

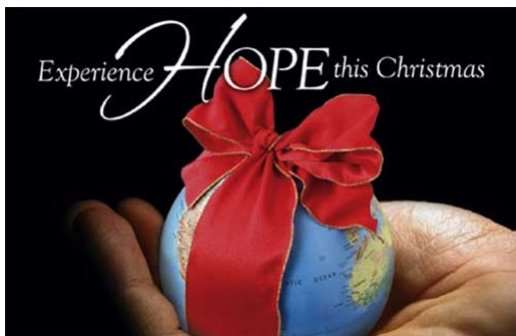
**St. James-St. Matthew's Lutheran Church**

119-15 135<sup>th</sup> Avenue

South Ozone Park, NY 11420

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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



**We Worship Every Sunday at 10:00 am**

**Visit us at [SouthOzoneParkChurch.org](http://SouthOzoneParkChurch.org)**

Greetings favored ones,

I know that I am not alone in thinking that it's almost sacrilegious to think of Christmas without being able to visit the elderly and those in need and singing carols, sharing a meal with workmates, family and friends, the Children's Nativity and, of course, being part of the candlelight Christmas Eve worship. But sadly, this is our reality this year – for we are living (*and I want to stress living*) in the midst of a pandemic that has claimed over 1.5 million lives so far worldwide.

The effects of COVID-19 have heightened our awareness of the disparities that exist among us – the inadequacies in our health-care system, the incompetence at the highest level of government, and economic and social injustices threatening the lives of hundreds of millions in the US and beyond. Many of us are afraid of losing our jobs and afraid to go into the public risking contracting this deadly virus, bringing it home and infecting our loved-ones, resulting in death.

Tensions are at an all-time high in these unprecedented times, our emotions are frayed, and fear seems to strengthening its grip on our lives. Strangely, this reality seems to be a weird connection between the first hearers of the good news of the birth of Jesus and us. Fear! Fear and uncertainty quietly creep into our lives when we least expect, but this time of year, it cannot be hidden or covered up.

But we are not alone; from the very beginning of times we are told that fear was present... Fear entered into the Garden of Eden and seized Adam. A terrified Adam cries out to God, "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid." Gen. 3:10

## ***The Messenger***

*December 2020 Edition*

Fear robs us of joy, paralyzes our souls, and undermines all our securities...we fear life and we fear death and sometimes throughout that passage of time between the two.

Well, in direct contrast to the fear that engulfs us today, we hear in the gospel of Luke (2:10) that the first words at the birth of Jesus are, "Do not be afraid." These words were spoken by an angel of the Lord to the terrified shepherds who kept watch over their flocks at night.

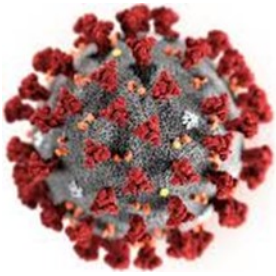
These words, my fellow sojourners, are not only for those shepherds in the field on that first Christmas – they are for us as well as we try to make sense of the chaos that consumes us in the daily and sometimes hourly grind. These words are for us, who are fearful of what the winter, this pandemic, or future holds, or the results of the next COVID-19 test. These words comprise the good news that comforts us this Christmas!

It is my sincere prayer that as you journey through this season that your fears will subside and that joy will fill your hearts as well as those around you. In the name of Christ, our newborn king! Amen

With Christmas hope,  
Pastor Romeo Dabee



Join us on Thursday, December 24 at 7 PM for a Zoom Christmas Eve Worship. The Zoom link is: <https://zoom.us/j/3941718778> You can also access this service by dialing **646-558-8656** and enter meeting ID: **394-171-8778 #**.



## Coronavirus & the Church

In the light of the recent surge in COVID-19 cases around us and throughout the world and after much prayer and thought, the Church Council has decided to suspend in-person worship until further notice. This was a deliberate process that took seriously the safety and wellbeing of our faithful who gather weekly, Ushers, Musician, Assisting Minister and Pastor.

We have resumed the 10 AM Zoom broadcast every Sunday and have the Worship Services uploaded to our website and YouTube channel by Saturday evening—thanks to Matt Khargie!

For the 2020 Advent Season, we have developed a **mid-week Devotional** to help nourish our faith – check your emails for links or visit our website.

Finally, we pray that you will be patient, continue to keep the faith (spread it when you can), keep a safe distance from others outside your household and keep healthy until we meet again.

## Save the Date

There is a **Special Congregational Meeting** scheduled for Sunday, **December 20th** immediately following the 10 AM Zoom broadcast of Sunday Worship. All are invited to this meeting as we consider the 2021 Proposed Church Budget. Please contact the Church Office by December 13<sup>th</sup> to request a paper copy of the Proposed Budget – we can also email you a PDF version, if you prefer.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to suspend in-person worship for the majority of Sundays this year. We miss our Church traditions of gathering, singing and socializing as a family of God, but we stay apart now so that we can be together later. Though thankful for those who continue to give towards our ongoing ministries, we project a **40% short-fall** in our anticipated offering for 2020. But, there is still time remaining this year for you to make-up on your contributions.

Looking ahead to 2021, our synod Bishop Paul Egensteiner has renewed Pastor Dabee's part-time appointment as Pastor at St. James-St. Matthew's for another two years. We are thankful to God and pray that our Church's ministry continues to blossom and grow.



We would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who continued to contribute their offering towards the ministry of our Church. For those of you who are wondering how to make your contributions, you may:

1. Mail-in your Offering Envelopes to the Church...there is a Special one enclosed.
2. Drop off (please, Checks only) your Offering Envelopes in our mail slot on the side door, or
3. Contribute via PayPal Accounts... <https://www.paypal.me/StJamesStMatthews>



We would like to thank Scott Campbell for refurbishing our wooden church sign and to Don Brodmerkel for helping to install it on our front lawn. Thank you gentlemen!!

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In order to keep in touch with us: <https://www.facebook.com/St-James-St-Matthews-Lutheran-Church> “like us” on Facebook to get these updates when posted.

### Sunday Worship: 10:00 am

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#### Contact us by Mail:

St. James—St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

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