

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

Parish Profile

March 1, 2026



36 New Canaan Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897
www.stmatthewswilton.org

Who We Are

St. Matthew's is a small but deeply faithful, warm, and welcoming Christian family that cares about one another, the wider community, and living out the teachings of Jesus in real, compassionate ways.



We are . . . faithful Christians centered on worship and prayer in the Episcopal tradition . . . a community that prays, sings, serves, learns, and has fun together, with a strong value on music and high-quality liturgy . . . a people who are trying to maintain spiritual, social, and physical life together amid the wider cultural decline of interest in institutional faith.

We characterize ourselves (and are known by others) as warm, friendly, supportive, “pretty darn awesome humans” who are compassionate, thoughtful, and authentic, recognizing we are imperfect but still growing. Some describe us as a family-like church that is loving, fun, sometimes silly and serious, and willing to try, fail, and try again together. We are intentionally welcoming and inclusive of everyone, including those at different places on the spiritual journey including the disenfranchised, marginalized, unchurched, and unsure. We try to create a judgment free zone where people can bring questions and opinions without fear, participating in ways that feel comfortable.

Our parishioners are educated, involved, and talented who generously share gifts, support each other and neighbors. We seek to be a community that holds, preserves, and fosters dialogue, nurture, and transformation amid the suffering of our world. A devoted group that wants to deepen our faith, we seek to spread a message of hope more widely, and find new, authentic ways to live and share Jesus’s teachings.

Our Joint Venture with Wilton Presbyterian Church

As an Episcopal worshipping community, we are unique. In 1971 St. Matthew’s embarked on a unique partnership with Wilton Presbyterian Church and formed the Wilton Episcopal Presbyterian Corporation (WEPCO). This joint venture grew out of a time when ecumenism was at the forefront of Christian thought. It was also seen as a



way that the two congregations could have separate sanctuaries and worship, while sharing resources and the expenses of staff and space. The two congregations share a campus of ten acres as a condominium association. The Presbyterian and Episcopal sanctuaries are owned by the respective individual churches. Everything else is held in common and managed by a WEPCO Board of Directors. This Board is comprised of an equal number of Presbyterians and Episcopalians. The common

ownership includes offices, classrooms, meeting rooms, a kitchen, and Parish Hall, as well as the outside grounds and parking lot. While the WEPCO complex is the physical manifestation of this partnership, its spiritual aspects run much deeper. Through periodic joint worship services and shared community events, all our parishioners gain increased understanding and appreciation for different ways of worshipping Christ and living in Christian community. Our Church School (K-7) and Youth Groups are a shared effort, with all our children gathering to learn and play together on a Sunday morning which leads to lasting friendships and memories.

Our Values

- **Welcome and belonging** – Creating a spiritual home, safe space, and anchor where all can feel included, known, and accepted
- **Community and relationship** – Emphasizing gathering, fellowship, mutual support, and doing faith together, not alone
- **Spiritual growth and exploration** – Valuing questions, learning, wrestling with big issues, and deepening one's relationship with God over time
- **Worship and prayer** – Holding sacred space, regular worship, and prayerful reflection is central to our identity and purpose.
- **Compassion and service** – Helping others, connecting with agencies, outreach beyond the walls, and doing what Jesus taught us to do
- **Living the Gospel in daily life** – Striving to put Christ's teachings into action, even when it is difficult or uncomfortable

- **Hope and meaning** – Helping people find purpose, peace, and meaning amid complex, overstimulating lives
- **Respect the dignity of every person** – Seeing God in each other and in those we don't even know, honoring all lives everywhere
- **Stability and faithfulness** – Being a steady, enduring presence in Wilton and in people's lives across seasons and generations
- **Honesty and humility** – Acknowledging uncertainty, questions about our mission, and the tension between survival and deeper purpose, yet still seeking to be faithful

Our Mission

St. Matthew's is a welcoming Episcopal community dedicated to sharing the love and teachings of Jesus Christ through worship, spiritual growth, and compassionate service. Rooted in prayer and the sacraments, we seek to support one another and our neighbors—locally and beyond—by living out the Gospel in meaningful, tangible ways. Our mission is to be a spiritual home where all people can encounter God's presence, strengthen faith and serve the world with kindness.

