

On the Spiritual Side

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St. Matthew's Lutheran church bids pastor goodbye

Jodi Spiegel Arthur



JODI SPIEGEL ARTHUR

Holly Thorington, administrative assistant, the Rev. Robert E. Mitman, and Susan Lear, director of Music and Youth, at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Bedminster Township.

This Sunday, members of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, also known as Keller's Church, will say goodbye to their beloved pastor.

The Rev. Robert E. Mitman will preach for the last time Feb. 7, at the church in Bedminster Township, where he has served for the past 36 years.

"It's time for someone else to lead the congregation into the next generation of ministry and mission, outreach as well as in-reach," he said as he sat in a church conference room reflecting on his time as pastor of the congregation of 412 active members that is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

"Since 1751, I have the longest tenure here. I don't know whether that's a blessing or a curse to people; it depends on who you ask," the 66-year-old pastor said with a smile. "It's been a good ride."

"If the church staff — which Mitman calls "a good working team" — is any indication, his time at St. Matthew's has been a blessing.

Ministry Assistant Linda Nice said the church would miss the pastor's caring nature, sense of humor and creativity.

"With a genuine love of people, he has endeared himself in the hearts of his parishioners," Nice said. "He was good with everyone from babies to the elderly."

"It is a true heartache to see him retire," said Susan Lear, director of Music and Youth at St. Matthew's, who has worked with Mitman for most of his time at the church. She said, however, that she is happy for him.

Holly Thorington, administrative assistant at the church where she has been a member since she was 9, said, the pastor had given her "the greatest gift anyone has ever given me — the foundation to my faith in Jesus Christ."

"I will forever be grateful of his knowledge and love of the Lord. Pastor Mitman has been a great teacher and friend to me and to our congregation. He will surely be missed."

"The pastor, who has a quick sense of humor and an easy smile, grew up in Pipersville and graduated from Penridge High School. He also graduated from Muhlenberg College, in 1971, and the Lutheran Seminary of Philadelphia, in 1975.

Mitman said he decided to retire in part because, "I don't have the same energy level as I used to, and

the requirements are not less." He also said he and his wife, Linda, who retired in July, wanted to retire while they were still healthy enough to pursue their other interests.

"I'm looking forward to reinventing myself, to see what the Lord has in mind for me and take that first six months to decompress and find direction," he said.

Mitman said he'd like to take voice lessons, music courses and classes in Pennsylvania German culture and language, to further explore his family background, and day hikes on the Appalachian Trail.

He'd also like to travel, as much as finances and health allow — the bucket list includes Alaska — and take more photographs of wildlife.

Mitman said he also wants to eat less and exercise more.

In addition, the father of two and grandfather of five, who all live fairly close by, said he plans to see more of his family. "I intend to spend a good deal of time in their lives without getting in the way," he said.

"I want to have fun," Mitman said, "not that I wasn't having fun. Fun is part and parcel of the church."

The day after Mitman leads his final service at St. Matthew's, an interim pastor, trained in the transition process, will lead the congregation through the call process for a new pastor.

Mitman and his wife, Linda, will have to find a new church, according to church policy, to make the transition easier for both the incoming and outgoing pas-

tors.

"The thing I'll miss the most is my relationships with people," the pastor said. "That's what feeds me as a person."

"We have a wonderful camaraderie in this congregation. People laugh — a lot; people enjoy each other (and) they enjoy the Lord."

Tom Hebel, stewardship chair of the church's Congregation Council, and son of the pastor who preceded Mitman, said he will miss the personal connection he has with Mitman as both a pastor and a friend. "He really (has) an emotional connection with many of us," Hebel said.

He also will miss Mitman's sermons and use of music: "He (is)

just an awesome worship leader," Hebel said, not only on Sundays, but also on occasions, including weddings and funerals. "He has the gift of saying the right thing at the right time."

"Bob was probably the first reason for people to join our church," Hebel said.

When the time comes to select a new pastor, he said, "The whole Sunday worship experience will be critical."

Mitman said he hopes a new pastor will expand on the worship experience, including the music and programs for children, and be creative about outreach to the larger community. "I think we're a well-kept secret," he said. "I don't think we're known enough

because of our location."

Speaking about children's programs, Mitman said, "I think that's another thing I'll miss is children's worship and time spent with children. You never know what they're going to say. They're candid."

Although ready to retire, Mitman is thankful for his time as pastor of St. Matthew's.

"Being invited into people's lives is a privilege for which I'm grateful," Mitman said. "You've invited into situations that are very personal to them, sometimes joyous, sometimes difficult, but it's the privilege of being with them that I will cherish and that I will miss."

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If you go:

The congregation of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Bedminster Township, plans to celebrate the retirement of the Rev. Robert E. Mitman, pastor at the church since 1980, in two events. From 3 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6, there will be a reception in the church's fellowship hall. At 11:30 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 7, there will be a luncheon at The Meadows in Hellertown. Tickets are required for the luncheon, but anyone may stop in on Feb. 6 to convey their well wishes or attend Mitman's farewell worship service at 9 a.m. Feb. 7. For information, call the church office at 215-795-2965.

Philadelphia Archdiocese launches 2016 Catholic Charities appeal

Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap. announced the launch of the 2016 Catholic Charities Appeal, Jan. 28, with an expanded vision inspired by Pope Francis, to serve even more people in need and an increased fundraising goal of \$15 million.

During the pope's September visit to Philadelphia, he challenged the faithful with the words "What about you?"

The campaign will expand to reach close to 180 beneficiaries in five areas of ministry: education, social services, evangeliza-

tion, parish and spiritual life, clergy and mission activities.

