

St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Islington

2020 Vestry Report



Clergy

The Rev. Philip Stonhouse, Priest-in-Charge

The Rev. Canon Dr. Merv Mercer, Honorary Assistant

The Rev. Gail Marshall, Deacon

The Rev. Milton Dorman, Honorary Assistant

Churchwardens

Rector's Churchwarden

Karen Lee

People's Churchwarden

Stuart Watt

Deputy Rector's Churchwarden

Lianne Thompson

Deputy People's Churchwarden

Shantelle Hampton

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73rd 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 72nd Annual Vestry Meeting
6. The Right Reverend Andrew J. Asbil's Pastoral Letter
7. The Right Reverend Jennifer Andison's Pastoral Letter
8. Rector's Report
9. The Wardens' Report
10. Social Justice Vestry Motion
11. Baptisms, Weddings & Burials
12. Financial Statements
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14. Rector's Appointments
15. Nominating Committee Report & Parish Elections
 - People's Warden
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 - Lay Delegates to Synod
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16. Reception of Reports
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19. Adjournment

Bishop's Pastoral Letter to Vestries, 2021



To our Clergy, Churchwardens and Parishioners

Beloved in Christ, peace and grace be with you.

Grow! You may remember that in my letter to you last year, I invited each community to embrace the essence of our diocesan strategic plan, Growing in Christ. The invitation was simple...grow! Well, none of us could have imagined the scope with which we would have to adjust, change, turn, accommodate, and innovate in 2020. Almost every aspect of how we do Church would need to be transformed: from worship to administration, from pastoral care to sacramental ministry, from finance to stewarding buildings and property. On Sunday, March 15th we closed the doors of our buildings and we were jettisoned into another way of gathering and being the Church.

Parishes small and large, rural and urban turned to online worship, telephone ministry, driveway conversations, pre-recording and livestreaming. We thought we would be back in our buildings by Easter. My, how we were wrong about that. Maybe by Pentecost things would be normal again, we thought. Summer turned into fall. A partial opening under strict guidelines would give way to a second wave that would carry us through Advent and Christmas, Epiphany and now into Lent. Through it all we have learned to live outside our comfort zone and grow. Like being tossed into the deep end of the pool we are learning to swim.

The Jubilee offered by the Diocese in 2020 helped to shore up a faltering financial confidence. Many parishes report that online worship and programming is reaching a wider audience. Some parishes tell us that financial support and donations are holding steady. Clergy tell me that there is a growing trust, cooperation, and companionship with colleagues. Many parishes speak of collaborating with neighbouring communities. We have also been wrestling with how to serve those who are falling through the cracks of our social structures and safety nets, particularly those who live in precarious housing, grapple with food insecurity, mental health issues and domestic violence.

The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 thrust us into the depths of confronting anti-black and systemic racism. Each year at vestry we ask you to consider supporting a social justice initiative. In 2021, we invite you to support the motion on Committing Ourselves to Anti-Racism. The initiatives that are outlined give all of us the opportunity to be agents of dismantling racism in all of its forms. We are called to change. Throughout this time of pandemic, we are doing more than just treading water... we are growing. I believe we are growing in trust of one another, and deeper still, in trust that God has this whole situation in hand. And trust calls us to be faithful and to be prepared.

As you gather for your vestry meeting, likely online, I want to say two things. The first is to express my profound gratitude for your faithfulness, hard work, creativity, and innovative ways thus far in this pandemic. I am thankful for the tireless leadership of our clergy; bishops, priests, and deacons. I am moved beyond words by the ministry of our lay leaders who move mountains to keep the church moving. Thank you.

The second thing is, be prepared. We hear this summons often in scripture. In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, cries the prophet. I go to prepare a place for you, Jesus says to his disciples. Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season writes Paul to Timothy. As circumstances begin to change, as the vaccine begins to take a hold for the better, I hope that you will take as much time planning for a return as you did when our doors closed in March of last year. Coming back will take a special kind of care and effort. It will take time to allay fears, it will take energy to coax the community to move forward in new ways. It will take a vision steeped in the Gospel of Jesus Christ to lift the eyes and hearts of a weary people.

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6.9-10

Yours in Christ,

+Andrew

The Rt. Rev. Andrew J. Asbil

Bishop of Toronto

Area Bishop's Pastoral Letter to Vestry, 2021



January 6, 2021

The Feast of the Epiphany

But the Lord will be your everlasting light, your God will be your splendor. Isaiah 60:19

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

I am writing this on the great Feast of the Epiphany, when we remember and rejoice in the fact that the wise men worshipped the young Jesus as the Light of the World. As the first non-Jews to realize who Jesus is, the wise men boldly proclaim that the gospel is for all nations and all peoples, and that Jesus doesn't just make local claims relevant only to the children of Israel, but global claims on the lives of *all* people, from Mississauga to Mauritius. What wonderfully good news: God sent his son to all the peoples of the world, not just a select few. In the York-Credit Valley Area, that good news is marvellously lived out in the global diversity found in our pews (and now online!).