We believe we are at a crossroads, recognizing that churches today need to adapt and change. We are aware that St. Matthew's has a story and history to offer while seeking the road ahead that best shows our true self and God's love in today's world. As former Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has recently stated, "... a vision for the future that is decidedly not the way we've always done it but instead shaped by the way of Jesus and his love."



How We Worship

St. Matthew's worship is liturgical and musically rich, typically experienced as The Holy Eucharist, Rite II on Sundays at 10:00 a.m. from the *1979 Book of Common Prayer* with choir and organ. We also use *Enriching Our Worship* and have used trial rites for the Season of Creation. Traditional in format and tone, parishioners describe worship as holy, thoughtful, comforting, sometimes solemn—and experienced as a time to relax, recharge, and feel peaceful in God's presence.

Our liturgy is strongly shaped by music. We have an excellent choir with four paid section leaders and an experienced musical director and organist. (Our organ was built in 2009 by the Reuter Organ Company of Lawrence, Kansas.) Our hymns are old and new, spirituals, anthems, and other sung elements that many experience as inspiring and essential. Worshipers are offered a service bulletin that contains all that is needed to participate in worship: readings, prayers, and some music. *The Hymnal 1982* can be found in our pews, along with copies of the Book of Common Prayer. Hymns are also included in the bulletin when we sing from *Lift Every Voice and Sing* or *Wonder, Love, and Praise*.



In addition to our music, a high value is placed on preaching that connects Holy Scripture and the Gospel to daily life and today's world through thoughtful, insightful sermons. As a congregation, we desire to be challenged. From time to time, lay parishioners are also invited to preach.

In the past a silent Rite II Holy Eucharist was offered at 8:00 a.m. on Sundays, which we hope to resume soon. We worship together during Lent and Holy Week; Taizé services are held quarterly on Friday evenings. New for us during Lent in 2026 has been a mid-week evening gathering that starts with a light meal followed by a brief service of reflections given by parishioners as part of healing liturgy with the laying-on-of-hands in response to requests from the parish. Our services are live streamed on Facebook and YouTube.



Children are welcome in worship. Cloth bags with books and resources are available for them to take into the pew. There is also a soft space in the back of the sanctuary, allowing toddlers to play as their parent(s) or caretaker(s) worship. Nursery Care is provided by two paid caregivers during Sunday worship for those who desire it.

How We Learn and Grow in Faith

St. Matthew's learns and grows in faith through worship, relationships, and a range of formal and informal formation opportunities, though children's and youth ministry are areas of concern and hope. Our formation programs for children and youth (except confirmation preparation) are done jointly with Wilton Presbyterian Church (WPC). Our adult programs tend to be lay led by several volunteers but are often in collaboration with clergy.

Children (Birth-Grade 7)

We believe children are formed by being welcomed in worship, seeing that they matter to the community, and watching the example and practices of their parents and other caring adults. Church School and age-appropriate activities are offered for children, as well as fun, games, and interaction with peers at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings in a one-room schoolhouse approach using the Episcopal Church's "Lesson Plans That Work." (In the past we have used "Godly Play" and "Shine" curriculum.) Children then return to the sanctuary for Holy Communion. There are few families with children who attend on a regular basis at St. Matthew's, making it difficult to sustain such a program which we jointly share with WPC who share our concerns. Several voices note that children's formation is currently thin or inconsistent and that more leadership and structured opportunities are needed.



Youth (Grade 8-12)

Traditionally our teens have learned and grown through confirmation classes (8th grade), youth groups, mission trips to Washington, DC (during winter break), service projects, and fellowship events. Youth are encouraged to be engaged members of the parish, learning by serving alongside adults and through multi-generational activities such as "Rise Against Hunger" and other mission experiences. A real decline in

numbers and consistency of youth has been noticed since the pandemic; there is a strong desire to rebuild youth ministry, often in collaboration with other churches, and to hire formation leadership (like a Director of Religious Education) to minister with children and youth in collaboration with WPC.



