



VESTRY REPORT

ST. MATTHEW, ISLINGTON

2025

Clergy

The Rev. Philip Stonhouse, Incumbent

The Rev. Canon Dr. Merv Mercer, Honorary Assistant

Churchwardens

Rector's Churchwarden

Sharon Shao

People's Churchwarden

Karen Lee

Deputy Rector's Churchwarden

Paul Lorimer

Deputy People's Churchwarden

Nancy Hurn

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78th Annual Vestry Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer
2. Appointment of the Vestry Clerk
3. Appointment of Parish Tribunal / Scrutineers
4. Adoption of Agenda
5. Acceptance of the Minutes of the 77th Annual Vestry Meeting
6. The College of Bishops Pastoral Letter
7. Rector's Report
8. The Wardens' Report
9. Social Justice Vestry Motion
10. Financial Statements and Accountant's Report
11. Presentation of 2026 Parish Budget
12. Review Engagement Motion
13. Appointment of Accounting Firm
14. Rector's Appointments
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 - People's Warden
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 - Nominating Committee Chair
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16. Baptisms, Weddings & Deaths
17. New Business
18. Prayers of Thanksgiving
19. Adjournment
20. Dismissal

The College of Bishops Pastoral Letter to Vestries, 2026

To the clergy, churchwardens and parishioners of the Diocese of Toronto:

Beloved Siblings in Christ,

"So they cast [the net], and now they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish." – John 21:6

God's goodness to the Diocese of Toronto amazes us every day. As your bishops, it is our joy and privilege to bear witness to the rich blessings, the varied gifts, the talents and skills, the sacrificial generosity, and the deep faithfulness of the Body of Christ in this Diocese. Every parish and community, and the many devoted Anglicans who make them up, inspire us. It has been a natural response for us to "Lift Up Our Hearts" in a spirit of gratitude and encouragement in 2025.

The very first [Call of our Cast the Net visioning process](#) was a Season of Spiritual Renewal. We heard over and over again that our Diocese is hungry to know and love God more deeply. During the season, more than 40 workshops were offered, geared to priests, deacons, lay leaders and people desiring to deepen their spiritual lives, hone leadership skills and discern God's call. We held five "Lift Up Our Hearts" worship services: at St. James Cathedral; All Saints, Whitby; Trinity, Streetsville; St. James, Orillia; and St. Paul, Bloor Street. Large crowds gathered to worship, sing and pray for the renewal of the Church. Each one was a moment of grace and joy. The Season of Spiritual Renewal officially draws to a close with the end of the season of Epiphany 2026. Now a small group gathers to discern how we continue to grow disciples, enhance ministry and form servants of the Gospel, building on the foundation of what has been offered. Stay tuned!

The Netminders is a group of clergy, lay leaders and staff who continue to help parishes engage with the Cast the Net Calls and to bring them to life in each community. Every parish was invited to choose three or four Calls from the 20 – those that reflect the ministry that they are a part of now or hope to be in the future – and to bring them to Synod for discussion and mutual encouragement. With each part of the Body engaging our common Calls in different ways, we move as one.

At the annual clergy conference last May at Trent University, our speaker, the Very Rev. David Monteith, Dean of Canterbury, offered reflections based on Jesus the Good Shepherd, an image that resonated with our clergy, particularly in this time of disruption and uncertainty. Our clergy work so hard at hauling in the nets, and we say to them

now, to all our priests and deacons: we see you, and we are grateful to God for the ministry that you do. The annual clergy conference is always a wonderful opportunity to renew friendships and make new ones, and this year was no exception. It was also our joy to host smaller clergy retreat days in the spring and fall. These were opportunities for clergy to gather in deanery groups for Bible study, to hear from their bishop and archdeacons, to deepen fellowship with one another and to share a meal. We want to respond to Call #12 to “continue and enhance support for all ordained people” as they engage in vital ministry.

Regarding shared ministry, our partnership with the Diocese of Brasilia continues to flourish, now entering our third year of seven. Our motto, “Partners in Christ, united in mission” (*Parceiros em Cristo, unidos na missão*) is grounded in Calls #4 and #13 regarding our participation in God’s healing work and ministries of service in the world. Dr. Paulo Ueti from Brasilia and the Rev. Canon Dr. Christopher Brittain from Toronto offered an online bilingual study day on liberation theology for clergy and lay leaders of both dioceses last March. The Rev. Dr. Rodrigo Espiuca from Brasilia invited us to seek signs of resurrection in his keynote address at the Outreach Conference in October. Bishop Mauricio Andrade participated in our bishops’ Advent series in December. Looking ahead, we will welcome Dr. Paulo Ueti as our guest speaker at this year’s clergy conference, and we can’t wait to receive a delegation of Brazilian youth for the ReCharge Youth Retreat. We also hope a small group of Toronto Anglicans can visit Brasilia this year.

We are pleased to be moving ahead with our work on equity, decolonization, diversity and inclusion with the hiring of our new EDDI Advisor, Dilesha Stelmach. Dilesha brings a strong experiential and educational background in this ministry, centered around Ephesians 4: 4-6: “there is one body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, Creator of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” With support from our HR department and the Bishop’s Committee on Intercultural Ministries, Dilesha is mindfully engaging, both practically and theologically, with our people – volunteers, staff, clergy – and with our infrastructure – policies, practices and the constitution and canons of the Diocese. She will be helping us to see the familiar in unfamiliar ways as we build up the ministry of every single beloved child of God in our Diocese.

To all our faithful people in so many vital ministries in our Church: thank you. To our hard-working churchwardens and treasurers, children and youth ministry workers, parish musicians, office administrators and envelope secretaries, altar guilds and custodians, ACW and outreach volunteers, and countless committee members: thank you. To our

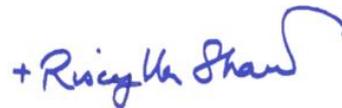
diocesan volunteers, members of Synod Council and participants on bishop's committees: thank you. To the staff team at the Synod Office: thank you. Together we all make up the strong net of the Diocese of Toronto, and together, by following the ways of Jesus, we receive "more than we can ask or imagine" – so many blessings collected in our net that we are barely able to haul it in.

