

St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church
57 Griffith Street
Welland, ON
Pastor: The Rev. Jukka Saarinen 905-327-2799

Email: stmatts@cogeco.net
Website: stmattthewswelland.com
905-734-4746
Chairperson: Sinikka Speck 905-735-2003



THE ST. MATTHEW'S MESSENGER

AUGUST 2020

WELCOME BACK!

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP SERVICES RESUME

September, 13 at 11:00 a.m.

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Reverend Jukka Saarinen

“I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord.” Psalm 122:1

Starting Sunday, September 13 we will be able to gather for worship. Because COVID-19 is still with us, there will be limitations to our in-person worship services. Our reopening plan follows the guidelines recommended by the Ontario government, the Niagara Region, as well as the Eastern Synod. These are the basic guidelines for the Eastern Synod's 'Amber Stage':

- Corporate worship may be conducted in-person; the wearing of face coverings (covering nose, mouth and chin) is required in the Niagara Region:
 - The Eucharist may be celebrated, with distribution of the bread only.
 - Congregational ensemble and choir singing are discouraged. Singing by one soloist is permissible with augmented physical distancing.
 - The Peace will be shared using non-contact gestures while remaining in place.
- Online services continue to be offered in addition to in-person worship.
- Larger in-person meetings may resume where physical distancing is possible. Food and beverages should not be served or shared.

- Public Health sanitization protocols must be followed after each use of our buildings.

If you do not feel comfortable joining us at this point, we pray for your continued health and well-being, and remind you to please continue to enjoy the recorded services available on our website. Many thanks to Bob Hansen for continuing to do such an excellent job with this ministry!

Despite the restrictions placed upon us, our community of faith continues to minister to one another and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Again, I thank everyone who continues to pray for us and support us with your generosity, so that our community of faith can continue to function under these circumstances. I, along with your church council, look forward to resuming in-person worship.

See you in church!

“In response to God's love, St. Matthew's is a faith community welcoming all to grow in faith, to worship Christ and to reach out to others.”

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE AMBER STAGE

Before you arrive

Please be prepared to wear a mask throughout the service, that covers the chin, mouth and nose. (If you do not have a mask, one will be provided for you.)

Entrance door

The door at the corner of Kent and Griffith is the only door we will be using until further notice.

The door closest to the parking lot will be locked. The office, kitchen and other public areas are off limits for now.

Coffee Hour

While we so look forward to gathering together for worship, coffee hour is on hold for now.

Inside the church

All persons will be asked to sanitize their hands with the sanitizer provided. We will be asking for your name and contact information each Sunday. We are obliged to do so by the Ministry of Health so that we may contact you in case of an outbreak. This list will be used only for this purpose and destroyed when no longer needed.

Please note that we will abide by public by-laws and maintain 2 metre separation between families. Please follow the markings on the floor to keep us apart and safe. We ask that everyone use the centre aisle to find seats. Use the outside aisles, along the walls, after receiving communion and to exit the church. Worship guides will be waiting for you on the church pews.

Singing

Congregational ensemble and choir singing are discouraged. Singing by one soloist is permissible with augmented physical distancing. Our lovely Sylvia Tollar will be our soloist to help keep the music alive! The congregation may softly hum along.

Sharing the Peace

The Peace will be shared using non-contact gestures only while remaining in place.

Offering

We will not be passing the offering plate. Instead, the offering plate will be waiting for you at the entrance of the church at the top of the stairs.

Communion

The Eucharist will be celebrated, with distribution of the bread only at this time. Like our summer tradition, Pastor will serve communion at the foot of the stairs. Anyone who receives communion is asked to return to their seat before removing their mask to consume the bread.

Exiting the Church

We ask that the congregation exit the church after the Blessing, during the last hymn. We will exit one side at a time and stay 2 metres apart to ensure physical distancing.

We all so look forward to seeing everyone in church once again!

— Pastor Jukka and the gang.

Stay home if you have any of the symptoms outlined in the COVID-19 symptoms on the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 website; have come in close contact with a person with symptoms of COVID-19 or who has come in close contact of a confirmed case COVID-19, in the past 14 days; or have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days.

Common symptoms of COVID-19 include: Fever (temperature of 37.8°C or greater), New or worsening cough, Shortness of breath (dyspnea)

Other symptoms of COVID-19 can include: Sore throat, Difficulty swallowing, New olfactory or taste disorder(s), Nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, Runny nose, or nasal congestion – in absence of underlying reason for these symptoms such as seasonal allergies, post nasal drip, etc.

