



**St. Matthews Lutheran Church**  
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September 1st, 2021

Dear members and friends of St. Matthews,

We have good news for you! Our church building will be open for worship again starting on **Sunday, September 19th, 2021!** This letter is largely the same that was sent out in September 2020. *Significant changes are marked in italics.*

Here is what to expect on a typical Sunday with our current pandemic protocols: Before you come on a Sunday morning, it's important for you to self-screen with the following common COVID questions (*or complete a Health Ontario self-screen test*):

- Have you been diagnosed with, or suspected of having, COVID-19? *Have you been told by a health care provider to stay home?*
- Have you travelled internationally in the past 14 days *and been told to quarantine?* Have you been in contact with someone who has travelled internationally in the last 14 days, *and are not fully vaccinated?*
- Are you experiencing any COVID symptoms today? (Fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, loss of taste or smell, nausea, diarrhea?)
- *Is anyone you live with currently experiencing any new COVID-19 symptoms and/or waiting for test results after experiencing symptoms, and you are not fully vaccinated?*

If you answer yes to any of these questions, please stay home and listen to the Golden Hour on FaithFM 93.7 at 11 a.m. or our livestream at 9.30 a.m. and seek medical care if you have not done so already. *We strongly encourage everyone who is eligible to be fully vaccinated prior to returning to in-person worship.*

Plan on arriving no earlier than 30 minutes prior to the service (9 a.m.) to allow 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



Entry

you require the use of the lift, we will be contacting you directly prior to the opening date.

At the entry door, you will *self-screen* based on the questions\* on the first page. If you answer yes to any question, you *should* return home. Then the queue will wind around the basement to the coat rack area, where an usher will take down your contact information for public health contact tracing (records will be kept for 30 days).

You will then climb *the left set of stairs* to the Sanctuary Narthex, where you (and your family/ partner/ party) will be directed 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 listen to the Golden Hour.



During the service, there will be **no congregational singing** and we will remain seated for the hymns. *Congregational responses and prayers may be said.*

At least once a month, we will celebrate **Holy Communion**, and our first Sunday most likely will be Thanksgiving Sunday, October 10th. 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 while maintaining physical distancing.

#### Other important items:

- **Hand Sanitizers** will be provided at all key locations.
- **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 48 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 *75 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. *Information about a potential Sunday school will be forthcoming.*
- **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.
- **Pastors** will not be greeting at the door or mingling indoors, *but will make an effort to come outside asap after the service.* If you wish to talk to them, best to call or email at another time. *An in-person meeting may be scheduled.*



- **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
- **Music** will likely be provided by a variety of groups, including soloists, a chamber choir and the handbell choir.
- **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. *Meetings with masks and physical distancing, based on room capacities, will be allowed upon 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](mailto: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, *especially the delta variant, even given current high vaccination levels.* Please also review the **video** to be reposted to our website and Facebook page with a mock walk-through of a Sunday worship service.

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, we thank you for being part of St. Matthews, "where community gathers".

On behalf of the Re-Opening Task Force (Kim and Tim Schaner, Linda McLellan, Pastor Carey and myself),



The Rev. Sebastian Meadows-Helmer