who have come to Family Nights, United Kids events and worship!
3. Matthews Alive parade participants and festival goers were welcomed to our campus and given a reprieve from the heat when our volunteers invited them into The Commons. We **served 820 cups of lemonade** in just four hours on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend.
4. Well over **4,000 branded items with invitations** to Matthews UMC have been distributed so far this year at these community events. This is having an impact, which is helping us to reach people and grow MUMC.

It's because of your love and generosity that we are able to fund our Communications Ministry work. Thanks to you and all our wonderful volunteers, we are making a difference!

Humbly yours,

Jon Pollack

Administrative Council Servant Leader