

St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church
57 Griffith Street
Welland, ON
Pastor: The Rev. Bart Coleman 289-821-9025

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



THE ST. MATTHEW'S MESSENGER DECEMBER 2021

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP Friday, December 24 at 6:30 p.m.

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Reverend Bart Coleman

Do you remember what was going on for you a year ago this time? Tempestuous politics in the US and reports of the development of vaccines for the COVID virus dominated the news. This time a year ago, "the Great One" broke another record as Wayne Gretzky's rookie trading card sold for over a million dollars.

I can imagine based on stories you've shared your lives were filled with hope and uncertainty all mixed together. A call committee was meeting to consider the future. Council and worship planners were getting ready for Advent and Christmas. Some wondered how to safely deliver Christmas cheer to those who are homebound. A creative group came up with "stop drop, step back and chat". Sinikka and Brian opened their home as a gathering area for food and other items to be given to those in need.

Then.... as COVID cases increased it was necessary to suspend many in person gatherings including worship. Family gatherings were likely scaled back, holiday events and traditions likely didn't take place (or at least in the ways we're used to).

A year later....

- Yet worshipping together meeting in person and sharing communion.
- Bob Hansen has worked to provide worship services online and many are still participating online.
- We're singing (through our masks) to Lily and Jennifer's beautiful playing and Sylvia's singing to lead us.

- We're reaching out to those who are homebound and bringing the sacrament to them too.
- We concluded interviews and called a pastor (and when he arrived invited him to contribute to this newsletter).
- We celebrated the installation for a pastor (November 14) and welcomed him and his spouse Sharon for their first Sunday on October 3.
- We celebrated Thanksgiving, Reformation, All Saints, and Christ the King.

What next?

- A transition team of folk from First and St. Matthew's meets to help the pastor get acquainted and at the same time to talk about what shared ministry might look like for us.
- We look forward to things we've "always" done on special days and holidays.
- We consider how to be the church knowing full well there are fewer of us and we're aging.
- We remain hopeful that God has lots for us to do together.
- We remain open to the Spirit's leading as we grow in loving God and our neighbour.
- We remain hopeful that even though we don't always know what's coming we have God and we have each other.

The Christmas greetings Sharon and I send out to family and friends this year will include lots of news about a big

"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."

move from one province to another as we've joined a new synod and new churches and are settling into a parsonage in Welland. We're still learning names and settling in. There are many days as I think back, I smile and comment, "that was joyous and that was fun." There are days I sigh and say, "that was tough" and offer prayers for those who need them. We are grateful for you and for God bringing us

together. As the days shorten and Christmas approaches many of us will be looking back to all the ways that God's promise to be with us has been fulfilled. Grace and peace to you this Advent and Christmas Season.

Pr Bart and Sharon

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AT ST. MATTHEW'S

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 28, 2021. Throughout the four Sundays in Advent, we will light the Advent candles during the 11:00 a.m. worship service as we prepare to welcome the Christ-child. Recently St. Matthew's council decided that **all people attending in-person worship at St. Matthew's must show proof of full vaccination against COVID-19** (exceptions for children under 12, and people with a medical exemption.)

This requirement allows us to remove capacity limits and include congregational singing in worship! There is plenty of room for everyone to worship with us on Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24 at 6:30 p.m.

These changes are not a full return to normal! Masks must still be worn by everyone, communion will continue to consist of bread only, and non-contact gestures will remain in place. 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

November 28, December 5, December 12, December 19, 11:00 a.m. – Sundays in Advent

December 24, 6:30 p.m. – CHRISTMAS EVE worship service

December 26, 11:00 a.m. – LESSONS AND CAROLS; join us to sing your favourite Christmas Hymn requests

NEWS AND NOTES

Pastor Bart's Contact Information

Although there is some flexibility, Pastor Bart plans to dedicate Wednesdays and Thursdays for ministry at St. Matthew's, and Tuesdays and Fridays for ministry at First Lutheran; however, you may contact him anytime. The most efficient way to contact Pastor Bart is to call (or text) his cell phone: 289-821-9025. You are also welcome to email: bartsterc@gmail.com or call and leave a message on his home phone: 289-820-7713.

Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes for 2022 are now available. Financially supporting St. Matthew's has never been easier! We can now accept donations by cheque, cash, signing up for monthly bank withdrawals through the PAR program, e-transfer to stmatts@cogeco.net, or in-kind transfer of publicly traded securities. Please ask if you have any questions about any of these giving opportunities! Please remember that all donations included on your 2021 receipt for income tax purposes must be received or postmarked by December 31, 2021.

Annual Meeting

Our in-person annual meeting will be after worship on February 6, 2022. Please send all 2021 annual report submissions to the office as soon as possible, but no later than January 9, 2022.

Confirmation

COVID-19 delayed many things in our lives, including Confirmation. If you know of anyone who is interested in Confirmation, please have them contact Pastor Bart.

Website

Our website, www.stmatthewswelland.com, is a fantastic resource for everything that is happening at St. Matthew's. Thank you, Bob, for all your work!

Eastern Synod Weekly

The Eastern Synod Weekly is a convenient new source for information, updates, announcements and resources to support the life of our Synod. Go to the website <https://easternsynod.org/the-eastern-synod-weekly/> to register for these regular email updates.

www.stmatthewswelland.com