Adult Formation

There are a multitude of offerings for adults to learn and grow at St. Matthew's. Sermons, Sunday forums/after-church discussions, Bible study, Education for Ministry (EfM), Spirited Sisters (a women's group), Social Justice events, book studies, and pub theology are held throughout the year. Adults also learn by engaging in mission and outreach, wrestling with hard theological questions, and connecting faith to daily life and community needs. Many value St. Matthew's as a place where adults can question, test, and explore faith in a supportive environment, learning side by side with others.

We also have an active young adult population who seek to serve and lead us in energetic and creative ways. Throughout Epiphany and Lent in 2025, they led all ages in “Melody Madness” (based on Lent Madness) in which the congregation voted on their favorite hymns each week from seasonal and topical brackets. Hymn #490, *I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light*, was the winner!

The Future

There is a strong sense that intergenerational experiences—children, youth, and adults learning and serving together—are powerful and should be strengthened going forward. We desire all people across ages and backgrounds to grow in faith by attending worship, praying and singing together, participating in projects that help others, and sharing honest conversation and fellowship.

As noted above, we are in conversation with Wilton Presbyterian Church about hiring a part time Christian educator to oversee our joint children and youth ministries.



How We Live Our Faith in Action

St. Matthew's lives out its faith through generous service, mutual care, and active engagement with the wider community, even as people wrestle with what long-term, boots on the ground commitment looks like today. Even with smaller numbers and worries about financial pressures, members remain deeply committed, sharing time, talent, and treasure to sustain the parish and to keep finding new ways to put faith into action. Our desire is to be even more involved in our community through mission and action.



Caring for one another

Parishioners of St. Matthew's support each other spiritually, emotionally, and practically through prayer, presence, fellowship, and help in times of need. Individuals serve in many ways: in worship as liturgical assistants, altar guild, ushering, and singing in the

choir; various fellowship and mission committees, vestry, delivering a hot meal, and countless behind the scenes tasks. Many see this shared work as a tangible expression of faith.



Serving our neighbors and the wider community

Members of our Mission Team and Social Justice group regularly organize and support outreach efforts. In 2025-26 we held diaper, backpack, sweatshirt, food, and sock drives. Annually we (and our interfaith partners) package meals for “Rise Against

Hunger,” a community-wide event that draws hundreds to our building, creating tens of thousands of meals. Partnerships with non-profits like Open Doors, Circle of Care, and Wilton Social Services are ongoing in financial and human support. Pop-up or one-time mission opportunities at a moment’s notice draws strong participation and generous financial giving, allowing the parish to respond quickly to immediate needs.

Pursuing justice and learning

St. Matthew’s engages social justice concerns and civic life, seeking to protect the vulnerable, speak for the voiceless, and advance justice locally and beyond. Our small—but mighty—Social Justice group has offered prayer services, a weekly social justice prayer, educational forums, and special programs to help the parish reflect on the Gospel and what it requires in a complex, anxious world. About twenty parishioners have participated in “Sacred Ground,” the Episcopal Church’s curriculum on becoming the Beloved Community.

Caring for Creation

Members of the Social Justice group led a series of nine forums after Sunday services in Spring 2025 using the “Love God, Love God’s World” curriculum from The Episcopal Church. Outcomes of those learnings have included encouraging parishioners to bring their own coffee mugs for coffee hour to reduce the use of paper cups; our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and Lenten Soup Suppers have used dishes and silverware instead of disposable products. Energy efficient fixtures and bulbs were upgraded throughout the campus, resulting in significant energy and dollar savings. In February St. Matthew’s applied to the State of Connecticut for permission to install a solar energy system. If accepted, installation will begin late spring or early summer of 2026.

Holding suffering and hope together

Many in our congregation understand part of St. Matthew’s calling as being a communal container for suffering—holding pain, doubt, and fear together in prayer, vigils, marches, silence, and shared action rather than in isolation.