When the nightly news seems especially dire, when anxiety is pervasive and the future seems uncertain, God's reign can feel far away. Yet our commitment to our baptismal covenant, our tenacious acts of faith, persistent resistance to the powers of evil, small but powerful acts of kindness towards our neighbours, and a deep, unshakable, unwavering belief that "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (Psalm 24) will carry us through troubled times.

Please pray for us, as we pray daily for you.

Handwritten signature in blue ink: "+ Andrew Toronto".

The Right Rev. Andrew J. Asbil
Bishop of Toronto

Handwritten signature in blue ink: "+ Riscylla Shaw".

The Right Rev. Riscylla Shaw
Suffragan Bishop of Toronto

Handwritten signature in blue ink: "+ Kevin Robertson".

The Right Rev. Kevin Robertson
Suffragan Bishop of Toronto

Rector's Report

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock" (*Matthew 7:24-25*)

This has been quite a year and I won't try to cover it here, instead I am going to focus on growth. The exciting reality of what God has been doing here at St. Matthews with, through, and in all of you.

This all starts with a bedrock, a foundation that can support anything that you may attempt to build upon it. Of course, our foundation stone is Jesus Christ, but we have a strong, capable, and faithful group that has been the bedrock here at St. Matthews. I need to take time to acknowledge that there are many people that put a lot into the life, stability, and growth of this parish. This whole report is written by many of them. Thank you for being good disciples in faithfulness and diligence.

In the last few years, we have begun to build patterns for ourselves. After three years of creating a schedule at the start of the year, I think we have found a good level of predictability and variety that makes room for people and needs as they come.

We have a lot of new people coming into St. Matthew's. Many of our newcomers are new to the faith and/or seeking baptism. The Holy Spirit is working in hearts to do this. It is also a God-given gift working through you that they feel welcome, belonging, and challenged here. We have slowly been introducing a structure of welcoming and integration for those who walk through our doors. If you want to know more or be involved let me know.

One of the new initiatives is a ministry seeking to help people find their ministry and/or their place of engagement. This is a natural follow up to the welcoming process, working with our list of ministries booklet. Not just from this ministry, but across the board we are seeing more people getting involved or expressing interest in volunteering. One exciting aspect that deserves highlighting is that the youth are stepping in many places like Messy Church, Club Matt, Tech, Sides people, Music, and Camp Matt.

Many ministries are experiencing new life through this desire to be involved. As a result, I am seeing our worship enlivened, fellowship going deeper, and discipleship growing

and spreading. St. Matthew's is feeling more and more like one big family following our great Father in heaven and it is a beautiful thing to behold.

And we know in the hope of Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, this is just the beginning. God has a plan for us. We are still early in our visioning process, but God has been making a path for us to follow.

A few things I heard at our Saturday meeting:

- We need to continue to grow in our potency and trust in prayer
- We need to continue to grow in our internal communication, especially with how people can be involved
- We need to continue to grow in our connection with the community, especially through our online presence
- We need to continue to grow in our service. We have a lot of things that reach out and support families, but what about others in need.
- We need to continue to think about our own space and how we use it for all those seeking the Kingdom of God
- We need to continue to grow in purposefully calling people to ministries
- We need to continue to grow in our worship, rejoicing always.

I have seen and do see ways in which God is preparing for us to move forward in most of these, and I am excited to see how God uses us in the years to come.

I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (*Jeremiah 29:11-13*)

Your brother in the love of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Stonhouse', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rev. Philip Stonhouse

Warden's Report

Submitted by Karen Lee, Sharon Shao, Nancy Hurn, and Paul Lorimer

Our annual Vestry meeting is an opportunity to Review, Reflect and Respond.

St Matthew's 77th year of ministry was a fulfilling one, with many opportunities to *Share Jesus' Love*. We continue to welcome many new folks and families. Attendance at all our services continues to grow, including our monthly Saturday Messy Church. We are so thankful for the inspiring and thoughtful worship leadership of Rev. Philip, Rev. Merv, and Rev. James, alongside the musical accompaniment of Tyler Versluis, our music director, and our choirs.

St. Matthew's various ministries grew and flourished through 2025, including Club Matt, Camp Matt, Messy Church, and the Youth Group. Many thanks to the leaders and volunteers for their dedication in nurturing the spiritual lives of the children and youth. Adult bible studies, also known as GIFT groups, also thrived under the guidance of Dawn Mercer.

As you will read in this Vestry report, St. Matthew's is fortunate to have multiple ministries which are led by many volunteers. Thank you to all for your contributions.

Our facilities, including our rectory, require constant attention. Many thanks to Marguerite Locke and Stuart Watt for overseeing maintenance issues throughout the year. A detailed property report can be found in this report to Vestry.

During 2025, under the leadership of Tyler Verslius, we enjoyed a musical concert series which included many guest musicians. Thank you, Tyler, for your dedication to ensuring our concert series continues. In June, coordinated by Tyler Verslius, we enjoyed a community concert showcasing many people from our parish which was then followed by a delicious dinner created by Chef Katie! Many thanks to all the volunteers.

In September, we welcomed Newton's Grove School as a tenant in the newly renovated downstairs. St. Matthew's is also home to multiple self-help groups as well as the Swansea Dog Obedience Club.

On Dec. 7, 2025, St. Matthew's was honoured to welcome the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Shane Parker. The archbishop presented our parishioner Nancy Hurn with the Anglican Award of Merit. Nancy was honoured because of her untiring work for the Indigenous People of Canada.

On January 1, 2026, Dawn Mercer received the Order of the Diocese of Toronto, bestowed upon her by Bishop Andrew Asbil for her work at St. Matthew's in Christian Formation and Education.

We are grateful to our staff for their dedication and work in their respective positions. Thank you.

And thank you to the parish for the financial support received in 2025 to address our financial requirements. The 2025 financial statements can be found attached to the 2025 Vestry report.

Your warden team is grateful for the opportunity to serve God and St. Matthew's as Wardens this past year. Thank You!