REFLECTION, COMMUNION IN AMBER; AUGUST 14, 2020

Bishop Michael Pryce

On the evening of Saturday, March 14th I sat down to prepare a guest sermon I was to deliver the next day at St. Peter's Church in Kitchener. Writing a sermon this late is unusual for me but I thought it wise to wait, given the rapidly shifting situation of the novel corona virus. Around 8:00 pm I received a call from Pastor Mark Ehlebracht informing me that the service would be cancelled with online worship starting the following week. Nothing has been the same since then. You, of course, have your own memories of that week.

Churches were asked to do the seemingly impossible: gather without gathering. This has taken place across the synod, nation and globe in a variety of formats – live-streamed, recorded, or the sharing of written materials – involving a diversity of content. Some congregations have used Service of the Word, while some have had virtual communion, but all have had to be exceedingly inventive as we gather for worship. People, however, pine to worship face to face in their buildings. This moment is upon us.

We may imagine that our experience of worship in the Amber Stage will be more real than our present virtual worship. But worship upon return will be drastically different from what it was pre-Covid. Some will find the experience of communion in one kind (bread alone) to be disorienting. Many of us will have had that disorienting experience in sharing communion virtually, asking ourselves: is this really communion? In responding to that question, it is important to revisit what Lutherans believe about communion.

First, Communion is a gift and the content of that gift is the presence of Jesus who unites the divine self with us in a tangible, fulsome, and empowering way. However, Lutherans do not understand communion to be necessary for salvation. God in Christ also meets us in the sermon, in baptism, and in the mutual care we offer one another. Communion is, however, empowering, and might be likened to a hug from God, for which many of us ache.

Further, communion is a coming together of a community. When I draw near to God, and you draw near to God, we draw near to one another. Many of us have sorely missed

this aspect of communion and look forward to that intimacy of face to face worship.

Communion, in sum, is God's "Yes!" to us. It has been described as a visible word. The gospel word of unconditional love in the sermon is now seen and smelt, tasted and felt in the meal. But we might ask, is this "Yes!" compromised when we only taste one element? When our gathering is distanced? When the hug feels more like a handshake? Will this really be communion?

In answering this question, it is important to look at our past experiences of communion with an honest gaze and ask: Has communion always felt like a gift? Have we always found joy in our sibling at the table? Have we always walked away from the communion rail feeling that we have heard God's "Yes!?" Of course, the answer to these questions is "no." Communion is about relationship and relationships are messy, fractured, and uneven. This is the nature of life.

Our experiences at the altar upon return to churches will be broken, as have been our experiences of virtual worship, as has been our experiences of pre-Covid 19 communion. What makes communion fulsome is not our experience of communion, but God's promise that this meal is "for you." God promises the divine presence in Jesus and with him the presence of our siblings in Christ – those alive and those beyond life in eternal life. This promise is the power of the "Yes!" And Luther was insistent that God's gospel work regularly is done in fractured and broken experiences. This is the surprise of the gospel. What might this mean for a return to Amber Stage worship?

We need to be prepared to be surprised. Things will be different, but difference is not bad. God has written difference into the architecture of creation. Of course, we will lament what we miss but we will also need to dream, imagining how we can make the most of new realities. Such dreaming is only possible when we allow ourselves to fail, knowing that as we explore this strange new world with our hearts open to God and one another, such failure will not be fateful, but rather, faithful to God's "Yes!"

PROPERTY REPORT

Norm McLeod

The main capital project this summer has been the repairing and painting of all of the exterior walls and trim of the church. Paramount Painting has done an excellent job. It was completed in early July.

Other smaller projects include repairing a dripping waterline in the church basement and purchasing like-new stainless-steel appliances for the parsonage: stove/oven, French-door fridge/freezer (only 4 years old) for \$1400.

Thank you to Frances McKenzie for planting and maintaining a floral display at our church sign.

Unfortunately, three projects were disrupted by COVID-19. Necessary electrical repairs to the altar window lights, the fellowship hall light, a breaker panel upgrade and fixing a raised sidewalk slab on our East side. We hope these repairs can move forward in the Fall.

OUR SYMPATHIES TO:

Gladys Pearson and Sid Smith at the death of their brother, **Alvin Smith**, in July 2020.

Terry Schrock at the death of her son, **Michael White**, on July 9, 2020.

Charlotte Cronshaw at the death of her husband, **Fred Cronshaw**, on July 21, 2020, in Port Colborne ON

The Duly Family at the death of **Ellen Duly** on August 11, 2020. Ellen was the wife of the late Wilfred Duly (2016), both former members of St. Matthew's.

LESSER FESTIVAL DAYS

SEPTEMBER 14 – Holy Cross Day

SEPTEMBER 21 – Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

SEPTEMBER 29 – Michael and All Angels

OCTOBER 18 – Luke, Evangelist

OCTOBER 28 – Simon and Jude, Apostles

OCTOBER 31 – Reformation Day

NOVEMBER 1 – All Saints Day

NOVEMBER 30 – Andrew, Apostle