



# Matt's Media

The Newsletter of St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Islington

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## From the Pastor

*Rev. Philip Stonhouse*

Hello to my St. Matthew's family,

To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces . . . who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. (*1 Peter 1:1-2*)

A lot of effort has been made over the last few decades to separate faith from the rest of life; whether in the separation of Church and State, the mind from the spirit and body, removing faith and prayers from our education system, making faith (along with politics and money) a taboo subject at parties, or limiting our Christian practices to Sunday. To some degree, we can understand why. Much harm has been done in the name of faith. And it is easier to blame human brokenness and selfishness on faith than to confess that our selfishness is ingrained and that we need to be fixed.

So here we have the problem: we are ignoring the real issue. And to make matters worse, we are removing the solution by removing faith. We can see this in numerous ways in our society. Health practitioners are realizing more and more that in order to treat the body, you must also treat the mind and spirit. In law, there is a strong OUTCRY FOR MERCY AND JUSTICE rather than law based on precedent, which is steering farther and farther away from the Christian law on which it was based. We are seeing an individualistic society doing whatever each person thinks is right in their own eyes to the harm of themselves, others, and the world instead of being guided by God's greater way. We are seeing more adversarial attitudes in almost all areas of life, but especially in politics, money, and faith because people are no longer talking about these issues and finding common ground. We see the breakdown of community, mutual accountability, and support because we have CONFINED ourselves onto our own little islands. These are all things that the Bible PROPHESES and shows us are natural consequences of removing God from our lives.

In these post-Christendom days (which in some ways is a good thing), it is especially important for us to be purposeful and thoughtful about how we integrate faith into our lives. We need to make faith in Jesus Christ a central part of every aspect of ourselves. Society doesn't support us in this endeavour; instead, it often stands in the way.

*... continued*

## From the Pastor *(continued)*

During this Lent, I don't ask that you fast from something as we typically do in Lent. Instead I want to challenge you to be practical about your faith practices. There are five primary areas I want you to think about:

- Worship
- Discipleship
- Fellowship
- Evangelism
- And Stewardship (Giving and Service)

Take a notepad and write down what you are doing in each area, then also write down one or two activities to challenge yourself in each area. Those of you who attended the half-day retreat where I guided your reflection on this found it immensely meaningful. I would encourage everyone to come to our March 2 full-day retreat, where once again I will walk you through the process in the morning, but then the afternoon will be spent in reflection, conversation, and practices as we each create for ourselves a purposeful, Christ-centred, Rhythm of Life.

This long-time practice has helped Christians for generations. The Sermon on the Mount has led us to this; the Monastic Communities built themselves around it, and even the Anglican Book of Common Prayer expresses that it is a worthwhile practice for all Christians. I hope and pray that you will join me in purposefully taking hold of your relationship with Jesus so that together we might grow in His love and build His Kingdom. Lent becomes a perfect time for us to reflect and transform our practices as we prepare ourselves for the revelation and restoration that is Jesus' death and resurrection.

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." (*Matthew 22:37*)

Your brother in Christ,  
Rev. Philip Stonhouse



# RHYTHM OF LIFE

Day Retreat Saturday, March 2, 10–5

Sign up on [saintmatts.ca](http://saintmatts.ca) or in the Narthex

## Wardens' Report

*Karen Lee, Marguerite Locke and Sharon Shao*

As we look forward to a new year with exciting possibilities for St. Matthew's and in our own lives, we must also reflect on the sermon message about 'Privilege' that Rev. Philip shared with us on Sunday January 7. We are a privileged family of Christians striving to Share Jesus' Love in a world of conflict, and of unhoused, hungry, and divided people. Despite such challenges and, of course, some on a personal level, we are very privileged to have the freedom to worship and share our faith in a parish built on a solid 75-year foundation. Such a privilege indeed!

The Wardens are excited with the continued growth in our attendance at our services and events. We thank God for the excellent leadership of Rev. Philip with new ideas, energy, and planning to engage a diverse range of parishioners. Our music ministry under Tyler's leadership is expanding with more participants and varieties of musical offerings lifting our spirits in thankfulness and joy on Sunday mornings. It is a privilege for us to worship together.

St. Matthew's has shared our privilege in a small way within our local community with a couple of outreach initiatives including the Food Cupboard, the Clothing Drives, and the Christmas gifts to less mobile members of our parish. Going forward we hope to assist again in the outreach work of Christ Church St. James Anglican Church on Park Lawn Road with donations of funds, gifts, and clothing for the many refugees who have arrived in Etobicoke.

Online worship and communication are key and are having a powerful impact on our parish. We are working with a sound technician to make a few improvements to the speakers in the sanctuary this year. Thankfully, the funds for these improvements are available.

One area that requires our constant consideration is the maintenance and improvement of our structures. Plumbing issues are on the list of concerns, particularly for the washrooms beside the gym. These need refurbishing and updating with plumbing fixtures that can accommodate high usage and better accessibility. The second area is our heating system. The current gas-fired boiler system is at least 25 years old and is on the "list" of endangered operations!!