Recommitting to “protect, sustain, and renew the life of the earth.” 2026 Social Justice Vestry Motion

We, the parish of St. Matthew, Islington, in the Diocese of Toronto,

- **Pledge to honour our baptismal commitment to “safeguard the integrity of God’s creation” and**
- **urge the Government of Canada to honour its commitments to the Paris Accord, 2015: to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 40-45% below 2005 levels by 2030 and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.**

In our baptismal covenant, we pledge to “safeguard the integrity of God’s creation and respect, sustain, and renew the life of the earth.” This is part of our duty of care for our neighbour, particularly those who are most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change, and for whom Christ had a preferential bias.

Over 88,000 peer-reviewed scientific studies on the damage caused by CO₂ point in the same direction: that the planet is warming at a rate that poses significant threats to Creation.

The consequences of the warming include:

1. More frequent and more severe weather events (hurricanes, floods, fires, tornadoes)
2. Increased desertification of land and acidification of the oceans
3. Reduced food production capability from the land
4. Rising sea levels from glacial melt
5. Loss of freshwater resources
6. Loss of habitat and sustainability for plants, animals, and other organisms.

Secondary consequences of global warming are already massive.

1. Wars over resources
2. Increased numbers of people displaced by climate impacts
3. Diminished biodiversity
4. Increased numbers of invasive species of plants and insects due to the changing climate zones
5. Increased economic inequality (the most vulnerable nations and people will suffer the most.)
6. Increased health issues from heat, smoke, and water scarcity.

Our lived experience of 2025 offers independent confirmation of the science. It was the hottest summer on record (following the previous hottest summer of 2024) It was the second most destructive forest fire season in Canada, with attendant smoke hazards for much of the country. While harder to quantify, we have also experienced many significant floods following torrential rains.

Despite these growing impacts, and the overwhelming scientific evidence, the amount of CO₂ has increased every year. Scientific data alone has failed to persuade governments and industry to protect the most vulnerable and future generations by ensuring a livable planet. As Christians, we must embody our faith commitment with actions that show our care for those whom we may not know, but who will be most susceptible to the climate emergency.

Our faith informs the way we act. We proceed in hope – not fantasy, not wishful thinking – but Christian hope, which means living ‘as though’ we already dwell in the kingdom of God. Consistent with living this way, we celebrate all of creation, and protect woodlands and animals, birds and sea creatures, oceans watersheds, clean air and the rains, thanking God for their variety and working to ensure their vitality.

If we live this way, we will plant more forests, not chop them down. We will use less energy, particularly in transportation, industry and agriculture. We will not consume more than our basic needs. We will recycle and repurpose, sharing more with our neighbours who have less.

We will also advocate for governments to honour their climate commitments. In 2015, 196 countries adopted the landmark Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change. The goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, relative to pre-industrial levels. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to achieve this goal and a net-zero-emission world by 2050, countries must significantly reduce their greenhouse gas emissions without delay. Yet, current global commitments fall far short of this, leading to projections of warming by 3 degrees Celsius by 2100.³

Since 1990, the Government of Canada has made many domestic and international commitments to address climate change, including commitments to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Yet Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by only 8.5% in the 19 years since then. Oil production from the tar sands generates as many CO₂ emissions as all Canada’s other human-generated sources combined. Canada is the worst performing of the G-7 countries in terms of meeting its targets.

In June 2025, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada passed Resolution A200 endorsing the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, and urging the federal government to:

- End expansion of any new coal, oil or gas production in line with the best available science as outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Environment Programme;
- Phase-out existing production of fossil fuels in a manner that is fair and equitable, taking into account the respective dependency of countries on fossil fuels and their capacity to transition; and
- Ensure a global just transition to 100% renewable energy globally, support dependent economies to diversify away from fossil fuels, and enable all people and communities, not least the Global South, to flourish.

This vestry motion, which urges the government of Canada to honour its commitments to the 2015 Paris Accord, aligns with General Synod's Motion. Moreover, it aligns with our Diocesan Cast the Net Call #8 "Intensify advocacy and action in response to the climate crisis," and our own baptismal commitments.

There are many ways in which we can bring action and advocacy to bear on the climate crisis. To learn more, please refer to the additional resources in support of this motion, which will be made available on the Diocesan website at www.toronto.anglican.ca/vestrymotion

St. Matthew's Church Register for 2025

Baptisms

Onyedikachukwa Ezra Udorji
January 5, 2025

Sienna Carolyn Bennett
March 2, 2025

Everett Lucius Kemp
October 5, 2025

Daniel Chikwadoro Osiriambe Ohanu-Okoroji
October 26, 2025

Alex Kiniaru Njoroge
December 25, 2025

Deaths

Joyce Lee
March 11, 2025

Mary Wallace
March 14, 2025

Noreen LaRose
April 8, 2025

Lena Mitchell
May 13, 2025

Verna Wilkinson
June 28, 2025

Dale Shuttleworth
October 10, 2025

Margaret Bastin
December 19, 2025

Operating Fund Budget

St. Matthew's Anglican Church

Comparative Income Statement (Operating Fund)

	December 2024	December 2025	December Budget 2026	Budget 2025
Envelope Total	183,374	200,436	195,000	188,000
Open	2,444	1,957	2,000	2,500
Initial	75	65	65	50
Total Room Use	92,421	110,492	142,795	95,000
Seasonal Total	17,610	14,720	16,000	20,000
Memorials	2,015	450	2,000	3,000
Matt's Media	600	100	300	600
Miscellaneous	6,678	10,888	3,900	6,700
Parish Events - Total	14,388	4,178	4,450	11,100
Total Revenue	319,605	343,285	366,510	326,950
Total Clergy	62,383	62,183	73,145	72,693
Total Staff	98,688	101,745	104,773	101,649
Rectory	12,735	13,581	14,725	12,894
Church	95,434	87,619	83,600	80,988
Office	12,667	13,814	13,954	12,850
Audit	4,203	3,742	3,925	4,500
Ministry	8,592	10,648	10,914	8,500
Parish Events	226	1,730	1,201	1,000
Flowers	1,588	1,600	1,640	950
Miscellaneous	456	263	300	700
Synod	41,810	50,463	50,471	49,560
Interest on Loan		1,875	7,500	
Depreciation		3,181	9,542	
Total Expense	338,782	352,442	375,690	346,284
Net Income	(19,177)	(9,157)	(9,180)	(19,334)

Administrative Reports

Envelopes Report

Submitted by Noel Martin and Sandra Watt

For the year 2026 there have been only a few changes; we have assigned 24 numbered envelope sets to parishioners, and there are 44 Pre-Authorized Givings (PAG) users. In addition, there are 40 or so who give via electronic transfer and another group of members or occasional visitors who contribute sporadically throughout the year, but do not wish to use numbered envelopes. Your generous Initial offerings offset the cost of the envelopes.

