

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

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Website: [stmattthewswelland.com](http://stmattthewswelland.com)  
905-734-4746  
**Chairperson:** Sinikka Speck 905-735-2003



## THE ST. MATTHEW'S MESSENGER DECEMBER 2020

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### CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

#### Thursday, December 24 at 7:00 p.m.

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#### PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Reverend Jukka Saarinen

The year 2020 will be one that many people will want to forget. The pandemic COVID-19 has caused havoc to all parts of our world. It has affected our work, social, family and religious gatherings. The coming Christmas season will be different from the usual joyous family and religious gatherings.

Our Christmas Eve service will be limited due to stricter public health regulations. Both First Lutheran and St. Matthew's will only be permitted 30% of the maximum capacity of people for worship to ensure that everyone can keep a safe distance from one another. This means that anyone who plans to attend Christmas Eve worship must contact the church office by phone or email to reserve a spot. If you do not make a reservation, you may be turned away due to limited space. All other safety precautions that have been in place for Sunday worship will be maintained.

The pandemic COVID-19 should not be seen as the grinch who steals our Christmas celebrations. Yes, it has placed a dark cloud over the joys many want to celebrate at this festive time. But the pandemic cannot stop the good news of God's love which was proclaimed at Bethlehem. The good news came to shepherds watching over the flocks of sheep at night thinking no one cared about them. Since then the good news of the birth of a saviour has been proclaimed throughout generations who have endured war, plague, economic uncertainty and even to us during a pandemic. Nothing can stop God's love from invading our world. It is a love that generates care and generosity for one another despite that

chaos and turmoil the world may produce. Mary and Joseph found refuge and a place for their newborn child, which serves as a reminder that God is continually watching over us even at bleak times. Even the possibility of facing a provincial lockdown, being in isolation, or the possibility of cancelling

Christmas Eve worship will not stop Christmas from coming.

Bringing Christmas joy to one another is always available to everyone. Communicating with friends and family and sending our Christmas greetings will not stop because of a virus. Being generous and supporting our community of faith

will not stop because of COVID-19. Praying for one another and remembering past Christmases and loved ones who are not with us but remain in our hearts forever will not stop because of the pandemic. Christmas is not a one-day celebration. Christmas and the love of God is celebrated everyday throughout the year to everyone who believes in the good news of Christ.

Wherever you are, let the light of Christmas shine through the darkness which tries to overcome the love of God.

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

#### A Part of Our History...

"October 13 to November 3, 1918 – Church closed. Ban on churches and public meeting places owing to Spanish Influenza epidemic. No victims in the congregation, thank God!" (*recorded in the church records*)

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"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."

## UPDATE FROM COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON, SINIKKA SPECK

It has been an eventful, or should I say uneventful, year since the beginning of March. A year full of frustration and disappointment. I could never imagine cancelled worship services, fellowship gatherings, fundraising events and Christmas parties replaced with social distancing and limitations on worship.

Although in-person worship has resumed, it is not the same joyful experience. I miss singing, partaking of full communion and sharing in the fellowship that usually accompanies our Sunday gatherings. However, I do delight in the many ways our members continue to communicate and reach out to help those in need.

Recently I met with Melanie, our professional treasurer, and a true treasure to St. Matthew's. She tells me that in spite of COVID-19, and the loss of parsonage rental income, we are in good shape financially. Many, many thanks to all who have continued with their regular offerings. As we hoped, our shared ministry arrangement with First Lutheran has been a financial blessing. We also received two generous bequests that came at a time of financial uncertainty. With these bequests we were able to add funds to the current account, pay for capital projects and support the benevolence fund of the Synod.

We are in the process of planning Christmas services, and with COVID-19 it is difficult. Niagara has just entered the

Orange stage, and it is hard to predict what our area will be like in a month from now.

We will e-mail any changes to our planned worship to the members of the congregation and post them on our website. If you do not receive automatic updates, please sign up. Simply go to the website and submit your e-mail address. Bob will take care of the rest.

The efforts of many people keep our doors open. Again, a thank you to Pastor, Lily, Sylvia and Bob for assisting our worship; to Jen who keeps the church sanitized so that we may worship safely; and to Norm for his almost daily check of the parsonage as it remains vacant.