Our interconnectedness as a global family has been brutally highlighted in 2020 as we battled with the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic. And while you don't need me to tell you about the painful and deadly impact that this virus has had on the world, our city, our churches and our own lives, I do want to encourage you with how Anglicans across our Diocese have risen to the challenges now set before us. I have heard of and seen the creative online offerings of worship, Messy Church and Alpha on Zoom, meals and food still being provided to the homeless, more phone calls to the lonely and isolated, and money raised for FaithWorks. Through it all, it has been a joy to see how you have all partnered with the Holy Spirit during the twists and turns of this past year.

On the occasion of your Annual Vestry Meeting, I particularly want to thank all of you who serve in formal leadership roles in your parishes (as Wardens and Treasurers) and of course, your parish clergy, too. When you were recruited for your role, I am pretty sure that it was not mentioned that a global pandemic was on the way! Finances are being significantly stretched, workload seems to have doubled, and some parishes are now

unsure of what their future holds. In the midst of this anxiety and exhaustion, your service to Christ still ascends to our Heavenly Father as a fragrant offering. Thank you so very much.

I also commend to your prayerful care our [Diocesan Social Justice Vestry Motion](#). This important motion acknowledges that anti-Black racism is a sinful reality in our lives, our society and in our churches and pledges us, through the grace of God, to work towards the dismantling of all forms of personal and institutional racism.

This is my last letter to you as your Area Bishop. I was consecrated as a bishop four years ago on the Feast of the Epiphany, and it has been a singular privilege to serve in York-Credit Valley, taking with me a treasure trove of wonderful experiences of watching the living God move and be active in your lives and in your parishes. While it has come as a surprise, to both you and to me, that God has called me to St. Paul, Bloor Street, I am grateful to be continuing my episcopal ministry in gospel partnership with all of you.

I would urge you during this coming year, as the pandemic continues to unfold and the York-Credit Valley Area goes through a season of transition, to cling to the Lord Jesus Christ, be steadfast in prayer, and to persevere in seeking ways to reach out evangelistically, both online and in person, to all those who are spiritually hungry in our neighbourhoods.

Please know that I will continue to hold you all in prayer this coming year. This year offers both deep challenges and the promise that the God who reveals Godself in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, will never leave us or forsake us.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "x Jennifer Andison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The "x" is at the beginning, followed by the first name "Jennifer" and the last name "Andison".

The Right Reverend Jennifer Andison
Area Bishop of York-Credit Valley
Bishop Suffragan of Toronto

Rector's Report

Submitted by the Rev. Philip Stonhouse

"For 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.'" Jeremiah 29:11

In 2020, the theme for St. Matthew's seemed to be "change." In the past year, you have seen a significant leadership shift and pandemic-related adaptations to worship style, gatherings, and the kind of ministry that occurs here. We have been continually adapting to meet the needs of the church, the people, and the world around us. Thankfully, with all of this change, we have seen the diocese and the people of St. Matthew's rise up to meet the challenge and support those in need.

I know that change is never easy. Change, whether good or bad, is challenging because it pushes us to think, adapt, and work hard at something we are not accustomed to. Our habits and assumptions can often help us to navigate a very large and complicated world, but change forces us to recognize that we do not know everything and that we need to keep growing in knowledge and practice. God has been challenging us in the same way through these trying times to grow in faith and practice.

I know I have been personally challenged by change. I came to St. Matthew's in the midst of COVID-19 when many relationship-building activities were restricted. Even though I grew up in the church as a double PK (Preacher's Kid) and have been serving for six years, I knew that helping to guide this church would come with a lot of learning, challenges, and growth. I have been so thankful for all the ways we have been able to partner in doing this work and I hope that we can keep growing in how we serve, learn and praise together.

What I did not initially realize was how much of my faith was social; I imagine it is the same for many of you. I love to sit down and get to know people's dreams, struggles, and faith. It feeds me and my faith to hear and share how God is working in each of our lives. Right now, we can't do this in the same way. Though I know community is essential, I have been forced to lean even more heavily on my relationship with God in prayer, reading, and conversation. In a strange way, I am thankful for this, because I have seen God accompany me, I have seen Him work, and I have seen Him move out and work through others. Thanks to this greater commitment, I think I have been better prepared to be your servant. If you haven't already, I encourage you to lean even more on God in these times.