Our Challenges and Hopes for the Future

St. Matthew’s hopes for a future that is spiritually vibrant, numerically stronger, more outward-facing, and clearly grounded in Christ’s love and mission. Even before COVID-19 we were beginning to see a drop in engagement and attendance from what had been a very large multi-generational congregation, known for its strong Church School and youth programming. We now find ourselves smaller in numbers but stronger in our dedication to following Jesus’s call to love God and love neighbor while growing in our faith and proclaiming the Gospel.

	2025	2024	2023	C O V I D	2019	2018	
Sunday Services	52	53	55			100	108
Weekday Services	15	8	11			30	37
Pastoral Visits (priest)	12	21	21			20	21
Pastoral Visits (lay)	9	2	5			6	
Total Sunday Attendance	2,626	2,721	2,909			7,897	8,560
Baptisms	1	1	1			2	2
Confirmations	1	5	1			23	23
Marriages	0	0	0			0	0
Funerals/Burials	1	1	3			5	6
Average Sunday Attendance	51	52	56		135	164	

Spiritual life and identity

We are open to a church that is less rote and more alive; where worship, preaching, music, and formation genuinely empower people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. We desire to be a community that remains welcoming, sacred, and rooted in Gospel hope, inviting people to bring sincere devotion as well as sincere questions. We realize we need help in letting our light shine more outwardly personally as well as corporately, instead of hiding our charisms under a bushel (Mark 4:21).



Growth, vitality, and sustainability

As with so many congregations today, we would love to see growth in membership, our Sunday worship attendance, and more children, youth, and young families. There are a core group of people sharing the workload and leadership and we seek to raise up new leadership. We seek to increase our generosity of time, talent, and treasure,

with stabilized finances and true viability—or, if that proves impossible, a thoughtful plan that stewards the endowment faithfully. We have a dedicated, experienced Finance Committee and our financial practices have been very careful and thoughtful, even as we continually spend more than we receive in pledges. We have noted that many of those who are no longer active were not as committed financially, although many of our long-time retired members moved out of the community during the pandemic as the housing market was in their favor. Still, we have a renewed sense of vibrancy, energy, and joy in the life of the congregation at this moment in time. We enjoy each other and our fellowship has grown stronger.

Community, intergenerational, and inclusivity

We hope our church will again span generations, where older members mentor younger ones and youth and children have robust opportunities for worship, learning, service, and fun. We desire to be a place where people feel welcome, known, supported in hard times, and inspired to participate actively in parish life—not just attend. We regularly participate in Wilton Pride and Wilton’s Summer Sidewalk Fair, representing St. Matthew’s with a visible tent while handing out fun objects like beach balls and frisbees with our logo.



Outreach, justice, and being a beacon of hope

We are active in social justice and outreach to the community. We hope to be a congregation that looks beyond its walls: bringing church into the community, listening to what neighbors need, and using our assets to help others rather than merely to keep the doors open. We seek deeper engagement in service, justice, and reconciliation—through partnerships like Braver Angels, interfaith work, and educational offerings—and through expanding the use of our building for the good of the town. Our hope is to be a visible beacon of hope and love in a stressed, polarized world, open to other faiths and committed to meaningful connection rather than adding more noise.

Leadership and shared responsibility

We desire a magnetic, intelligent, spiritually grounded priest to serve as our rector who will draw people in but with the clear understanding that renewal cannot rely on one person alone. We have experienced leaders but desire a culture where more members step up to share leadership, shape the church's future, and discern with clergy how God is calling St. Matthew's to thrive in new ways in an ever-changing world. Concern has been expressed that many of our leaders are over-worked and in jeopardy of burn-out.



Our 2025 Annual Auction's theme was "Boogie & Bid." It was an evening of fun and fellowship—we enjoy each other's company, some of us even dressing up for the 70s.

The Rector We Seek

St. Matthew's is hoping for a priest who is warm, relational, spiritually deep, an excellent preacher and communicator, and who can lead collaboratively while engaging the wider community in creative, outward-facing ways of ministry.