For those who must use the pew envelopes, please clearly write your full name on the front, along with the amount, so that we can better prepare tax receipts.

We encourage all regular donors to ask for envelopes, or even better, enrol in the PAG program. Use of either system greatly reduces both the time required to process each donation and the likelihood of introduced errors in correct assignment of the donation.

Annual tax receipts are ready by the end of February. Please remember to pick yours up in the Narthex and look it over right away (please don't wait until you are doing your tax return), If it is not correct, please let us know as soon as possible so it can be corrected.

If you can deliver a friend's receipt also, that would be appreciated.

Many thanks to Lisa for gathering the files needed to help keep the donations lists organized and complete, and to Anita for coordinating the PAG and E-transfer system.

Property Report

Submitted by Marguerite Locke and Stuart Watt

St. Matthew's addressed several serious issues during 2025, which are briefly outlined below. Our building is more than 75 years old and needs ongoing important maintenance and repair matters to be handled in an expeditious fashion.

1. Roof: The heavy snow load on repeated occasions in the winter necessitated in having our flat roof above the gym foyer shoveled to prevent more seepage of melting snow into the ceiling of this area. Torrential rainstorms last year resulted in more water leaking into the northwest corner of the sanctuary, in the elevator pit, and in the front entrance or narthex area. After securing three competitive

quotations from roofing companies, the wardens approved *Let It Rain* to complete a repair to the lower section of the narthex roof in April 2025.

2. Elevator pit: This pit sits below the lower floor level and has had repeated leakage or seepage over the past year. We have tried various remedies to determine the cause, which now appears to be seepage below the floor of the pit. Tom Travaglini does an excellent job removing the water with our wet vac, but it is a labour-intensive job that we must resolve. Our investigation is ongoing.
3. Landscaping and snow removal: These services have been handled satisfactorily for several years by Mortimer Landscaping. We secure competitive quotes for this work, and Mortimer has been the most reasonable from a price/service basis to handle our property for several years. Harrison Services have taken good care of our sprinkler system for the lawn, clearing the lines each fall and reactivating the system in springtime.
4. Lower Level: The biggest change in our building was completed during the summer months when Kingsley School vacated the premises, and we prepared for the arrival of Newton's Grove School. Many people assisted in cleaning rooms, reorganizing supplies for Club Matt, moving boxes to the stage area, disposing of unused materials, cleaning out the kitchen and storage closets, and relocating choir room materials and music. Thank you to all the helping hands for your cooperation in completing this time-consuming task.

Newton's Grove completed a major renovation on the lower level throughout the summer and had it completed in time for the fall opening of the school. It is a refreshing, bright, and modern space. Thanks particularly to Karen Lee, Peoples Warden, who acted as the Project Manager throughout this large renovation. Karen dealt with all sorts of challenges including the scheduling of work, different sub-contractors, and communicating with tenants and parishioners. Thank you, Karen.

The maintenance of both the rectory and the church building is critical, and we strive to be mindful of costs but also completing necessary jobs in a timely fashion. Thank you to all parishioners who contributed to our fundraising efforts to offset the cost of the work this past year. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

Reports Submitted by Parish Ministries

Discipleship (Believing)

Adult Discipleship/Growth in Faith

Submitted by Dawn Mercer

Small Groups

St Matthews has a long tradition of enabling everyone a variety of opportunities to explore their faith and apply what they are learning to daily life. Over the past year a variety of small groups has enabled those discussions – including GIFT Groups, Wednesday Tea after Eucharist, Lent and Advent studies, a Men’s Study Group, and Diocesan study groups. Below is a brief overview. If any of these “call out” to you, the last page of this Vestry report has a way for you to give us the information we need to get you into a group.

GIFT Groups (Growing In Faith Together Groups)

There are currently two GIFT Groups – Tuesday morning and Tuesday evening. We’re looking for a time and place for a third.

The emphasis for these groups is the application to daily life of weekly sermons and Bible texts. Participants often note that they “never thought of that before.” Together, we are able to bring new insights to faith issues that we may have had for many years. Together, we are able to explore how God is calling us at St. Matthew’s to live out our Christian calling.

Wednesday Tea after Eucharist

The discussions in this gathering often focus on the themes and sermon of that day and often in the context of the current news headlines. This group has a fluid conversation applying faith to their daily life in personal and practical ways. It is also a place for laughter and fun and often has lived historical perspectives.

Men's Study Group

This group meets the third Wednesday of each month (not summer) over a meal and topics set up by Bryan Tran and Tyler Versluis. Their dynamic, personal, and prayerful discussions of scripture and the topics are from a male perspective. Recently the group completed a series of meditations on spiritual discipline, and how these disciplines can be improved and deepened. If you are interested in joining, please contact Bryan or Tyler through the church office.

Lent Study

The Lent Study in 2025 was again within a Taizé reflective service. All four weeks the discussion was based on the Lord's Prayer, with a different focus each week. We were all amazed at how much we learned about that prayer that we say so often and how our faith is stretched when we start to really take those words seriously.

Advent Study

The Advent study this year was again based on a segment of *The Chosen*. This season the episodes portrayed Jesus' preparation for the Sermon on the Mount. Especially at the busy season of Advent, it was useful for us all to see the amount of time Jesus spent in quiet and a glimpse of the importance of his time alone with God before that "landmark event" in his public ministry.