One positive aspect of change is that it can also create new opportunities. Though it may be easier to focus on the loss that we feel through this pandemic, we should also be attentive and watch for the doors that God has opened. As a church and a community of faith, I would love for us to grab hold of this opportunity and find the hope that God has given us in this season.

During Advent, we did a GIFT (Growing in Faith Together) Group Study and a Sermon Series on The Christian Hope. I know this challenged many of us to rethink how we perceive and hold onto hope. As I heard, read, and reflected on what individuals had learned through these studies, one thing jumped out at me: we are called to see, create, and be heaven on earth. Our hope is that this world will be recreated to be God's perfect kingdom: heaven on earth and we all play a special role in making that happen through this community and through our everyday lives.

Re-creation involves change, and change brings with it an opportunity for re-creation, redemption, and new life. That is why for this coming year I would like for us as a church to have a vision to be a filter, guide, and structure for everything we do in the coming year. Let us together be A People Preparing God's Kingdom. In the context of our strategic plan and church, this means that we will be looking at how we are creating Godly community and welcoming others into the kingdom (belonging), how we are preparing our own faith and helping others prepare theirs (believing), and how are we discerning the needs of those around us and working God's kingdom out in the world by employing the talents and gifts God has given us (behaving).

All of this change and reflection offers us a rare opportunity. Just like Christ's resurrection and our baptism, this moment gives us a fresh start, where we might hold onto and make room for new things that prepare God's Kingdom in our midst. Now, let's do this work with purpose and faithfulness together.

This Christian life is a lifelong journey where through gradual change and dedication, God's Holy Spirit is preparing God's Kingdom in and around us. We want everyone to live in a kingdom where justice, love, and life are known. So, let us focus on preparing and creating this kingdom for all those we meet. Together, let us make this community a place where people can find heaven on earth.

"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:19

Your Servant in Christ,

Rev. Philip Stonhouse

Warden's Report

Submitted by Karen Lee, Stuart Watt, Shantelle Hampton, and Lianne Thompson

Indeed, 2020 was a year like no other that many of our St. Matthew's family and friends have ever experienced! Despite the challenges, and thanks to many, the ministry of St. Matthew's continued and remained stable.

It was with very mixed emotion that we bade farewell to our Music Director and Organist, Thomas Gonder. We were most fortunate to have Thomas with us for over seven years and so appreciated his immense talent. Following Thomas' departure to take up the position of Organist and Music Director of Christ Church Cathedral in Fredericton, New Brunswick, we welcomed Tyler Versluis as our Organist and Music Director. We are grateful for his presence with us and the continuation of our music ministry.

In February 2020 we welcomed Jeff Bonner as our Family Ministry Associate. The role of the Family Ministry Associate is to collaborate with volunteers and clergy to disciple children and their parents in their faith.

We were able to gather for the annual Pancake Supper which took place just before the Ontario lockdown occurred and we were no longer permitted to gather together in person.

We were grateful to Rev. Stephen, the staff, and Colin Hall for taking us online. This work then allowed us to continue to worship and meet together.

In late May we found ourselves bidding farewell to Rev. Stephen, Lauren, and the family. Despite the lockdown we were able to celebrate and thank him for his many years of dedicated service to St. Matthew's. He is now Rector at the Church of the Resurrection in Hamilton, Ontario.

On July 1, we welcomed Rev. Philip Stonhouse and his wife Mary Anne Perta. Rev. Philip was appointed by our area Bishop, Jenny Andison, Priest-in-Charge.

In August and September we bid thanks and farewell to Kim Butler, our Director of Youth Ministry and Laurie Bodley, Communications Coordinator.

In late October, Christine Ivy joined us as Youth and Discipleship Associate Pastor. Christine's role includes providing leadership to the youth, evolving our discipleship ministry and supporting parish communications.

Following all established COVID-19 protocols, we were able to gather for in-person (and online) worship services for a few months before another lockdown occurred. On November 8, 2020, we joined in person and online in a service of celebration and commitment of our new priest, Rev. Philip. Bishop Andison led the service and delivered the sermon.

We are grateful to Deborah and Nancy Hurn and a team of choppers who have prepared and delivered a weekly meal to the Toronto Urban Native Ministries. Thank you for this work and to all for the financial support of this ministry.

The Advent and Christmas Season, which required us once again to be online, was rich and meaningful thanks to Rev. Philip, the staff, and the musical talent of our parishioners. Thanks to all.

Financial challenges continued, however we were grateful for the government subsidies and Jubilee grants from the diocese, as well as the constant support of our family and friends. As you will see in the financial statements found elsewhere in this vestry report, we have been able to end the year without a deficit. We extend our sincere thanks to David Oakden, Treasurer, Anita Wakeman, Accounts Administrator, for the preparation of these reports.