"I want to thank every person who has supported the Catholic Charities Appeal," Chaput said. "Each year you have helped feed, clothe and educate over 200,000 people in need from all faith backgrounds in our community."

"Your generosity will continue to bring meaningful, spiritual and material assistance to those most in need and in the lives of those we serve for future generations to come."

In previous years, the Annual Appeal exceeded the \$10 million fundraising goal, with more than 50,000 donors aiding the elderly and disabled, the hungry and homeless, children and families in need, and persons with disabilities.

With the \$15 million fundraising goal of this year's Annual Appeal, up to \$10 million will be earmarked to fund the ministries that historically benefit from Catholic Charities.

For information, visit catholiccharitiesappeal.org.

Trinity Buckingham hosts free, community lunch

Trinity Buckingham Church, 2631 Durham Road, Buckingham, will serve a free community lunch for all of the wider Central Bucks County community from 1 to 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 7, in the church's Faith Hall.

All are welcome to join in for food and fellowship. The lunch celebrates Code Blue guests and volunteers and Trinity Buckingham's successful January Code Blue site participation.

Code Blue is a program sponsored by the Coalition to Shelter and Support the Homeless (CSSH) that provides transportation, overnight accommodations and warm meals to those in the Central Bucks region who are without shelter in weather that is

below 26 degrees.

"We are grateful and honored to be able to offer a loving and caring space for free monthly Community Lunches," said the Rev. Dr. Nancy Burton Dilliplane, the rector of Trinity Buckingham. "These lunches are a great opportunity for anyone in the Central Bucks County community to join in with church parishioners, Code Blue clients and Code Blue volunteers to all share a warm meal together."

Trinity Buckingham, located at the intersection of routes 202 and 413, hosts a monthly free community lunch on the first Sunday of every month. For information, visit trinitybuckingham.org or call 215-794-7921.

"Conversations on Science and Theology" series set for Trinity Buckingham

Trinity Buckingham Church hosts a six-week Lenten Series based on the award-winning Public Broadcasting System (PBS) documentary, "The Brain," created and produced by neuroscientist and writer Dr. David Eagleman.

All are welcome to attend. The series will begin on Wednesday, Feb. 17, and will be held weekly at the church's Faith Hall from 7:30 to 9 p.m.

Trinity Buckingham member Steven W. Mann will facilitate discussion and offer some reflections following the viewing of each of the documentary's six one-hour episodes.

First premiering on PBS last November, "The Brain" blends breakthrough science discoveries, master storytelling and state-of-the-art visual effects to describe



STEVEN W. MANN

the inner workings of the human brain.

"David Eagleman's award-winning documentary, 'The Brain,' offers its viewers both a new love of science and a sense of reverent awe," said the Rev. Dr. Nancy Burton Dilliplane, rector of Trinity Buckingham Church.

"We look forward to this series being a wonderful opportunity for all those who attend to discuss 'the big questions' with others

who are interested in learning more about what it means to be human."

Mann received a doctorate in Pharmaceutical Science from the University of Rhode Island and is a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary's Science for Ministry Institute, a three-year program funded by Templeton Foundation to "further the development of a more informed approach to the tensions between science and faith."

The series follows Trinity's Wednesday Lenten Simple Suppers at 6:45 p.m. in Faith Hall. All are welcome to attend the suppers as well.

Trinity Buckingham Church is located at 2631 Durham Road, at the intersection of routes 202 and 413.

For information, visit trinitybuckingham.org or call 215-794-7921.

HAPPENINGS

Police officer to speak about schools at Tiferes B'Nai Israel

Recent shootings, physical fighting, student safety, drug dealing ... these are some of factors to focus on regarding whether there should be a police presence in schools.

Lower Gwynedd police officer Beth Sanborn will be the guest speaker at the Friday, Feb. 5, Sabbath service at Congregation Tiferes B'Nai Israel, 2478 Street Road, Warrington.

She has served on the force for 18 years and currently serves as a School Resource Officer and teaches criminal justice at Holy Family University at night.

Services begin at 7:30 p.m. and are open to the public. For information, call 215-343-0155.

Saint Andrew's Lambertville offers Evensong

All are welcome at 4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 7, to Evensong at Saint Andrew's Church, York and Main streets, Lambertville, N.J.

This evensong will commemorate the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple, the greeting of Jesus and the Holy Family by the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna. This day is also known as

Candlemas.

Music presented by Saint Andrew's Choir and soloists of the choir will include works by Johannes Eccard, Michael T. Keavane, Charles Villiers Stanford and Heinrich Schutz. Members of the congregation are invited to join in the chanting of the psalm and in the singing of hymns.

For information, call 609-397-2425, e-mail rector@standrewslambertville.net or visit standrewslambertville.org.

Begin Lent on Ash Wednesday at St. Philip's Episcopal Church

Holy Eucharist with the distribution of ashes with occur at noon and 7 p.m. on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 10, at St Philip's Episcopal Church, River and Chapel Roads in a New Hope.

Ash Wednesday, a day of fasting and prayer to focus on the mortality of human life, is the traditional start of the Lenten season in the western Church. Lent means "spring" and calls Christians to go back to the basics of their lives as followers of Jesus.

St. Philip's will make every effort to provide "ashed to go" for those who are unable to attend church on that day but would like to receive ashes. Contact the church at 215-862-5782 or info@stphilipsnewhope.org.

Worship Directory

SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sunday, February 7, 2016

9:30 a.m. Worship / Communion / Sunday School
Pastor Michelle Schenk Preaching

10:30 a.m. Fellowship and Refreshments
Nursery Service Available

186 E. Court St., Doylestown • www.DoylestownSalemUCC.org
215.348.9860

Ash Wednesday Service - February 10th at 7:30 pm

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at 215-794-1097