It would be wonderful if a few people could brainstorm for fundraising ideas to offset the costs associated with some of the repairs and renovations. Let the wardens know if you have suggestions in this regard as our regular offerings cannot support major repairs.

We are delighted that so many ministries are thriving in our parish, and new participation is always welcome. If you have a particular interest and would like to be involved in any of the activities do not hesitate to reach out to a Warden or Rev. Philip who will connect you to the right individuals.

Parking signs were placed on the east lot to deter owners of vehicles who are not visiting or renting space at the church from parking on our property.

We look forward to 2024 with excitement and joy and Sharing Jesus' Love with each of you!

## Palm Crosses and Easter Flowers

*Sandra Wilson*

**Palm Crosses:** Volunteers are requested to make Palm Crosses on Friday, March 22 at 9:30 a.m. in the Lounge. No experience necessary. RSVP to Sandra Wilson, 905-625-3786.

**Flowers for Easter:** As has been our custom, we plan to order flowers for the Easter season. We appreciate the congregational support given for this each year. Please watch the weekly newsletter for order dates and prices.

## What's Happening

Tues Feb 13	Pancake Supper & Shrove Tuesday Service: 6 p.m.	Gym & Sanctuary
Wed Feb 14	Ash Wednesday Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person
	Ash Wednesday Worship: 7:00 p.m.	In person & online
Sun Feb 18	All Ages Worship: 9:30 a.m.	In person & online
	BAS Worship: 11:00 a.m.	In person & online
Tues Feb 20	Winter Tea: 2 p.m.	In person (Lounge)
Web Feb 21	BCP Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person
Sat Feb 24	Messy Church: 4:00 p.m.	In person (Gym)
Sun Feb 25	Unity Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person & online
	Vestry Meeting (following service)	
Tues Feb 27	Lenten Bible Studies begin (to March 19): 7:00 p.m.	In person & online
Wed Feb 28	BCP Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person
Sat Mar 2	Rhythm of Life day retreat 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.	In person (Lounge)
Sun Mar 3	Unity Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person & online
Wed Mar 6	Stations of the Cross: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	In person
	BCP Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person
Fri Mar 8	Stations of the Cross: 6 to 9 p.m.	In person
Sat Mar 9	Men's Breakfast: 8:30 a.m.	Sunset Grill
	Contact <a href="mailto:dave.oakden@gmail.com">dave.oakden@gmail.com</a>	1510 Dundas St. (Miss.)
Sun Mar 10	All Ages Worship: 9:30 a.m.	In person & online
	BCP Worship: 11:00 a.m.	In person & online
Wed Mar 13	BCP Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person
Fri Mar 15	Youth Group/Family Room: time tbd	In person
Sun Mar 17	All Ages Worship: 9:30 a.m.	In person & online
	BAS Worship: 11:00 a.m.	In person & online
Wed Mar 20	BCP Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person
Sat Mar 23	Messy Church: 4:00 p.m.	In person (Gym)
Sun Mar 24	All Ages Worship: 9:30 a.m.	In person & online
	BAS Worship: 11:00 a.m.	In person & online
Wed Mar 27	BCP Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person
Thurs Mar 28	Maundy Thursday Worship: 7 p.m.	In person & online
Fri Mar 29	Good Friday Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person & online
Sun Mar 31	Easter Sunday Worship: 6:30, 9:30, & 11:00 a.m.	In person & online
		Sunrise service in person only, Marie Curtis Park
Sun Apr 6	Unity Worship: 10:30 a.m.	In person & online



## Messy Church

*Linda Dickson*

We are busy planning for future Messy Church sessions. We are looking for people who would like to help with kitchen clean up. Join us for the meal in the gym at 5:30 p.m. then clean up in the gym kitchen at 6:00 p.m. RSVP to [Mrsldickson@gmail.com](mailto:Mrsldickson@gmail.com).

The theme on January 27 was "God's Winter Wonderland." Many fun activities were enjoyed with snow! Was it real or not? Ice castle doorways (inflated), a 'sandbox' full of snow (foam chips), a basket full of snowballs (cotton) and snow-related crafts (slime). Brief worship in the church with Rev. Philip was followed by dinner.

All families, relatives and friends, come out on February 24 from 4 to 6 p.m. to see for yourself and experience the fun. Be a part of our Messy Church family!



Call me for your home care needs

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## Club Matt Children's Program

Lianne Thompson

This is the time of year when the cold and the grey skies (due to either rain or snow!) can wear us out and bring down spirits. But how blessed we are that our faith is always a warm light to gather around. As one of our Club Matt children read at the Christmas Eve service, *"the light keeps shining in the dark, and darkness has never put it out."* (John 1:5) How wonderful!!!