In closing we wish to thank our Clergy, our Staff and our St. Matthew's family and friends for your continued engagement, prayers, time, talent, and financial support in 2020!

And once again, with God's Help and Guidance, together we can do more than we can ask or imagine!

Committing Ourselves to Anti-Racism: 2021 Social Justice Vestry Motion

The vision of God's Kingdom is one where all races, tribes and nations are welcomed and made one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28), where barriers are broken down and all are full citizens of the household of God (Ephesians 2:17-21) and where all are invited to contribute the gifts and glory of their heritage (Revelation 21:26). Yet, as racialized members of our communities can attest, and as has been made painfully visible in the events of this past year, our society and even our Church fall far short of this goal.

Canadians, particularly those of European decent, may be tempted to look at racial tensions in the U.S. and congratulate ourselves that we live in a comparably diverse and tolerant society, but the experiences of racialized people in Canada do not bear out this assumption. A recent study by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has found that, although Black people make up less than 9% of the population of Toronto, they are "grossly overrepresented" in cases of discretionary arrests for low-level offences, as well as in police use of force, including fatal shootings. Another report from the OHRC found that between 2013 and 2017, a Black person was nearly 20 times more likely than a white person to be fatally shot by police in Toronto. Indigenous people make up only 5% of Canada's population, but more than 30% of incarcerated individuals in Canada. Several school boards in the GTA have faced inquiries into their systemic inequitable treatment of racialized students. These are all present realities within the most racially diverse region of Canada.

Nor can we claim that our Church is free of racist attitudes and the systems that entrench and perpetuate them. Black clergy in our Diocese can attest not only to being racially profiled in shops but to encountering surprise and discomfort when people realize they are the senior cleric in charge. Nor does our leadership fully represent the ethnic and racial diversity of our Church. The first bishop of African descent in the Anglican Church of Canada, Bishop Peter Fenty, was only elected in 2013 – less than a decade ago. Nearly 30 years have elapsed since the Rev. Dr. Romney Moseley's report "No Longer Strangers" was presented to General Synod, and many of its recommendations have yet to be implemented. We have a long way to go before we fulfil God's vision of a people "from every language, tribe and nation" (Revelation 7:9) where all are fully welcome.

However, there are signs of positive change. In our Diocese, ethnic and linguistic-based congregations are centres of growth and vitality. Our recent ordinands and postulants represent a wider range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Indigenous Anglicans in Canada are taking steady steps toward self-determination, while this past year has seen the formation of the group Black Anglicans of Canada, whose mission is to improve the participation, representation, empowerment and inclusion of Black people in lay and ordained leadership roles within the Anglican Church of Canada. Our Diocese will be implementing anti-racism and anti-bias training for Diocesan staff and clergy starting in early 2021. An Anti-Racism/Anti-Bias Pod will be created to carry this work forward among volunteers and lay leaders and over the long term.

In his letter to the Diocese of July 17, 2020, Bishop Andrew wrote: "It is time to challenge and to question how structures shape our attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and bias. We must understand and confront white privilege, institutional and systemic racism that so many of us have been blind to for too long. And we must not be afraid to become agents of transformation. To dismantle racism in all of its forms takes commitment, community and faith in order to realize progress and change. It means becoming comfortable with being uncomfortable. It means taking a very long look in the mirror and understanding the part that we each play."

Some of this work has already begun. Just as many Anglicans in our Diocese and beyond have committed themselves to education and action as part of the process of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, Anglicans in our Diocese have started to examine their own attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and bias. Virtual study groups have sprung up around books such as Robin diAngelo's *White Fragility*, Desmond Cole's *The Skin We're In*, or the late Rev. Dr. James Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Many signed up for the Black Anglicans of Canada's summer roundtable series (still available on YouTube) and workshops on anti-racism at the Diocesan Outreach Conference.

In the September 2020 issue of *The Anglican*, the Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Fields wrote: "The compassionate Church cannot be an observer on the sidelines, reluctant to judge the values by which racism is allowed to take root. It must be disposed to listening, open to being transformed by reality, and accountable for being contributory to the situation, where that is the case." In the second part of his column, published in October 2020, Canon Fields discussed the parts we must all play – from the institutional to the individual level – to grapple with systemic racism and make our Church and our society a place of mutual healing. Let each member of our Church take up this work with intention and goodwill.

