

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

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

South Ozone Park, NY 11420

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Jamaica, NY  
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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



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

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

## GIVING THANKS

*A Message from Bishop Egensteiner*

Peace and blessings, dear followers of Jesus.

"For what are you grateful right now?"

"What role does gratitude play in your day-to-day life?"

"If you were to increase your gratitude, what might happen?"

As I did my daily devotion the other day, listening to the podcast "Pray as You Go," the narrator asked these questions reflecting on the account of Jesus healing the ten people with leprosy and one returning to express gratitude. The questions caught my attention, especially the last one. I wasn't feeling particularly grateful that day. The concerns of our synod and events in the world were making me anxious, and I was having a hard time focusing on the many positive realities in my life. The problems and challenges seemed bigger.

Do you ever engage your devotional life as an obligation to "check a box?" I do, sometimes. I think I was in that frame of mind; it was something I should do. And then the narrator asked, "If you were to increase your gratitude, what might happen?" Well, at that moment, there was nowhere to go but up! And I began to wonder and experience a shift in thinking and acknowledgment of God's overwhelming goodness in my life. Recently, I have been reflecting on the fruits of the Spirit St. Paul mentions in Galatians 5. The second is "joy." When I did a word study on "joy" ("chara," in Greek), I discovered that joy could be understood as Great Thanksgiving; "megale euchariste" in the Greek. You already see the connection to our liturgy and the Great Thanksgiving, which begins our celebration of the Lord's Supper. In fact, the word "joy" is right there in the middle of "euCHARiste!"

What do I have to be thankful for? As Christians, we freely and boldly acknowledge that, without God, we have nothing. So, in light of anything and everything I have, I have a reason to be grateful. And not just grateful but extravagantly grateful — megale euchariste!

Increasing my gratitude, even just a fraction, completely shifted my focus. The problems and challenges didn't go away; they just got smaller and more manageable in light of the abundance of blessings God extravagantly pours into my life on a daily basis. And that I then get to share in extravagant joy and generosity! As we approach our National Day of Thanksgiving, no matter what that celebration might look like for you, I invite you to reflect with me on how even the smallest increase in gratitude can strengthen your faith and change your perspective.

And then, go live like Christ in your community.

In gratitude for You,  
+Bishop Egensteiner

## The Messenger

*Advent 2024 Edition*



The Seafarers International House—New York City port chaplains bring satchels filled with gifts to the ships for the holiday. Every crew member on a ship regardless of their faith or nationality will open their satchels, each containing:

- One Sweatshirt – hooded or not (M-L-XL)
- Three Pairs of Socks – thermal or gym
- One T- Shirt (size M-L-XL)
- One Knitted Winter Cap (scarf optional)
- One Can of Nuts, Large Bar of Chocolate, or Health Snack Bar
- A Holiday or Christmas Card from YOU!

Throughout the season of Advent and Christmas, we will gather these items for donation to the Seafarers International House ([www.sihnyc.org](http://www.sihnyc.org)). You pick the colors, styles and brands as you go shopping this season. Thank you for participating!



### Advent Worship Services

Sunday, December 1, 8, 15 & 22 — 10 AM

### Christmas EVE Candlelight Worship

Tuesday, December 24 — 7 PM

### Christmas DAY Celebration Worship

Wednesday, December 25 — 10 AM

### Christmas Service of Lessons and Carol

Sunday, December 29 — 10 AM





Part of our mission as a called-out community of believers known as the church is to bring the gospel (the good news of Jesus) to the world. St. James-St. Matthew's has identified a need in our community for food, and a Food Ministry was launched.

In collaboration with Stacey's Pantry, Key Food and Stop and Shop Supermarkets and St. Paul's Richmond Hill, we are providing a monthly service—the next program is set for Thursday, **December 19th from 3PM to 4PM**...and Thursday, January 23rd from 3 PM—4PM.



Yes, volunteers are always welcome by 1 PM to help! What this means is that there is a wonderful opportunity to enrich your lives of service to God and your neighbors. Please contact the Church office either by phone, 718-845-8770 or email [stjstm@aol.com](mailto:stjstm@aol.com) and let us know if you have any resources, be it time, talents, and treasures, to grow this new ministry.



*...Still Wanted !*

We still need **Ushers, Lectors, and Assistant Ministers**. Please contact Pastor Dabee or the Church Office to indicate your willingness to help make worship a welcoming and meaningful experience for everyone in attendance.



*Thank you to all who supported Operation Christmas Child this year—a total of 65 shoe/gift boxes were filled for the children.*



*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:5).*

Sounds familiar? I hope it does, for it forms the basis of the season of Advent leading to Christmas and the centerpiece to our faith in Jesus—the Christ-child. But there's more, with the lighting of one candle, Advent begins on *December 1st* this year.

With the lighting of one candle, Advent begins. We have been here before—with one candle. A candle to offer a prayer. A candle to remember death. A candle to mark the passing of another year.

Whether in the church building, around the dinner table, or in the silence of your room, light a candle you are encouraged to: Offer a prayer. Sit in the silence. Offer yourself. Listen. Wait. Allow the light of Christ to shine in and through you. Amen



**Sunday, December 8, 2024 at 11 AM -**  
Special Congregational Meeting to examine the 2025 Proposed Budget.  
All members are invited to participate!

**Sunday Worship: 10:00 am**

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**Contact us by Mail:**

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**South Ozone Park, NY 11420**

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