### *2023 Pageant ~ On the road to Bethlehem*

What a joyous Christmas celebration we experienced on December 17. We were thrilled to watch 25 children and youth participate in the pageant this year, and one special guest adult (Simon Wukasch was a dynamic Herod)!

The children were spectacular in their telling of the story and their rendition of *Away in a Manger*. We are grateful to Reverend Philip for his exciting and dramatic leadership and to Tyler for his always-moving music. Thanks to the moms and dads who helped prepare their little ones, to the Club Matt and Youth leaders for making it all happen, and most especially...to the children and youth who brought the story to life!



### *Winter Program: The Wise Men and then...the Parables!*

We wrapped up the Advent/Christmas program with the children learning about the Wise Men and their long journey following the star to find the Christ child.

Now we have launched into our next segment in the Club Matt program – the amazing Parables.

## Club Matt Children's Program *(continued)*

The kids are learning the stories that Jesus told people – familiar tales that people would understand but that explained something TRUE about God. Ask the children on one of the upcoming Sundays what parable they learned that day!

### **We would love your help!**

The Club Matt team is looking for people to assist with special events or to help out leading in the program. Program lessons and activities are provided, and leaders teach on a rotation – so if you attend another service, you can simply attend the 9:30 service when you are scheduled. We are a fun group!

If you are interested in helping in the Winter/Spring programs, please speak to Lianne Thompson – we would love to tell you more.

## St. Matt's Youth

*Bryan Tran*

At the start of 2024, we began the Alpha Youth Program on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. This is a time for us to connect over food and worship music, explore our faith, and discuss life's big questions. Although we had a slight hiccup on our first morning with some minor flooding in the Youth Room from recent rainfall (special thanks to the clean-up crew), the program has been well-received and the youth are thoroughly enjoying the series. We look forward to the rest of the series, and especially the Alpha Weekend, which will include a sleepover at the church, and which just happens to coincide with the Rhythm of Life Day Retreat for adults.

The annual Youth Winter Radiate Retreat at Ontario Pioneer Camp is another outing we are looking forward to. Open gym time is something we are exploring as another avenue to provide a place and time for the youth to connect.

The Youth Leaders recently enjoyed attending a Theology Day, hosted by the BYMC (Bishop's Youth Ministry Committee) at All Saints Kingsway, which included a series of sessions designed to support our understanding and relationship to God. The Rev. Jeff Nowers from neighbouring church, Christ the King, hosted a session on Baptism and Communion, and his wife, the Rev. Dr. Alison Hari-Singh, hosted a session on the Trinity. It was a lovely day bookended by worship services, with a delicious Thai lunch served in the middle. Bishop Andrew Asbil and his wife, Mary, joined us for the morning and shared some encouraging words and hugs with the youth leaders present from around the Diocese.

We give thanks for our youth and all the different ways they serve at St. Matthew's.



**Feb 20  
2 pm**

**With Tyler Versluis, Music Director, speaking on Faith and Music**



**St. Matthew's Lounge  
RSVP to  
office@saintmatts.ca  
or 416.231.4014**

## FRIENDS for Friends

**Milk bags collection!** We need 250 more empty milk bags! We have a total of 250 collected so far! They are received in groups of 500... I am sure we can reach this number by Easter. In case you are not familiar with their use, the bags are crocheted into mats and used for flooring, beds, and carrying sacs. We must make sure they are clean, dry, and NOT FROM NATREL which are biodegradable.

**Soup to Warm your Soul.** Could someone you know use a warm hug from St. Matthews? We can offer this by way of a warm bowl of soup or chili. You can offer this to family, friends, neighbours, parishioners – anyone in need! There is a supply of frozen soup in the gym kitchen. Call the office or Deborah (905-625-7848) if you would like to pick up some.

**Individual-size soap, shampoo, lotions, etc.** Do you have a source for these toiletries? Perhaps a hotel stay is in your near future? If so, you could help here. We are providing gift bags at Easter this year, rather than last Christmas, to the homeless at the Toronto Urban Native Ministry (TUMN) at Holy Trinity. We need individual-size soap, shampoo, lotions, etc., which you might obtain from your hotel room. Please give them to Nancy or Deborah Hurn or call the church for pick up.

## Thank You for Helping Make 2023 Special

*Nancy Hurn*

We have received a note of thanks from Holy Trinity for our help in the past year. In 2024 we will help by providing gift packages for their Easter Feast.

“Thank you for helping make 2023 another special year of community building and support on Trinity Square. We could not do even a fraction of what we do without the enthusiastic support of our community of guests, volunteers, parishioners, staff, followers, and partners.

As many of you already know, 2023 has been a year of great shift and transition. Such times are never easy, but our determination to continue has already borne a lot of beautiful fruit under our new name of Trinity CommUNITY Hub at Holy Trinity.

As always, the best way to keep up to date on everything going on is at our [Linktr.ee](http://Linktr.ee). Please feel free to reach out with any ideas you may have in the new year.