The Diocesan Christian Foundations Study

This fall the Diocese encouraged as many parishes as possible to participate in an online study/course lead by Judy Paulsen and Patrick Paulsen. It provided information and discussion for knowing God from the span of scripture, the establishment and the growth of the church up to our own time. It was huge and people of many backgrounds learned and explored their faith in fresh new ways. The St. Matthew's folks (the biggest church group in the course) chose to meet in their own ZOOM study group after to explore the topics further. St. Matthew's participants shared how they learn from the Bible and resources that can help us ground our faith in the scriptural, historical, and present context. Watch for this study being offered again. It is a great way to explore our faith in its bigger context.

Questions of Faith Group (+ Baptism and Confirmation Prep)

Rev. Philip offers this course once every two years as a nine-week intensive lesson focusing on the big questions of faith as a preparation for all those who want to commit or recommit themselves to faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not a study group in the sense of other St. Matthew's study groups; after the hour-long lecture, there is a 30-minute lively discussion where participants ask questions and dig deeper. There are practical things to take home and study, including a book study on C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*.

Children, Family, and Youth Ministry (Believing)

Youth

Submitted by Tanya Marcon Moore

2025 has been a year of transition, growth, and engagement within our youth ministry. In September, I assumed leadership of the program from Bryan Tran. During this time, several senior youths transitioned to university, while younger youth began their journey in the youth group. These changes have created new opportunities for mentorship, relationship-building, and leadership development within the group.

Throughout the year, our youth have participated in a wide range of programs and events designed to deepen their faith and strengthen community. I am deeply grateful for the commitment of our youth, volunteers, and church leadership, whose continued support has been essential to sustaining and nurturing this ministry. From weekly gatherings to special initiatives, it has been encouraging to witness the youth embrace new opportunities and grow in their faith in meaningful and visible ways.

On Sunday mornings, the youth have been following Rev. Philip's sermon series, continuing the conversation together and connecting the themes to their own lives. We have intentionally been reading directly from Scripture, helping youth become familiar and comfortable navigating the Bible, including locating chapters and verses. During Friday evening youth gatherings, we have been studying the Book of Acts, focusing on themes such as community being built through showing up for one another, the patience required to form lasting friendships, living out faith through how we treat others, and the reality that people make mistakes while God's love remains constant.

Many of our youth attended the Fall Diocesan Retreat at Muskoka Woods, and we are planning to attend the Spring Radiate Retreat. These retreats continue to be valuable opportunities for youth to deepen relationships with one another and with God while experiencing the beauty of creation. For several youth, this was their first overnight

retreat experience, where they connected with Christians from other parishes, grew together in faith, and were encouraged to attend Christian summer camps, forming meaningful and lasting relationships.

This past winter, the youth participated in outreach initiatives, including assembling Go Packs for unhoused individuals in partnership with the community police. Any remaining packs were gratefully received by officers, who continue to distribute them as needs arise. In addition, the youth baked cookies and created handmade Christmas ornaments for senior gift bags, offering care and connection to members of our congregation and community.

Our youth have also taken on increasing leadership roles within the life of the church. They have served as speakers, readers for the Prayers of the People, members of the worship band, and musicians contributing to Sunday services. Many youths served as leaders at our annual summer camp, Camp Matt, where they guided campers through activities, helped manage conflict, and fostered a warm and welcoming environment. They also taught lessons in Club Matt, led activity stations at Messy Church, and supported worship ministries. During the Graduation Sunday service, several youths played key leadership roles, including preaching and leading prayer.

Looking ahead, we hope to move into the newly designated youth room and undertake its design and renovation. Plans include creating a small lending library with Christian-based fiction for youth, expanding opportunities for community engagement, and exploring partnerships with other local churches. I extend heartfelt thanks to all who support and encourage our youth ministry. It is a privilege to witness the faith journeys of these young people and to walk alongside them as they grow spiritually and serve within our church and wider community.

Club Matt

Submitted by Dawn Mercer

Club Matt has prepared a three-year cycle, age-appropriate children's program that was completed in 2025. Beginning in the Fall of 2025, existing lessons are polished and reused, resulting in a significant decrease in time required to prepare curriculum outlines. Lessons are offered as part of the 9:30 service and the Unity Service at 10:30 a.m. (usually on the first Sunday of the month). In Club Matt Junior (ages 3-6 or Grade 1) 4-6 children eagerly learn together, and in Club Matt Senior (ages 7 -10) 6 – 11 very enthusiastic kids explore Bible stories and think about how they apply to their life. Teachers take the materials and provide an active, engaging lesson suited for the children they work with.

Over the past year, St. Matthew's has welcomed several new families and children and infants are growing into Club Matt kids. Some experienced teachers have moved on, and we have added new teachers, including some of our youth members who love to be with children. We would welcome additional adults and youth who want to share Jesus' love with children. This is a great way to learn; new teachers start as assistants and ease in gradually.

We continue to offer both Christmas and Easter Pageants as active ways for children and youth to participate in the major events of Jesus' life. Pageants draw many folks including extended families and engage the broader St. Matt's community. We are thankful for a long tradition of dramatic presentations in the extensive costume collection with which we have been blessed.

We are very thankful for the ongoing support of Clergy, Wardens and Vestry for Club Matt activities.

Submitted by the current team of teachers, organizers and communicators.

Other Family and Children's Ministry Events

Movie Nights

Children love to see movies on a big screen with popcorn so from time to time we schedule a family movie to watch together. It is always a challenge to find a night that suits all the families who would like to attend.

Pizza in the Parking Lot

The tradition of celebrating the end of school with "Pizza in the Parking Lot" continues to be eagerly anticipated and greatly enjoyed. It usually involves lots of water and bubbles and is great to participate in or observe depending on your energy level.

Pool Party

Once again, the Hurns opened their pool and backyard to friends and family of St. Matthew's in July. A suitable Sunday afternoon sees lots of kids and adults from a variety of St. Matthew's communities cooling off in the pool, enjoying the antics of the swimmers, and catching up after a busy spring. Topped off with BBQ, this is very special time to relax together.