The Social Justice Vestry Motion for 2021 is offered by the Bishop's Committee on Intercultural Ministry with the full support of the Social Justice & Advocacy Committee:

"The parish of St. Matthew's, Islington, acknowledges that Anti-Black racism exists in our society and in our Church, and that it and all forms of racism against Black, Indigenous and other racialized people are a sin against God and against our neighbour. We commit ourselves to the recognition, dismantling, and elimination of Anti-Black and other forms of racism in our secular institutions, in our Church, and in ourselves, and to work for the full inclusion, participation and belongingness of Black, Indigenous and other racialized people in all sectors of our common life.

In light of this acknowledgment, and in keeping with this commitment, our parish undertakes to do the following: _____ "

Some examples of possible parish actions:

- Hold a special service to celebrate the contributions of racialized people to Canada and to our church, i.e., Black History Month (February); Asian & South Asian History Month (May); Indigenous History Month (June)
- Start an anti-racism study series at your parish. For suggestions of books, audio-visual and other resources, see <https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/parish-life/diversity-resources/>
- Invite someone from a racialized community to speak on anti-racism, or to give an anti-racism workshop at your parish.
- Are people of racialized communities well represented in your parish life and leadership (churchwardens, parish council, Synod members, committees)? What barriers to inclusion exist? How can they be dismantled?
- Other: (please specify)

The Bishop's Committee on Intercultural Ministry would be happy to recommend resources and potential speakers for parishes to aid them in this work. Please contact Christina Yu or Andre Lyn for more information.

St. Matthew's Church Register for 2020

Baptisms

Oliver Bromberg Kemp
December 6, 2020

*"Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works
and glorify your Father in Heaven."*

Deaths

Barbara Mitchell
February 22, 2020

Bridget Farrar
April 11, 2020

Marcia Scott
July 15, 2020

Charlotte Weiler
October 10, 2020

Pat Rickards
October 31, 2020

"Rest eternal grant them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them."

Operating Fund Budget

Submitted by David Oakden

St. Matthew's Anglican Church Comparative Income Statement and Budget

	Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget
	2020	2019	2020	2021
Envelopes / PAG	173,398	189,867	195,100	180,100
Open Offerings	863	3,945	4,000	2,000
Seasonal Offerings	17,990	9,665	15,148	17,500
Room Licenses	72,773	84,167	85,850	79,100
Memorials	2,965	2,620	2,000	3,000
Interest	0	0	0	0
Advertising - Matts Media	300	700	500	500
Parish Events	6,393	6,090	9,402	9,525
Miscellaneous	2,850	962	1,011	1,000
Building Fund	0	0	0	0
Debt Reduction Contributions	250	0	0	0
Jubilee Grants	31,903	0	0	0
Government Grants	13,774	0	0	5,000
Income	323,460	298,016	313,011	297,725
Staff/Clergy Salary and Benefits	155,681	164,255	169,632	153,917
Rectory Expenses	15,563	18,912	18,341	12,006
Church Expenses	61,177	60,570	56,649	58,408
Office Expenses	14,858	14,057	14,102	15,296
Audit	4,301	3,500	3,750	3,675
Worship and Ministry	4,690	7,452	7,748	7,150
Parish Events	2,438	3,999	4,147	4,067
Insurance	8,901	7,620	8,200	6,526
Misc.	5,523	367	0	0
Major Reno Church	0	0	0	0
Synod	45,976	43,819	45,976	41,761
Prior Year Adjustments	0	(3,579)	0	0
Expenses	319,108	320,972	328,545	302,806
Net Operations	4,352	(22,956)	(15,534)	(5,081)

Administrative Reports

Envelopes Report

Submitted by Noel Martin and Mary Gleeson

For the year 2021, we have assigned 42 envelope sets to parishioners, and there are 51 Pre-Authorized Givings users. In addition, there is a group of about 30 members or occasional visitors who contribute sporadically throughout the year but do not wish to use envelopes. Your generous Initial offerings offset the cost of the envelopes.

If you have not received your new envelopes yet, you can use last year's (same number).

We encourage all regular donors to sign up for envelopes, or even better, the automatic PAG program. Use of either system greatly reduces both the time required to process each donation, and the likelihood of introduced errors in recording your offerings.

E-transfer or Interac donations are another convenient way to make your offerings.

Annual tax receipts will be mailed this year. In the (unlikely!) event of an error or omission, please let us know as soon as possible so it can be corrected. It looks like we will not get another postponement of tax returns this year, so early corrections are most desirable.

Many thanks to Lisa for her cheerful help in preparing various reports needed to ensure all offerings are recorded accurately.

Property Report

Submitted by Stuart Watt

Due to the circumstances we are in and have been since March 2020, the past year in property management has been mostly uneventful. Some of our many tenants met for a short time when they were allowed to do so and others did not meet at all. Kingsley School followed the public-school guidelines as set out by the province of Ontario. As a result, many of their classes have been by Zoom. Construction work continues on their playground with expected completion by September 2021.