Best Wishes,  
The Team at Holy Trinity  
Elizabeth Cummings (They/She)  
Open Hours Program Coordinator

Follow What We Do at [Holy Trinity](http://Holy Trinity) & [Trinity Community Hub](http://Trinity Community Hub)”

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## A Blue Christmas for Some at St. Matthew's

*Martha Lewis*

Christmas time: twinkling lights and tinkling bells; the smell of sugar and spice wafting from the kitchen; the laughter of children, young and old. Many of us have fond memories of Christmases past. But for some of us, Christmas time is a stark reminder that someone, something, or some special place is missing. Loved ones have been injured, they're ill, or they passed away. Jobs are lost. Relationships break down. Homes we once cherished are gone. Dreams crushed. No matter what happened to make us feel sad, Christmas comes once a year. The impression is that we should all be joyful. After all, this is a time to celebrate the birth of God's one and only Son, Jesus Christ.

So it was that several of us attended the Blue Christmas Service at St. Matthew's Church on December 13. Why had we come? Various personal reasons, I expect. Perhaps it might be a place of refuge. Maybe we came to be with others who were also struggling at this time of the year. Possibly we wanted to be in the beautifully decorated sacred place we call our spiritual home. We wanted to honour the ones we miss so much. We found a comforting pew, there in the candlelight, on which to rest. We could remember the ones we loved.

The service was simple and profound: meaningful. There was the liturgy, rich in Anglican tradition, modern and relevant to people in all sorts of circumstances. Throughout the service, there was a message of hope and empathy from Rev. Philip Stonhouse, our Incumbent. His tone was compassionate. The hymns were familiar and the music was meditative, thanks to Tyler Versluis, our organist and Director of Music.

The essence of the service was that we were there to recognize the birth of the Holy Baby. That one was Jesus: fully human, and at the same time, fully God. He lived on earth, as a humble carpenter. When His time came, He performed miracles among all sorts of people. He delivered sermons, referring to God as His Heavenly Father. He wept, too. Jesus suffered terrible pain, public humiliation, and abandonment by many of his closest family members and friends. Ultimately, Jesus died for us on the cross in order to bring us closer to Our Father, who loves us unconditionally. In short, Jesus knows how we feel. He was born to comfort us and to counsel us. He came to heal our wounds, and to bring us the kind of peace that passes all understanding. Christmas time is when I remember that Jesus was born with the promise of happier days in this life, and supremely happy times in the next.

A warm welcome awaited us in the Narthex following the service. There was hot apple cider and homemade baked goods: a real treat.

Thank you to everyone who made this service really very special, despite our situations.

My prayer for everyone is that, even if our burdens have not been removed yet, we were moving on a little lighter than before. Thanks be to God.



[investia.ca](http://investia.ca)

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Know you Advise you Guide you

## Advent and Christmas Season 2023 at St. Matthew's

Kathie Oakden

**The Chancel and Nave were decorated for the Season** with evergreen garlands, a fir tree at the front, and several nativity scenes (including the recent gift made from birch bark by Rev. Andrew and Esther Wesley). Christmas poinsettias were set out for the Pageant on December 17.



**Advent Lessons and Carols Service** was held on Sunday, December 3 at 4:30 p.m. Clergy, a Bell Choir, soloists, and choirs from St. Matthew's, St. Philip's Lutheran, and Christ the King churches joined together, alternating Bible readings and Christmas carols. The congregation joined in on several of the carols. You could watch it again on [St. Matthew's YouTube channel](#).

**Christmas Gift Bags** were prepared for our Seniors at home: A Christmas Cornucopia of Heartfelt Thanks: It takes many hands to put together our senior's gifts each year, and we are very grateful to those who have helped in any way.

Our first big thank you is to the very generous person (who wishes to remain anonymous) who gathers and sews the variety of items in the bags each year. Next are the Messy Church participants who designed cards and created colourful wreath ornaments. This year, our youth group decorated small stand-alone Christmas trees, and included a handwritten note with a meaningful message. About ten bakers made several different kinds of cookies to help fill the bags. Then several more volunteers delivered the bags to those who often find it difficult for one reason or another to attend church regularly. Lastly, a big thank you to those who boxed the cookies, inserted the tissue and tied the ribbons before delivery. All of your assistance is much appreciated in carrying out this yearly ministry.

*Extracted from St. Matt's Friday mail, of December 8.*





## Advent and Christmas Season 2023 at St. Matthew's

*Kathie Oakden*

**St. Matthew's Annual Christmas Pageant** took place on December 17 (see Club Matt, page 6).

**A Toy Drive** was held on December 17 for refugees being supported by Christ Church St. James. We delivered toys for about 24 babies, children and youth, and warm mittens for adults. See "Refugee Outreach" article on page 14.



**A delicious and festive Christmas Lunch** of turkey with all the trimmings – vegetables, mashed potatoes plus pie for dessert – was served in the gym on December 6 following the Wednesday Eucharist.