Messy Church

Submitted by Linda Dickson

Messy Church continues to build relationships with the people of St. Matthew's and the larger community. Each month we develop activities around a faith-based theme. Some of those have been:

- God's Love Finds You – finding the lost sheep, finding a coin in the bottom of a cupcake, finding a coin in a cup shuffle game
- 40 Days to Easter – planning an Easter garden, making a boat that will float
- Meet the Risen Jesus – developing a skit (“Where did you take him”). decorating fish, playing a memory game “Guess who is Missing,” making tomb cookies
- Empowerment God's Way – making a helicopter, decorating with feathers. racing cars
- Harvest Gratitude – making a tree of gratitude with handprint leaves, creating pumpkin seed art
- Event Preparations – making things to give away, collecting food for food baskets, making cards with hot chocolate included for *Friend for Friends*, decorating candles
- Seeing Through Eyes of Faith - decorating plastic cups and putting in tea lights. Looking through fun glasses to see things differently, making stress bottles (shake the glitter up and watch them float to the bottom.

Messy Church is only possible with the help of our many volunteers. Thank you to our teen helpers who attend faithfully to help with set up, and lead activities. The younger children enjoy spending time with the youth.

Thank you to the Messy Church team who plans and prepares each month. If you or anyone you know might like to come out, all ages are very welcome

Fellowship & Worship (Belonging)

Music Ministry (Belonging)

Submitted by Dr. Tyler Versluis

Choir and Worship Band

The choir and worship band continues to lead music at our 11 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services, with a core group of about 15 singers and musicians. We are grateful to say that we have seen some growth in our ministry, and the establishment of a soprano and alto vocal sextet, which sang at Lessons and Carols and on Easter Sunday.

The choir and worship band led music during Holy Week 2025, as well as global worship songs (mainly from Africa and the Caribbean) in celebration of Pentecost Sunday.

In June, the parish hosted a community concert and dinner to raise funds for roof repairs. This event revealed even more of the musical talent present at St. Matthew's. I would like to personally thank Michelle Lorimer for being so involved in this event, and Katie Ward for the dinner afterward.

Our music ministry was also part of Camp Matt this year: leading music at morning and afternoon worship, and also at our Music station, where the campers learned Orff instruments, participated in an instrument petting zoo, and learned about the connection of music and colour.

After a summer break, the choir resumed for two substantial services. All Souls Evensong on November 2 involved an expanded vocal ensemble of community and professional singers singing hymns, psalms, and anthems in memory of our deceased ones, and welcomed guest organist Michael Pirri. On December 8, the choir and SSA sextet led music at Lessons and Carols, singing a variety of hymns and carols in this beloved worship service. Musical leadership at Christmas Eve followed at the 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. services.

The choir continues to welcome singers, especially basses, for our Thursday night, and occasionally Wednesday night rehearsals. We also welcome seasonal singers for Holy Week and Christmas.

Music Events

Our concert series *Music at St. Matthew's* continues to offer high-quality music to the public, bringing new faces from our neighbourhood into our building. This year we saw a slight increase in attendance from a broader demographic of people (ie. many new visitors). The concert series remains financially viable. In May 2025 we heard local Etobicoke musicians Mary Dolnycky and Anton Yeretsky on the piano and violin, respectively. In October 2025 we welcomed our first international ensemble, the Gaia String Quartet from Boston, who among a number of American composers, also played a new piece by Michelle Lorimer.

After the February 1 concert "Southern Harmony II" the concert series will undergo some discernment, as we find better ways to build on our successes while glorifying God through the wonderful gift of music.

Chancel Guild (Belonging)

Submitted by Pat Currie and Sandra Wilson

In January all the Christmas decorations were removed and stored in their appropriate places.

The flower chart was displayed in the Narthex.

Feb and March we were busy attending to our regular weekly duties.

April, however, is a very busy month. We assisted in the setting up of the Station of the Cross. We prepared communion for the Seder dinner. Palm crosses needed to be made so thanks to the members of the Chancel Guild and many members of the congregation we made one hundred and fifty in approximately an hour and thirty minutes. Proof that many hands make light work. Flowers were ordered & the church beautifully decorated for Easter.

The next four months we were busy attending to our regular weekly duties.

October a notice was sent out requesting vegetables & fruits to decorate the church. We had a very good response & the church was beautifully decorated for Thanksgiving.

November the children of Messy church made the crosses that were set up in front of the Poppy painting. The children also made paper poppies for a memorial cemetery for the Remembrance Day service.

December is probably our busiest month. At the end of November was the beginning of Advent. We set up the Advent candles and other essentials for the Advent season. The second week in December we prepared for the Blue Christmas. The following week we decorated the Chancel and the Nave with greenery. Sandra Wilson guided the children of Messy Church in setting up the nativity scene in the Chancel and the Native Nativity scene in the Narthex.

All three Christmas Eve services were staffed by the Chancel Guild members.

The Chancel Guild enjoyed a rewarding and busy year.

Prayer Ministries (Belonging)

Intercessory Prayers

Submitted by Rev. Philip Stonhouse

This ministry was led by Mary Gleeson for many years, then recently by Barb Landry and then Marilyn Friedmann until she moved away. Mercy Njeteneh has taken on the coordination role for volunteers. We are deeply thankful to all those that have taken on leadership in the past.

In congregational worship, the liturgy is the work of all people of all ages, not just the priest.

The Prayers of the People are:

1. An expression of what we as a community may be thankful for, concerned or excited about.
2. Focused on the world and concerns for all of humanity (as highlighted by the person leading the prayers).
3. Include concerns of both our local church and the wider church beyond St. Matthew's.
4. A way to lift up to God our particular needs through our cycle of prayer and requests for prayers
5. Intended to challenge people to continue to trust in God through prayer
6. A response to the church season, Bible readings of the day and theme of the service.