Pastoral and relational qualities

- Warm and personable, one who genuinely enjoys and relates to all ages: adults, youth, children, and less devout seekers, not just those already committed in active participation through such metrics as pledging, regular worship attendance, or engagement in Sunday programs.
- Demonstrates real care for parishioners' religious, social, and personal lives, including strong pastoral care for the grieving, the struggling, and those on the margins.
- Open-minded, non-judgmental, good listener who takes time to learn and incorporate St. Matthew's history, traditions, and customs.

Spiritual depth and preaching

- Person of deep faith who can connect Christ's teaching with contemporary issues, justice concerns, and daily life in a thoughtful, challenging, and hopeful way.
- Strong, engaging preacher: fresh perspectives, intellectually serious, spiritually grounded, vibrant and charismatic enough to attract and retain people.
- Able to challenge the congregation to grow as Christians (helping people discern how God may be calling them into action in the local or wider community).

Leadership and vision

- Confident, energetic leader who can cast a clear vision for how St. Matthew's can survive and prosper, including realistic "plan B" thinking about viability.
- Comfortable delegating, collaborating, building up lay leadership, and avoiding micromanagement; sees leadership as community-building, not solo heroics.
- Willing to make tough decisions when needed, while maintaining trust and transparency.
- Pastoral skills to help members move from nostalgia of "what has been" to look to the future with excitement and energy.

Community and mission focused

- Sees the potential in the pews as well as in Wilton and surrounding areas to help the parish connect with social service agencies, other churches, and community institutions.
- Outward-facing, boots on the ground presence: active in town life, schools, and events; willing to offer ministry beyond the building and beyond Sunday morning.
- Passionate about outreach, justice, and creating new ways of service, social gatherings, and worship that meets people where they are.

Style, gifts, and hopeful qualities

- Authentic, smart, creative, out-of-the-box, with a sense of humor and the ability to laugh at themselves as well as with us.
- Enjoys fellowship, values intergenerational life, supports children/youth/family ministry, and cares about music and existing partnerships (especially with Wilton Presbyterian Church).

What We Offer Our New Rector

St. Matthew's can offer our new rector a devoted, welcoming congregation, strong and dedicated leaders, and a genuine opportunity to lead renewal and creative change in a vibrant community.

A committed, caring congregation

We are warm, loving, loyal parishioners who care about faith, one another, and doing God's work. We will partner with and support our rector's leadership. A core group of thoughtful, educated, involved lay leaders are ready to take responsibility, experiment, and get behind efforts to grow the church and St. Matthew's visibility in Wilton and the wider community.

Strong physical and local assets

We have an attractive, well-cared for physical plant: beautiful sanctuary, excellent organ, flexible space for worship and gatherings, and a large, newly updated rectory nearby but not next door. Wilton is a family-oriented town with quality schools, healthcare, and easy access to New York City, the Connecticut coast, parks like the Norwalk River Trail and Weir Farm National Historical Park, and scenic New England

roads within a vibrant, affluent, educated community. Wilton has recently been named one of the top ten communities in Connecticut to live in (*Travel & Leisure*, February 2026).



The rectory is 1.6 miles from St. Matthew's (about 6 minutes). It is newly updated 4 bedroom 2.5 bath home with 2 fireplaces, LR & DR, eat-in kitchen and partially fenced in backyard with a firepit and patio.

A community with ecumenical and interfaith connections

Wilton is a town with opportunities for interfaith and community collaboration, including an active inter-faith group which St. Matthew's is a key, founding member. Wilton is home to a Roman Catholic church, Congregational church, non-denominational church, Quaker Meeting House, Reformed Jewish Synagogue, Hindu temple, a small Muslim community, and a new Church of Latter-Day Saints. Our established partnership with Wilton Presbyterian Church, offers collegial relationships, shared ministry possibilities, and peer support for the rector.

Real opportunity for impact and renewal

We feel we are in a turnaround or build something new period: we are a functional but challenged parish that is open about being in transition and eager to try new ways of worship, community, and outreach. We can offer members who are ready to create change in a community that admits it has been relatively docile and now wants to be active, innovative, and more deeply connected to Wilton and beyond.