We were joined by Rev. Jeff Nowers and several parishioners from Christ the King Church, our neighbouring Anglican parish. We were also honoured by the presence of retired Indigenous Priest, Rev. Andrew and Esther Wesley, who presented St. Matthew's with their own hand-made Birch Bark Lodge and Nativity Figures, in appreciation for St. Matthew's efforts towards Reconciliation. Several of our Seniors were enabled to attend and presented with their gift bags. Thanks to all who contributed: the table setters, cooks, bakers, servers, and kitchen helpers.





## The Magnificats *Come Together* Encore

Linda Harrison

It is always wonderful to join in praise music. In the afternoon on January 21, as a 75th anniversary memory event, the resurrection of St. Matthew's first praise band was joyous.

The mid-1980's saw a time of spiritual rebirth in our parish. With the permission of Rev. Bill Kibblewhite, parishioners started an informal Sunday evening service called *Come Together*: a new type of worship led by parishioners, with testimonies of faith and the introduction of praise music accompanied by guitars, drums, and tambourines. The new band was called *The Magnificats*. We sang music that touched the soul and let our spirits rejoice in song. New energy emerged and depth of relationships grew. This informal worship ministry was part of our parish from 1986-1996. After a time, musical praise and lay participation became an expectation of our regular worship.



Getting the “band” back together was a chance to welcome friends back to St. Matthew's and to sing again the music that opened hearts and spirits. It was an opportunity to remember where we were at that time and how we have grown and developed since.

Thanks go to Bruce Gleeson, Ted Smith, Linda Kibblewhite, Linda Dickson, Mark Dickson, and George Anstey. Thanks also go to Tyler Versluis on piano for filling the void left by the passings of Colin Nusum, Sally Martin, and Doug Cuttall.

## The Chosen Video & Discussion Series

Linda Harrison

The Fall discussion and video sessions of *The Chosen* were thought-provoking and enlightening. Each week we could read the discussion material and view the video ahead of time. This gave the added advantage of absorbing more detail. We may have heard and read the gospel stories many times; with each retelling something new is revealed. *The Chosen* video series provided a very relatable, live version of the gospel. Watching it unfold on the “big screen” we could feel we were there, part of the retelling of our history.

The four weekly sessions, in person and on zoom, were a great way to focus on the early days of Jesus' ministry. As a group we watched the episode, gathered in prayer, experienced lively discussion, and then concluded in prayer. We were encouraged to continue more personal reflection during the week ahead. There was never enough time to address all the study material provided, but everyone felt comfortable to share and ask questions. Being part of a group discussion always brings out many points of view and life experiences. We need opportunities to speak out loud about our faith and our questions.

*The Chosen* discussion series was a wonderful faith learning and growth event.



## Put Me in, Coach!

We need each other – it's that simple. St. Matthew's is able to offer the wonderful and diverse programs and experiences that it does because of our volunteers. From making coffee on a Sunday morning to reading during worship, teaching our children about Jesus, welcoming, anointing, raising funds, running technology for services, and much, much more, volunteers are essential. And by offering their time and talents to the church, volunteers are able to deepen relationships with each other and with God.

Whether you have a lot of time or just a little, you are needed. Whether you prefer to help one-on-one or as part of a team, you are needed. Everyone can help. Everyone is valuable.

Not sure what fits you? Please speak with Rev. Philip, any team leader, or with Lisa in the office. And yes, of course you can try a few ministries (or all of them!) to find your best fit.

Let's start our countdown to a great year of volunteering at St. Matthew's.

3 – We need three or more volunteers to help livestream our services. Training is provided.

2 – Two or more people to read the scriptures during worship would be helpful.

1 – Lianne has requested one more volunteer for Club Matt.

Keep reading below for more opportunities.

## Opportunities

Will you contribute here? Training is provided. Contact in person or through the office.

*Make Palm Crosses (Sandra Wilson)*

- Friday, March 22 at 9:30 am in the Lounge (Parlour)

*Chancel Duties (Pat Currie, Sandra Wilson)*

- Purificator cloths: washing and ironing
- Communion vessels and altar coverings: set-up and tidy-up
- Flowers: assist, carry vases, bundle for distribution. Sandra Wilson, 905-625-3786

*Tech Team (Rev. Philip)*

- Operate the computer and the camera during Worship Services
- Connect with online and telephone worshipers
- Record the service for later views on YouTube.

*Coffee Hour Hosts (Sign-up sheet in Lounge kitchen doorway)*

- Bring cream, milk, snacks
- Serve coffee and tea
- Tidy up

*Messy Church (Linda Dickson)*

- Kitchen clean-up after dinner, occasionally. Join in for the meal at 5:30 p.m., then clean up in the kitchen at 6:00 p.m.

## Refugee Outreach at Christ Church St. James (CCSJ)

Many individuals in St. Matthew's assisted in community outreach by providing warm clothing, winter footwear, wonderful toys for the children at Christmas, and also a \$500 donation from Outreach funds to assist ongoing efforts. More assistance will be needed in the upcoming year.