Tom continues to maintain the church on a daily basis. Although there is not much foot traffic at the present time, roof and pipe leaks can occur periodically. Annual inspections to the elevator and fire alarm systems still take place.

Work was done at the rectory before Mary Anne and Philip moved in. This included a complete re-painting, some masonry work on the chimney, and re-finishing of the floors. Hopefully they are enjoying their new accommodations.

Many thanks to Ted Hampton, Al Thompson and all those who helped to maintain the church during the past year. Your assistance is very much appreciated.

Reports Submitted by Parish Ministries

Discipleship (Believing)

"...Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well."

2 Timothy 2:1-2

During the past year we have all had our faith challenged. As we learned to deal with "STAYING AT HOME" for school, work, worship, supporting each other and learning, we were stretched even further by the moving on of our faith leader, Rev. Stephen. In the midst of it all, we have learned and celebrated together in ways we had never previously imagined. These reports reflect some of the joys, challenges and understandings through which God has sustained us.

Adult Discussion Groups

GIFT Groups

Submitted by Dawn Mercer

At our last Vestry we presented the idea of thinking about small groups at St. Matthews as Growing In Faith Together - GIFT Groups. The concept of expanding our faith and doing that in a group where there is trust, respect, and prayerful concern for each other accurately reflects how small, mostly Bible study groups, had been functioning at St. Matthews. In the strategic plan we projected that the number and variety of groups would expand in 2020, but gatherings were soon restricted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were restricted in moving forward with several of those plans. One of the existing small groups - GIFT groups - had enough people who were comfortable enough in Zoom to try out an online GIFT group. Although not the same as "in-person," most of the members of that group have been able to continue to grow and support each other.

Since Rev. Philip has had the chance to assess where folks at St Matthews are in their faith journey (although hampered by the limitations of COVID restrictions), new groups and growth opportunities are being planned.

The Sermon Series'

From the day we began to meet again in person (Sept 13th, 2020) we have been going through a number of sermon series. This allowed us as a community to focus and dig deeper into certain important ideas and events. In Holy Week and Easter of 2020, due to COVID-19, we were less able to celebrate the way we may have preferred, so we decided to take 11 weeks to focus on three of the most important days: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday in a series called *The Greatest Story Ever Heard*. We then continued into a sermon series to partner with our Bible Studies on the Christian Hope and now we are just finishing a series on *Who Are We?* This coming year we have more sermon series planned:

[The Lord's Prayer \(Feb 14th - April 4th\)](#)

In conjunction with Lent and a GIFT Group study (small group) on the same topic, we will be working verse by verse through the prayer that Jesus Christ Himself taught us. This will help us to understand and enrich our own prayer life.

[What is God's Kingdom? \(April 11th - May 16th\)](#)

God's Kingdom begins to show up in amazing ways as Jesus comes into the world. As He was raised to new life, we see that God's Kingdom has the power to overthrow injustice with love and serve. We are meant to be little pockets of God's wonderful Kingdom at the same time that we are meant to spread it. We will begin to explore what this present and coming Kingdom looks like and means for us right now.

[The Present Holy Spirit \(May 23rd - July 11th\)](#)

The Holy Spirit is one of the greatest gifts we will ever receive and yet many of us don't know enough about Him. At baptism, the fullness of God dwells in us and can and will work powerfully through us. The question is, will we quench the Holy Spirit in us, or will we courageously move with Him to be God's presence in this world? In this series during the Pentecost Season, we explore the characteristics and work of the Holy Spirit.

[The Imminent Kingdom \(July 18th - Nov 21st\)](#)

Sometimes this world seems really broken but through the life and work of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of Mark shows us how God's Kingdom is breaking in and overthrowing the old order of sin and death. In this series, we will be focusing just on the Gospel of Mark to really explore the richness of this book as a whole and to better understand who Jesus is and what He has done.

Surprised by Hope and Advent Devotionals

Submitted by Christine Ivy

Entering into the Christmas season, St. Matthew's held a four-week study based on NT Wright's book, *Surprised by Hope*. Our desire was to help people understand what hope Christ offers at all times – even during the dark days of winter and a global pandemic.

While editing and condensing the *Surprised By Hope* GIFT Group study, I knew the Holy Spirit was at work because Rev. Philip, Dawn and I kept coming to the same conclusions about which questions should stay, and which were less important. We also made sure it was relevant to the realities we were facing in Etobicoke in 2020. Using new technology to scan the workbook we were drawing from and then editing it in Word, we developed handouts/leader's guides that allowed us to have something people could use to follow along that wasn't a poor photocopy, but easy-to-read and write in (if they printed it). Each week we watched a video and engaged in discussion. Take aways at the end of each session encouraged attendees to continue to take action, pray, and reflect.