An Intercessor acts in the role as one taking part in the priesthood of all believers as he/she brings our words, requests and hopes to God - communicating to God for the people. We don't try to change God's mind or try to say what should be done for people. God already knows about those for whom we pray but we trust in God's will through prayer and his loving response. We know that our prayers matter to God and that through faithful intercession something powerful is done. At St. Matthew's we have seen numerous miracles because of our corporate prayers and prayer chain. At our visioning, we learned that we need to get better at communicating these.

We are grateful for the dedication of Barb Landry, Nancy Hurn, Marguerite Locke, and Michelle Lorimer, Linda Harrison, Layla Ho, and Tatiana Saliba for leading Intercessory Prayer, and we are delighted to have welcomed Mercy, Cindy and Toby Njeteneh and Barbara Erdelyi to the team in 2025. We would welcome more volunteers and encourage those interested to contact Rev. Philip. Training will be provided. It is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the scripture, deepen one's prayer practice and to get to know the needs of our community and to consider the needs of the wider world.

Partners in Prayer

Submitted by Michelle Lorimer

Partners in Prayer has been a parish ministry for a long time at St. Matthews. There is a history of believing strongly in the power of prayer and the power of many people praying.

Philip and Michelle went to visit Bob Holloway in May of 2025, seeking to understand the history of this ministry and the how and why behind Bob's approach as the longtime leader of *Partners in Prayer*. He generously shared resources that he'd used to guide prayers, as well as stories of people praying for one another at various times through St. Matthew's history. I felt blessed to be able to share in this work of gently prompting our community to prayer through the weeks and months, as needs and requests are circulated among us beyond Sundays. Pausing to pray at various points in the day has also been a fruitful rhythm of connecting with God throughout the busyness of my day. It's also helped me lift up others and grow more of a heart of intercession and care for others. May it be a vehicle for that for all of us who participate in taking time to pray for the requests of our community throughout the week. We continue Bob's format of logging the information and date of each prayer that's sent out and using a group email to communicate prayer requests. Generally, we use first names only, unless those submitting are comfortable sharing more detail. The list is also shared with the church

office so that the names of those we are praying for can be included in the *Prayers of the People* during worship services.

If you'd like to join the list of *Partners in Prayer* and be sent requests for prayer as they arise in our community, please contact Lisa in the office, or Michelle Lorimer and they'll gladly add you to the list!

Hospitality (Belonging)

Submitted by Tanya Marcon Moore and Katie Ward

During 2025, and with the generous support of our dedicated volunteers, St. Matthew's hospitality ministry offered a wide range of gatherings that strengthened fellowship and community life. These included weekly Coffee Hours, the Christmas Lunch, Pancake Supper, a fundraising dinner, St. Matthew's Day celebrations, BBQs, concert receptions, special worship services, parish teas, and hospitality offered during funerals. We were also honoured to host special visits from the Primate and the Bishop.

Hospitality at St. Matthew's continues beyond the church walls through small group gatherings hosted in private homes.

Sincere thanks are extended to the St. Matthew's community for their ongoing participation, generosity, and commitment, which make these hospitality ministries possible.

Lay Administration (Belonging)

Submitted by Karen Lee

St. Matthew's is very fortunate to have a team of eight administrators. The role of the administrator is to assist in the serving of the wine in the eucharist. Lay Administrators are an appointment of the Bishop on the recommendation of the Parish Priest.

St. Matthew's is extremely grateful for our team and for their dedication to this ministry. Thank you

Lay Anointing

Submitted by Karen Lee

Lay Anointers are part of healing ministries within the Anglican church. It is Biblically based and is a ministry of the whole Church.

St. Matthew's is fortunate to have a team of dedicated anointers who will anoint and pray for God's healing and grace upon yourself or someone else. We are grateful for our lay anointing volunteers: Ann Sim, Nancy Hurn, Deborah Hurn, Dorothy Sproule and James Liu. We welcome new volunteers and training is available. It is a very special opportunity to Share Jesus Love in our church community.

Lectors (Belonging)

Submitted by Bruce Gleeson

We are grateful for the dedicated volunteers whose expressive readings of scripture enhance our worship, and we appreciate the support of our technical team who make that participation possible. We thank Robert Pooran and Ken Boughton for their many years of faithful service, and we welcome Joanne Killam our newest member. We appreciate Tanya Marcon's taking the organizing of a younger group of readers for the 9:30 a.m. family service: Caleb Ho, Joy Wukasch, Henry Locke, Cindy Njeteneh, and Toby Njeteneh. Lauren Kuljis and Josh Lorimer continue to read regularly in addition to playing instruments in our chancel band. If you are interested in joining this important ministry, please contact Bruce Gleeson (416-239-9640) or the rector and we will gladly add your name to our list of volunteers.

Matt's Media (Belonging)

Submitted by Kathie Oakden

Matt's Media is the parish newsletter of St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Islington in Toronto. In 2025 the traditional four issues were published: Lent-Easter (March 2), Pentecost (June 8), Thanksgiving (October 12) and Advent-Christmas (November 30).

Matt's Media informs parishioners about recent Parish activities and publicizes future Worship Services and Events. Parishioners are encouraged to submit photographs taken at church events. Linda Harrison has enthusiastically encouraged parishioners to write articles, which have been very informative. Thank you, Linda and contributors.

Marguerite Locke has recruited support for the production of Matt's Media. Thank you, Marguerite and advertisers. Parishioners, please encourage your favourite shops and tradespeople to advertise in Matt's Media.

The newsletter is distributed electronically by email and as a paper booklet, 8.5x11". Please supply your email address to the Church Office. Paper copies are available in the Narthex or by request from the Office. Paper copies are delivered to parishioners who are unable to attend church. Some are sent by mail, others by visits from members of Friends for Friends. If need be, you can request a paper copy by phoning the Office. For past issues, electronic or printed copies can be obtained.

St. Matthew's parishioners continue to appreciate the creativity, dedication and skills of Lisa Tait, our Parish Administrator, who typesets and produces Matt's Media using Microsoft Publisher.

This year, Lisa has created its new format beginning with the Thanksgiving issue: colour blocks, bottom margin colour strips, two columns per page, side-bar index. Thank you, Lisa.