*From Barb Patterson at CCSJ:* CCSJ started having refugees appear at the church door last spring. One family from Uganda had been dropped off at the Queensway motel with nothing. They were afraid to go out and didn't leave the building and didn't eat for three days. The father, David, finally went out to look around and happened to pass the church where we were having our Victoria Day Summer Sizzler for the neighbourhood. David saw that there was food and immediately ran back and got his family, so they took part in the food and all the festivities. Rev. David, our former priest, talked with them and the next day they started attending CCSJ. The family has three children, Shalom, Tendo and Lian, and mother, Eunice.

Next came a Mexican family with two children and none of them could speak English. Fortunately, we had two people who could speak Spanish, so they translated for them. Both families have been with us every Sunday even after they were moved to the Radisson Hotel by the airport. For a while, parishioners were picking them up and bringing them to church but over the summer we switched to Uber with the parish paying. Unfortunately, the Mexican family has been refused asylum and they are fighting deportation at the moment. The father has been working since he got here (a skilled tradesman) so one wonders why they would not be accepted.

Eunice from Uganda was a social worker there, so she connected with a lot of people at the motel and now the Radisson, so word got out that we were a friendly and supportive church and of course we have the Food Pantry as well. Eunice also helped us determine what the refugees needed. The first thing was food: with a microwave and a small fridge it was difficult to feed a family. Our first attempt was to let the people use our church kitchen where they would cook enough for a few days. Then we realized they had no kitchen supplies so we put together a Rubbermaid bin (which could be used for a table) containing plates, bowls, cups, utensils, can opener, cutting board, sharp knife, microwave casserole dish, towels, dishpan, tea towels and some personal stuff like toothpaste, brushes etc.) Each kit costs \$100. We have handed out at least 20 kits.

When October came the request for warm clothes became another primary need. A lot of families only had sandals and light clothing. This turned out to be an enormous task and we would not have been able to clothe people without St. Matthew's tremendous help and organization. We have clothed all the children on the 'Christmas present list' plus their parents.

During the summer months we started to have a steady stream of people from Nigeria and Kenya. So keeping up with the kitchen kits was time consuming and expensive. A lot of private donations have helped with this. Before Christmas a new group of Nigerians arrived so we have assisted another five families.

The Christmas presents provided by St. Matthew's were a terrific hit. The parents were thrilled and thankful, as most of these children are in a motel room with no toys at all.

As an aside, we have about 25 -30 refugees attend church each Sunday and the children's ministry and nursery are full. We went from three children at CCSJ last year to 25 at Christmas this year. It is a challenge for staff, volunteers and space in our already busy church, but a new and exciting challenge.

St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Islington presents:  
**Musical Moments at St. Matthew's**  
Tyler Versluis, artistic director

# RESURRECTION MUSIC



Aysel Taghi-Zada, violin,  
Michael Murphy, percussion and shō

SPECIAL GUEST

## DUO HOLZ

Percussion and violin pair Duo Holz perform music full of new life, including premiere works by

**Michelle Lorimer and Tyler Versluis**

**MAY 26, 2024**  
**2:30 PM**

**All Concerts Pay What You Can (\$20 suggested)**

**3962 Bloor Street West**

**saintmatts.ca office@saintmatts.ca 416.231.4014**



# Purposeful & Practical Faith

*A four-week study on living out our faith*

Taize

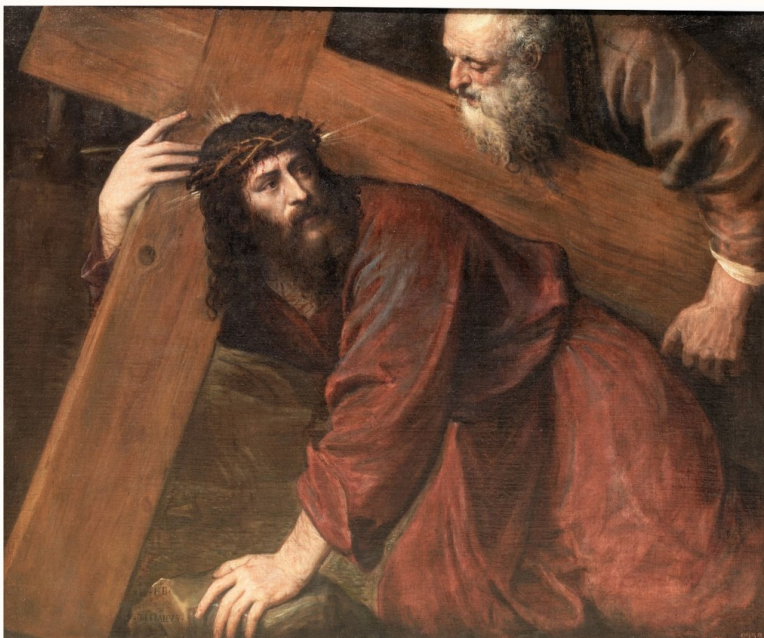
Compline

Bible Study

Self-Reflection

**Tuesdays 7 - 9 pm: February 27 to March 19**

## STATIONS OF THE CROSS



An interactive prayer walk to pray, feel, reflect, and experience Jesus' crucifixion in a unique and meaningful way.