The year 2021, which marks the 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our church, will see some changes. Pastor Jukka plans to retire soon, and we have a call committee in place consisting of Bob Hansen, Dianne Yungblut and Melanie Funk Laskaris, who will work in conjunction with First Lutheran to facilitate this transition. Perhaps we will see improvement with COVID-19 in the Niagara Region, and be able to celebrate and honor these milestones with fewer restrictions.

I appreciate all of you for your continued support and prayers for each other and for St. Matthew's.

## ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

The Advent Season is a time of anticipation and excitement as we watch and wait for Christmas. This year the first Sunday of Advent falls on November 29, 2020. Throughout the four Sundays in Advent we will light the Advent candles during the worship service as we prepare to welcome the Christ-child. While we are still in the Amber stage of worship, planning for our Christmas season must be done with great care and consideration. **St. Matthew's is planning a Christmas Eve service at 7:00 p.m. Because we are limited to a maximum of 30% capacity, we are asking that everyone who would like to attend the Christmas Eve service to RSPV to the church office ([stmatts@cogeco.net](mailto:stmatts@cogeco.net) or 905-734-4746) no later than Sunday, December 20.** We will

need to know the total number of people worshipping together who are in the same social bubble. We will create a planned seating arrangement to ensure that we can make the most efficient use of our space while still maintaining a 2 metre separation of all social bubbles. Reservations will be available on a first-come, first-served basis and we will try to post weekly updates on seating availability throughout December. **If the number of people planning to attend Christmas Eve service exceeds our capacity, we may hold a second service at 10:00 p.m.** For those who are not ready to join us for in-person worship, please continue to enjoy our worship services available on our website: [stmatthewswelland.com](http://stmatthewswelland.com)

## LUTHERAN WOMEN UPDATE

Recently St. Matthew's Lutheran Women received a very generous donation of \$5,000.00 from the estate of our long-time member Mrs. Jean Weber. Knowing that many not for profit organizations were struggling financially during the COVID 19 pandemic, and inspired by St. Matthew's mission goal of "reaching out to everyone" we chose to share our gift with the following community organizations.

- The Hygiene Cupboard and Harvest Dinners - Holy Trinity Anglican Church -Welland
- Women's Place - Welland
- Niagara Nutrition Partners – Welland Schools
- Heartland Forest – Niagara Falls
- Wellspring Niagara – Fonthill
- As well as our ongoing support for several other traditional projects.

As well, we are delighted that 2 of our senior members, Betty Scheel and Inge Poetzinger have been very busy knitting an abundance of hats and slippers for the

community and our shut ins. Thank you Betty and Inge.

Seven of our bible study women met on Zoom in October and November. We were surprised by the ease of discussion and the enjoyment of seeing each other in this new way.

Our Christmas Zoom "get together" will be take place at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>. All St. Matthew's ladies and friends are invited to join us for a 1 hour gathering of scripture, carol singing and reflection. To join the gathering on your computer, tablet/iPad or cell phone, please send me an email at [dianne.yungblut@gmail.com](mailto:dianne.yungblut@gmail.com). On December 14<sup>th</sup> I will send you an invitation with a meeting link. All you need to do is click the link. I am happy to practice with you personally between now and Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>. Contact me by phone: 905-735-1152 or by email. Zoom is easy to use. We hope that you will join us.

If you would like to donate to the Hope Centre Soup Kitchen you may send your donation to our LW treasurer Marilyn Schultz, 531 Clare Ave. Welland, ON, L3C 3B6

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### LESSER FESTIVAL DAYS

DECEMBER 26 – Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

DECEMBER 27– John, Apostle and Evangelist

DECEMBER 28 – The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

JANUARY 1 – Name of Jesus

JANUARY 18 – Confession of Peter

FEBRUARY 2 – Presentation of Our Lord

### OUR SYMPATHIES TO:

**Inge Milde** and family at the death of husband and father, **Heinz Milde**, on September 26, 2020.

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### BIRTH CONGRATULATIONS

To **Ruth Kiers** on the birth of another great grandchild, **Ava Joanne Hagt**, born on November 4, 2020, to Jennifer and Jeremy Hagt.

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

**Hilda Finlayson:** Ville de Rose, 310-370 Hellems Ave, Welland ON L3B 0B5. Tel: 905-788-0623

**Terry Schrock:** Royal Rose Place, 635 Prince Charles Dr. N, Rm 125, Welland ON L3C 0C7.  
Tel: 905-480-0380

**Stay home if you have any symptoms of COVID-19; 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.