At the end of Advent, I was able to do a week of short devotional videos and upload them to our YouTube Channel. They were based on the Advent Devotional Calendar for 2020 by Jenny Smith, which was distributed to many of the GIFT Group attendees. For the seven days leading up to Christmas Day, I sent an email to all those on our contact list who are connected to the parish in some way. Each video was short, and viewing was optional (of course) but the goal was to be able to do something "together" each day. We received permission to use the excerpts from the author and the publisher, Abingdon Press, before recording and posting them, but had to remove the videos after a couple of weeks due to copyright. A number of parishioners replied and appreciated the devotions.

Goals for Future Growth for Adult Groups

- a. More GIFT groups – at least one more long-term GIFT group and several topical, short-term groups such as *Surprised by Hope* (Advent) and *The Lord's Prayer* (Lent) will be offered. We are waiting for lifting of COVID restrictions to be able to offer "in person" groups for people who prefer that setting.
- b. Topical studies and courses have begun including, *How to Read the Bible*, *The Marriage Course* and others to follow.
- c. Reaching out with learning opportunities that will engage our community will begin when we are able to invite neighbours and friends to join us, i.e., when the

limitations of the pandemic are removed. If you know of topics that would work well for this, please let pass them along.

Youth Group

Submitted by Christine Ivy

I began working at St. Matthew's at the end of October 2020. It has only been a little over three months at the time of this writing, yet I have already experienced so much joy working with the staff and parishioners. The reality of the world right now is not easy, it is not familiar, and it can feel especially isolating and difficult to maintain friendships and community. Yet I have seen real hope and faith in the leadership as we plan discipleship and programming that will help people grow closer to Jesus. It is true that our only salvation, our refuge, the rock upon which we stand and upon whom we build this house of the Lord (the church) is Jesus Christ.

In Youth Ministry, it is obvious that we are facing the unique challenges of trying to meet with youth when we cannot do so physically and most are burnt out on screens from doing school all week at home. My original plans to go on physically distanced walks outside were thwarted by the lockdown. However, despite these setbacks, every other week we continue to play D&D with some of the youth, and I have been in regular communication with a few others. I believe that God is calling us at this time to build a strong foundation for the youth ministry at St. Matthew's, and that that foundation be made up of parishioners who enjoy youth and have a heart for youth ministry. Together with one or two others, I will be getting in touch with most of the parish to personally ask for names of people you know who might be interested in joining a weekly Youth Ministry Team. We will meet weekly, pray for the youth – by name – weekly, and consider how we can discern the spirit's leading for our youth and the community to which they belong. The fact is that these are our youth. God is already at work in their lives, just like he is in ours, and I believe He is moving in the hearts of some of us – calling us – to figure out how we can help them see and celebrate the reality and abundance of God's love in their lives and ours, too. We don't have all the answers, but we do have presence, and testimony to the God who is faithful and generous and alive, speaking to us through Scripture, and everything else. If you or someone you know is coming to mind for this prayer team, please get in touch. We are building something beautiful in this community... join us! civy@saintmatts.ca

Children

"Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children." Matthew 19:14

We are working on inviting the children to come to Jesus and then we will all watch them show us about the Kingdom.

Club Matt

Submitted by Jeff Bonner

When the pandemic first hit and restrictions came into place, St. Matthew's was one of the fastest to adapt and adopt a Zoom-based worship. The Club Matt team followed that lead and quickly embraced Zoom as a way to continue the Club Matt program almost uninterrupted.

Club Matt continued through the spring and summer as a separate, children-focused online time in the half-hour before the main church service. The curriculum continued to be developed in-house by dedicated volunteers and experienced educators. The lessons followed the lectionary through to Pentecost, but then went into special themes for the rest of the summer. First, the children experienced a *Journey Through Acts*, hearing some of the highlights of the Book of Acts from beginning to end and meeting key characters. Once that journey was complete, we began a series on *Heroes of the Faith*, where the children learned that many heroes of faith are just ordinary everyday people who made choices to make the world a better place. As part of that exploration, we talked about historic figures (e.g., Harriet Tubman) as well as guest speakers including our own parish members Al & Florence Thompson, and Bishop Mark MacDonald who is the National Indigenous Bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada. In the fall we returned to following the Sunday sermon themes.

With the return to in-person worship in September and resumption of the 9:30 am service, the separate Club Matt ceased, as we endeavored to adapt the service to meet pandemic requirements. Although the service was initially designed for in-person attendance, it quickly became obvious that families were more comfortable staying home and attending online. This required some adjustment to the service design, but allowed for more music as families are able to sing at home but would not be allowed to in-person. The 9:30 am service now serves as both a structured worship time and Club Matt program in one.