Sides People (Belonging)

The sides people greet the people as they arrive and ensure any newcomers are warmly welcomed and any of their enquires answered. They count and record the number of people in attendance, including those online. The offertory plate is presented at the Doxology.

During 2025 we had a small, but dedicated team of four parishioners involved in this ministry. Thank you to the sides people for their faithful and continued service to this ministry. In 2026 we look forward to welcoming new members as the team is anticipated to double in size.

Stewardship (Belonging)

Submitted by Marguerite Locke

In February 2025 a Stewardship package of information was hand delivered or mailed to our Parish with the goal of informing everyone about our work and needs from a viewpoint of Time, Talent and Treasures. We reviewed several areas of strengths in our community and areas where improvement was needed. Thank you to all the parishioners who responded with increased participation in ministries, discipleship and financial contributions.

The Warden team appreciates the support that you offer as stewards of Sharing Jesus Love."

Tech Team (Belonging)

Submitted by Karen Lee

During 2025, St. Matthew's Tech team continued its unrelenting dedication in ensuring our worship services, special events, and teaching sessions were available thru' Zoom, other platforms and our power point system. Our sincere thanks to the members of the Team. Under the leadership of Rev. Philip, (also 'Head Coach'), the team has stayed current with the ever-changing technology. New members are always welcome to the team.

Outreach (Behaving)

Food Cupboard (Behaving)

Submitted by Noel Martin

Our food cupboard is operating in a very limited way. We still have only two clients asking for food; we provide a large bag of staples once a month for them.

Over the past year, there have been several large donations of food items, and a few cash donations, all of which were thankfully received.

We continue to help St. James United Church on Burnhamthorpe Rd., for their large "Food Basket" operation, if ever there is a surplus that will not be used up before its Best Before Date.

We will continue to need and to collect your donations and put them to the best use.

We trust that you will continue to help provide for those who are struggling with food insecurity in our area.

Your generous donations, of any amount, whether food or cash, are appreciated.

FRIENDS for Friends (Behaving)

Submitted by Deborah Hurn

The *Friends for Friends* team has had a busy year as we try to support our friends in and out of the parish. The group meets on Zoom every two months or so. One of the main activities has been maintaining contact with our parishioners through phone calls. We contact about 30 individuals to make sure they know St. Matthew's is truly keeping them in our thoughts and prayers. It gives us an opportunity to see if they require any support. The support may just be words of encouragement, a meal, a ride to an appointment or church, or an offer of Home Communion. The call may also just be a

caring voice that cares beyond Sunday morning. This group provides meals through the *More Than Soup* program. There is always a supply of frozen meals and soup available to anyone in need. They may have medical issues, personal issues, or just benefit from someone bringing them a meal that they do not have to make for themselves.

We have tried to be a support to Rev. Philip by making calls for special events such as the Christmas or Easter pageants, ensuring inclusion for all children who participated in Camp Matt, Messy Church, or Club Matt. Team members have been willing volunteers as requested for helping with the filling of Easter bags for the homeless, Christmas lunch, etc.

A new ministry we have been developing is ongoing support for grieving families. We are trying to follow up with the family or those parishioners who have passed to make sure the family know we are offering continued support of their family. The other new ministry is a birthday card for children who have any association with St. Matts. We feel it is important for them to know we remember them on their very special day. With the support of Rev. Philip, we are truly trying to offer support from cradle to grave.

We continue to work on the welcoming of newcomers to the church. We try to offer information to anyone who may be a first-time visitor, a guest of a parishioner, or someone who has felt a call to enter our doors. We are most grateful for the team of Ann Sim, Pat Currie, Kathie Oakden, Mary Gleeson, Dawn Mercer, Linda Harrison, Barb Landry, Katie Ward, Karen Lee, Sharon Shao, Lianne Thompson, and Rev. Philip Stonhouse.

Social Media (Behaving)

Submitted by Tyler Versluis

We continue to maintain social media accounts on Instagram and Facebook, which share information of upcoming events of the church, including worship schedules, as well as sharing media of past events.

As of January 2026, we have 672 followers on Facebook, with a slight increase in engagement over the past year (6.1%). Our Instagram account has 175 followers and was viewed 699 times in the last 30 days.

Our social media accounts are often the first impressions people receive of our church. Therefore, we try to keep it active and representative of how our church looks and behaves.

<https://www.instagram.com/st.matthewsislington>

<https://www.facebook.com/StMatthewsAnglicanChurch>

Nominations

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the Harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."* Matthew 9:37-38

Below please find the list of names for those in the parish who have so generously committed to share their gifts over the coming year.

Parish-elected Nominees:

People's Warden:	Nancy Hurn
Deputy People's Warden:	Open
Lay Delegates to Synod:	Helen Prankie, Bryan Tran
Alternate Lay Delegate to Synod:	Deborah Hurn
Stewardship:	Marguerite Locke
Envelope Secretary:	Noel Martin
Assistant Envelope Secretary:	Sandra Watt
Nominating Committee Chair:	Marguerite Locke
Scrutineers / Parish Tribunal:	Cathy Cross, Cliff LaRose

Rector's Appointments

Rector's Warden:	Karen Lee
Deputy Rector's Warden:	Paul Lorimer
Property Chairs:	Stuart Watt, Marguerite Locke
Chancel:	Pat Currie, Sandra Wilson
Club Matt:	Deborah Hurn, Mercy Njeteneh
Friends for Friends (Welcome Team):	Deborah Hurn
Hospitality:	Tanya Marcon Moore, Katie Ward
Intercessors:	Mercy Njeteneh
Messy Church:	Linda Dickson
Outreach:	Mary Emmanuel
Prayer Ministry:	Michelle Lorimer
Readers:	Bruce Gleeson
Sidespersons:	Open

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Service Times

Sunday 9:30 a.m. "All Ages"
Sunday 11:00 a.m. Book of Alternative Services
(Book of Common Prayer once a month)
Unity Worship 10:30 a.m. (first Sunday of each month)
Wednesday 10:30 a.m. Book of Common Prayer