Enrich your Lenten worship as you experience the stations at your own pace at any time within the listed hours.

Wed March 6  
11:30AM-1:30 PM

Fri March 8  
6:00-9:00 PM



## Where Have All the Children Gone

*Tyler Versluis*

As the pandemic hit Canada in 2020, the country quietly celebrated an historic milestone: its fertility rate fell to a record low of 1.40, down from 1.44 the previous year. This means that there were 1.4 children for every woman in Canada in 2020. Since that year, the fertility rate has increased somewhat, but the consensus is clear: Canada is a low-fertility country, and people of child-rearing age are largely not having children. It is expected that the fertility rate will continue to drop over the next decade.

Many people blame the high cost of living in Canada, as well as the lack of housing for the low fertility rate. Young couples, especially in urban areas, are stuck in one-bedroom homes or small rentals, with the concept of baby in the house nigh impossible to imagine. But are economics really the sole reason for this trend? On paper, this doesn't make sense because, on average, people with less money tend to have more children. Other excuses I have heard include the fear of passing undesirable characteristics on to their children (mental or physical illness, generational trauma), the anxiety of contributing to overpopulation, or the fear of raising children in a world ravaged by climate change. I would argue that all these fears are respectfully noted but exaggerated, and I think the true reason for adults not wanting to have children is more complex.

In the last 80 or so years, there has been a massive societal erosion of the family as the centripetal force for cultural building. While fatherhood and motherhood were largely seen as badges of respect and honour (almost mandatory for any sort of hierarchical advancement, especially in the work force) contemporary culture broadly ignores these roles, because parenthood is a moderating force. And the last thing our culture wants is moderation in any format. Businesses know that if a man becomes a father, he becomes distracted: less likely to work overtime or to go on work trips, and to sink in extra time for the business. He thus becomes less valuable to the company. Parents are less likely to go "all in." Thus, while parenthood in the past caused an ascension in social status, today's parent loses social status when they engage in child-rearing. I haven't even mentioned the immense conflict that mothers experience with the dual role of maintaining a career and raising children. A woman who completes a PhD but then halts her academic career to raise children is considered a huge "waste." This is depressing, but often the reality adults face.

Social theorist Christopher Lasch argued that capitalism, our economic system as we know it, has ended up in such a twisted, harmful state largely because the economy has stopped believing in families. In the past, family-friendly companies and businesses were the status quo and CEOs would ferociously defend this reputation. Working adults would pour their expendable income back into their families, and the cycle remained harmonious. However, this practice has stopped. At some point, business conglomerates realised that targeting the adult individual was more profitable, and the market largely turned towards "adult toys" in all formats: TV, social media, video games, personal hobbies and luxuries, things that one could enjoy either alone or with other adults. We live in a time where personal desires and self-discovery are more important than ever and, ultimately, the perception is that having children limits your freedom to pursue these things. All these circumstances have greatly reduced the societal pressure for adults to become parents. The average 30-year-old still feels they have so much to discover about themselves and the world, and the thought of giving that up to have children is frankly undesirable. It is for these reasons that I believe young people have ceased to enter the life of parenthood.

*... continued*

## Where Have All the Children Gone *(continued)*

Why have children when the incentive really isn't there anymore? Why have children when all you are going to do is submit yourself to 18+ years of hard labour and diminished social status? And why bother when none of your friends are having children, and the village community that supported child-rearing in the past is just not available in 2024?

As a parent, I contemplate these questions very seriously, and in honesty, I do not blame anyone for not wanting to have children. It is obviously very hard work, and the pressure to get married and have children is lower than ever before. So naturally, a lot of people will choose not to do it, if they don't have to. I also mourn with parents who want to have children, or want to have one more child, but for various circumstances cannot. But the reason I still believe in a child-centred culture, or a family-centred culture, is this: cultures that reject this worldview will naturally give in to despair, because raising a child, is by far, the longest-term investment you can make. It does not mean just selfishly passing on your genes and raising somebody who looks like you, it means building a pathway of hope for the future. Every parent wants to raise a child who multiplies goodness, love and truth, who works earnestly to solve the problems that lie ahead in our world. Viewing child-rearing and parenthood in any other fashion, is both inhuman and despairing, and is ultimately not Christ-like. By the way, if there's one thing the Anglican Church needs, it is more babies and cradle Christians.