Trust, warmth, and a shared life

We have a reputation—even among non-members—for being warm, inviting, and musically strong, with a robust choir and lively Sunday worship life. Our parish community loves each other, offers sincere trust and support, and wants our new rector not only to serve with us but to find a true home and a place to grow spiritually and vocationally themselves as well.

JOIN US ON THE JOURNEY

Applications are being accepted now through May 4, 2026. Please contact the Rev. Canon Kevin Olds (kolds@episcopalct.org) of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut for more information.

Directly, you may apply at this link:

<https://www.episcopalct.org/clergy-employment-application/>



About the Greater Community

A suburban community 55 miles northeast of New York City, Wilton is in the western portion of Connecticut in Fairfield County, with the closest city being Norwalk on its southern border. With a 2026 population of 19,501, Wilton is currently growing at a rate of 0.63% annually and its population has increased by 5.97% since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 18,403 in 2020.



Hundreds of preserved 18th and 19th century homes scattered among modern estates, make Wilton an attractive community for executives at the numerous successful businesses in Wilton and within a thirty-mile radius. A town center with several restaurants, retail stores, and a grocery store and post office complement the "old" town center anchored by the Wilton Library.

Educational Facilities

Known for its school system, Wilton is ranked #3 of all Connecticut school districts by Niche.com. Wilton High School is ranked in the top 1% of high schools and ranked #5 of all Connecticut high by US News and World Report. Wilton's 3,715 students attend 4 different schools, each supported by a strong PTA.

- Miller-Driscoll (PreK-2nd Grade)
- Cider Mill (3rd-5th Grade)
- Middlebrook School (6th-8th Grade)
- Wilton High School (9th-12th Grade)

Wilton is also home to several nursery schools and private educational institutions, ranging from early childhood centers and Montessori schools to specialized middle and high schools.

Recreation

Recognized as a parish in 1726, today's Wilton offers hints of its colonial farming roots by maintaining open spaces to preserve its heritage. In 1999 a beautiful 200-year-old working farm was purchased by the town as part of its open-air initiative. Along with community events, Amber Farm now provides active-learning programs, sustainable agriculture and responsible land stewardship. A second farm, maintained by the National Park Service, celebrates Wilton's artistic legacy. This National Historic Site, Weir Farm, commemorates the life and work of J. Alden Weir and other artists who made this farm their rural retreat.

Wilton's Parks and Recreation department is housed in the Comstock Community Center where preschool through senior activities are held and through which Wilton's 200+ acres of developed recreational facilities are managed. Town favorite 17-acre Merwin Meadow Park contains a swimming pond, picnic facilities, and athletic fields. Other non-profit agencies such as Wilton Little League and Wilton Soccer Association. The Wilton Family YMCA has activities for all ages.

Transportation

With easy access to the Merritt Parkway and I-95 and with two train stations (Danbury Line of Metro-North) with free parking, Wilton is commutable to the area's major employment centers. The train provides direct service to Norwalk (8 mins), Stamford (15 mins), Greenwich (25 mins), and NY City's Grand Central Station (70 mins)

to the south; New Haven and Boston to the north. The Norwalk Transit District bus route runs between Norwalk and Danbury along the Route 7 corridor. Westchester, LaGuardia, and JFK airports in New York are within easy driving distance (30 min – 1.5 hours). Alternatively, Wilton is home to many national and regional businesses allowing residents to live and work in one place.



Medical Care

Medical care in Wilton is provided through several primary care practices, urgent care centers, and specialized surgical facilities, primarily located along the Danbury Road (Route 7) corridor. Local hospitals include:

- Norwalk Hospital – 6 miles
- Stamford Hospital – 11 miles
- St. Vincent’s Hospital, Bridgeport – 12 miles
- Danbury Hospital – 15 miles
- Greenwich Hospital – 15 miles
- Yale-New Haven Hospital – 26 miles