



ST. MATTHEWS LUTHERAN CHURCH

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September 29, 2020

Dear members and friends of St. Matthews,

The long-awaited time has come! Our church building will be open for worship again starting on **Thanksgiving Sunday, October 11th!** Thank you for your patience while our Re-Opening Task Force (Kim and Tim Schaner, Linda McLellan, Pastor Carey and myself), as well as the Board of Directors, ushers and others involved have been preparing for a safe return to in-person worship, in consultation with the Eastern Synod's Task Force, as well as local and provincial public health directives.

In order that your return to our building may go as smoothly as possible, I want to outline what to expect on a typical Sunday from now on, as things will be different to how they were before March. Before you decide to come on a Sunday morning, it's important for you to self-screen based on the **questions*** that you will be asked upon entry:

- **Have you been diagnosed, or suspected of having COVID-19?**
- **Have you travelled internationally in the past 14 days? Have you been in contact with someone who has travelled internationally?**
- **Are you experiencing any COVID symptoms today? (Fever, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, runny nose, loss of taste or smell, not feeling well, nausea, diarrhea?)**
- **Have you recently been in contact with someone who has COVID (probable or confirmed)?**

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you should stay home and listen to the Golden Hour on FaithFM 93.7 at 11 a.m.

Furthermore, if you are considered in a high-risk category for COVID-19 (over 65, or with underlying medical conditions), it is recommended that you stay home as well.

After deciding to come to church, please plan on arriving no earlier than 30 minutes prior to the service (9 a.m.) to allow for time for screening and seating, while reducing time spent indoors. There is only **one entry door that will be open: the tower door off the main parking lot**. Please be mindful of keeping a 2 metre physical distance throughout the queuing process. If you require the use of the lift, we will be contacting you directly prior to the opening date.



At the entry door, you will be screened based on the questions* on the first page. If you answer yes to any question, you will be asked to return home. Then the queue will wind around the basement to the coat rack area, where ushers will take down your contact information for public health contact tracing (records will be kept for 3 years).



Roped-off Pews

You will then climb either set of stairs to the Sanctuary Narthex, where you (and your family/ partner/ party) will be escorted to your seat by an usher. Please note that the church will be filled from front to back and that you will unfortunately not be able to sit in your favourite seat. Every other pew is roped off to provide safe distancing. A Guide to Worship will be on your seat, and pew hymnals will be in the pew rack. We ask that once you are seated, and throughout the service, you remain in your assigned seat, and you **keep your face mask on at all times while indoors.**

If for medical reasons you cannot wear a mask for the entire duration of the service, you will be seated (via the parking lot tower staircase) in the front reserved section nearest the baptismal font. This section is limited and only has two spots. Furthermore, we recommend that people who cannot wear a mask stay home and listen to the Golden Hour.

During the service, there will be **no congregational singing** or humming and we will remain seated for the hymns.

Congregational responses and prayers will be done silently.

Keep your
face mask
on at all times.

No
congregational
singing.

Once a month, we will celebrate **Holy Communion**, and our first Sunday will most likely be Reformation Sunday, October 25th. During the meal section, those desiring to receive will line up in a single file with 2 metre distancing, as directed by the ushers, starting with the back. The masked pastor will distribute the host only, and once you have received the host, you will return to your seat circling around the sanctuary, and then take off your mask to consume the Body of our Lord. Those seated on the centre aisle will come up first, followed by those on the side aisles and finally the balconies. Alternately, you may choose to bring your own bread and wine and consume these in your seat.

At the end of the service, all will remain in place until the end of the postlude. Then, following the ushers' guidance, those in the back pews will exit first, going directly out **the only official exit**: the Benton parking lot doors. Please do not stop to talk and mingle at any point inside. We encourage you to mingle outside with masks and physical distancing.



Exit

Other important items:

- **Hand Sanitizers** will be provided at all key locations. Please use them!
- **Masks:** Please bring your own, but if you forget, the ushers can provide one for you. According to the Waterloo Region Bylaw, wearing a mask indoors is mandatory.
- **Signage** will be posted at important locations to assist you. Please follow all directional markings.
- **Seats:** There are 50 marked locations in the pews for sitting, including the balconies. All locations are 2 meters distant from other seats, as well as 2 meters from the centre of the aisles (the balcony seats have the greatest distance from one another). Couples and parties can sit together at a seat location.
- **Capacity:** At the moment, we anticipate an average Sunday attendance of 30-50 people. If more than 50 people arrive, we will have to turn people away.
- **Children** are welcome to attend, but must stay with you/ your family in your seat at all times.
- **Personal belongings:** Please bring a minimum of belongings along, as all items must remain with you at all times (ie. the coat racks are not to be used).
- **Offering:** Please place your offering in one of the offering plates upon leaving.
- **The Peace** will be shared without physical contact.
- **Washrooms:** Available for emergency use only. Please only use the ones in the Sanctuary basement, follow all signage and maintain physical distancing.
- **Coffee Hour** is cancelled until further notice.
- **Mingling:** Please do not mingle while indoors and respect 2 metre physical distancing at all times. Please refrain from shaking hands or other physical contact with people outside your social bubble.
- **Pastors** will not be greeting at the door or mingling inside . If you wish to talk to them, best to call or email at another time.

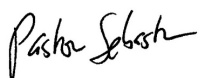
- **Water Coolers** have been removed. Please bring your own filled water bottle if needed, and be sure to take it with you when you leave.
- **Access** to the rest of the building (e.g. Office, Fellowship Hall, Nursery, Sunday school rooms, Scout Hall) is not permitted.
- **Property Cleaning and Sanitizing** will be increased throughout this time
- **The Choirs** will not be singing at this time, since music will be provided by soloists and musicians (e.g. handbells).
- **Lectors, Communion Servers and the Altar Guild** will not be active at this time.
- **Other building usage** (meetings, meals, office hours etc.): the building remains closed except for worship, and individual groups are approved by the Board on a case-by-case basis, upon presentation of a COVID re-opening plan. Communication will follow upon such approval.
- **Other changes:** Due to the constantly changing pandemic situation, it is possible that our building will re-open for even more usage in the future, or alternately be closed again. We will inform you as best as we can when decisions are made. Continue to listen to the Golden Hour, check our website and social media, or sign up for our email updates at info@stmattskw.com.

Thank you for reading through this letter to plan for your next worship attendance at 54 Benton St. We appreciate you following these guidelines as well as any instructions of the ushers; we are responsible together to do our part to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Please also look for a **video** soon to be posted to our website and Facebook page with a mock walk-through of a Sunday worship service. Thanks to our Communications Group (Karen Farrell, John Heil, Mike, Sue and Delaney Laking, Linda Ramsey and Leanne Vanderhout) for their input with this process.

Please do not hesitate to contact myself or Pastor Carey, members of the Board or Staff with questions or comments. Whatever option you choose of worshipping with us, whether on Zoom, via the Golden Hour, the Drive-in or in person, we thank you for being part of St. Matthews, “where community gathers”.

All God’s blessings in these troubled times,

Yours in Christ,



The Rev. Sebastian Meadows-Helmer