As a Christian community, our work is to fight despair in all its manifestations. So how can we affect this negative trend on both large and small scales? Firstly, I believe as a church we need to be explicitly pro-family. It is not enough for us to be neutral about this descriptor. In the past we took this for granted because the church was naturally a family-raising hub, but now it is often unclear to passersby that church isn't just a place for performative piety or other "adult" things (sadly, many churches resemble nothing more than adult lifestyle communities).

Secondly, we must work together as a church and culture to create incentive for people to want children. Provide space, money, and resources for those couples who want to have one more child but are faced with uncertainties. And most importantly, provide the "village" one needs to support one another. I often think about what child-rearing would be like without the "village" of my church community, my parents, my in-laws, and friends. To be alone in our struggles is not what Christ intended.

I encourage you, in both spiritual and secular contexts, to think about how we can oppose these negative worldviews which take away the good things that God gives us freely. Let us not give in to the despair that often weighs upon our hearts, for the sake of some secular, performative altruism that tells us that children are not worth having. When God gives us the ability to raise children, we are not supposed to take that "coin" and bury it in the ground, as *Matthew 25:14-29* says. We are called to multiply our gifts, even though the work may be burdensome.

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"Lent is a time of going very deeply into ourselves... What is it that stands between us and God? Between us and our brothers and sisters? Between us and life, the life of the Spirit? Whatever it is, let us relentlessly tear it out, without a moment's hesitation." —*Catherine Doherty*

## Church Records

### Deaths

Lois MacPherson  
December 3, 2023

*Grant to them Eternal Rest, O Lord,  
and let light perpetual shine on them!*

## Special Vestry Meeting

A Special Vestry Meeting was held on Sunday, January 7, 2024, in the Church, after the worship service. Two motions were passed to approve:

1. the adoption of a Review Engagement (rather than a full Audit) for the 2023 Financial Statements.
2. the appointment of the firm Tummon Wallington Chong LLP as Certified Professional Accountants for St. Matthew's, Islington for the purpose of providing a Review Engagement for the 2023 Financial Statements.

## HOLY WEEK: MARCH 24-31

ST. MATTHEW'S

SUN  
24

Palm Sunday  
9:30 & 11 am

FRI  
29

Good Friday  
10:30 am

THURS  
28

Maundy Thursday  
7 pm

SUN  
31

Easter Sunday  
6:30 (Marie Curtis Park, east)  
9:30 & 11 am (St. Matthew's)

**Pastoral Care:** Pastoral visits can be offered over the phone, by email or via Zoom. If you would like to arrange for home communion, please contact Rev. Philip or the office at 416-231-4014 or [office@saintmatts.ca](mailto:office@saintmatts.ca).

**Partners in Prayer:** Should you desire prayer for yourself or for another person, please make details known to Bob Holloway at 416-253-4909 or [rholloway@sympatico.ca](mailto:rholloway@sympatico.ca). If necessary, the request can be transmitted through the church office.

**Cycle of Prayer:** “Beloved, pray for us.” This is Paul’s way of asking the Thessalonians to pray for him (5:25) and it expresses the genuine need for believers to support one another through prayer. Each Sunday, we will be praying for individuals and families of St. Matthew’s in the Prayers of the People. Each week, a few names will be mentioned in our prayers and we will have the opportunity to support one another through prayer. Please take the time to remember these people during the week in your own prayers as well. If you do not wish to be included in our “Cycle of Prayer” please let the office know and we will be sure to keep your name off the list.

**Prayer Shawl Ministry:** Prayer Shawls are provided to those who need the warmth and comfort of God and St. Matthew’s. If you would like a shawl for someone, please contact the office at 416-231-4014 or [office@saintmatts.ca](mailto:office@saintmatts.ca). If you are knitting shawls for this ministry, please contact the office to arrange to drop them off.

### Join Us

#### Wednesday

10:30 a.m. BCP Service  
(Posted on YouTube afterward)

#### Messy Church

Last Saturday of the month  
Next Messy Church is February 25  
4 p.m.

#### GIFT Groups

Contact the office for information



#### Office Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday  
9:30 - 3:30

416-231-4014  
[office@saintmatts.ca](mailto:office@saintmatts.ca)

#### Sunday Services

9:30 a.m. Casual (in person & online)  
*followed by Coffee Hour in gym*

11:00 a.m. Classic (in person & online)  
*followed by Coffee Hour (in Lounge & online)*

10:30 a.m. Unity Worship occasionally replaces  
9:30 and 11:00 a.m. worship  
(generally the first Sunday of each month)  
Please check [saintmatts.ca](http://saintmatts.ca)



**The Rev. Philip Stonhouse, Incumbent**  
416-231-3060 / [philipstonhouse@hotmail.ca](mailto:philipstonhouse@hotmail.ca)

*The Rev. Merv Mercer, Honorary Assistant*  
*Dr. Tyler Versluis, Music Director and Organist*  
*Bryan Tran, Youth Ministry Associate*  
*Tom Travaglini, Sexton/Verger*

3962 Bloor Street West, Etobicoke, Ontario, M9B 1M3

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