As part of the weekly program, and to support family learning at home, a weekly email goes out with printable activities for use at-home. Packages including full-colour prints of the activities, and sometimes special crafting materials, are also hand delivered to local St. Matthew's families. These weekly deliveries are often a source of joy, with some children actively and eagerly waiting and looking forward to them.

Although participation in Club Matt activities dropped off in the spring and summer, now the number of children and families is quite similar to pre-COVID times.

Story Hour

Submitted by Philip Stonhouse

As we have been forced to change our ways of gathering and teaching, we kept adapting to do that better. For a series of weeks and months, Rev. Philip and a few others read open domain children's books to the kids over YouTube. The storytime contained such classics as the Velveteen Rabbit, Peter Rabbit, The Three Little Pigs, and more; this also included a story written by our very own Lianne Thompson. In total, fourteen videos were created and are still accessible on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcEOpB1pSnA&list=PL60qgCKg2i3ijCT8mgOyYGbRWFGyPrl2O&index=3>

If families would like more of this content, please reach out to anyone on the children's ministry team.

Messy Church

Submitted by Dawn Mercer

As 2020 began, Messy Church had a strong start with plans for meeting the last Saturday of each month up to the end of May. The first two Messy Churches were well attended and followed the usual pattern of about 20-25 kids and youth with 15-20 adults as leaders and participants.

The announcement of pandemic restrictions in mid-March left us unable to imagine how we could offer the program we had planned for March in such a short time, so it was cancelled. By April we renewed our approaches and offered May and June Messy Church online in Zoom. A few children and families attended but the enthusiasm for sitting in front of a computer was weak; we realized that we would need to rethink how to get kids more actively involved online.

By Fall, Messy Church leaders had more experience and more ideas for online Messy Church. General ideas and specific suggestions for such gatherings were being shared

around the world. Delivering materials to homes (thanks to Deborah and Nancy Hurn) had worked well in the spring so we built on that idea and will continue to do so until it is safe to gather in person. It seemed that doing child-friendly science experiments would interest a range of age groups when we could get the necessary materials to them; this formed the basis for the planning the October Messy Church and continues into 2021. In October, we explored Water and related the behaviours of water to how God is with us in Jesus.

As in past years, our Advent Messy Church focused on reaching out to others and preparing Advent materials to use at home in the advent season. It was a very busy Messy Church and we were all surprised as we shared hot chocolate and star cookies that we had been online for two hours. We certainly had been doing a lot more than staring at the screen all that time!

We will continue to use themes that provide children and their families with engaging activities that allow them to expand their knowledge of themselves, others, and God as their friend in this strange time. Numbers in the online environment continue to grow as kids and families hear about the fun things we do in Zoom Messy Church. Music and singing continue as one of the online parents leads music with guitar. Rev. Philip leads worship and we end together sharing fun food even though it is not a meal.

Leadership Team: Emily Crump, Linda Dickson, Deborah Hurn, Vanessa Shao, Carol Richardson, Jeff Bonner, (Rev, Stephen Blackmore until June), Rev. Philip Stonhouse, Dawn Mercer. (Edna Strong is taking a leave as she looks after her aging and frail mother.)

Families

Submitted by Jeff Bonner

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges for families as well as our family ministry, particularly for younger children. The main challenge has been to continue to engage our children in faith formation, maintain communication with families and support them through these difficult times. Although the situation makes it more difficult to reach out to the wider community beyond our church walls, we still strive to be a church that is welcoming to children and families. Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, we have managed to attract some new families through the Christmas Pageant and Messy Church ministry.

As the pandemic conditions have stretched on longer than anyone had imagined, we were always watching for new ways to engage our families and children. One successful initiative was storytime videos, discussed earlier in this report. Another program was

“Mission:Matt-possible” which ran briefly in the Fall alongside the sermon series, with different activities for children to do related to the weekly sermon series theme.

At Hallowe’en, a spontaneous effort came together to host “Trunk or Treat” at the church, safely handing out Hallowe’en treats to costumed children from the back of a car in the parking lot behind the church. Despite short notice, volunteers came together to deliver this fun event and children who visited dressed up as their favorite characters, and appreciated the opportunity to show off their costumes.

Advent was a fruitful and resource-packed season for our families, beginning with an Advent-themed Messy church and several different devotional items. These resources included a gingerbread person Nativity scene, Scriptural chain garland, a special Advent book, and a simple Advent Candles arrangement with weekly readings and devotions for the lighting of each candle.

We were able to keep the beloved Christmas Pageant tradition alive, adapting the story to an online format through Zoom, with different scenes enacted by designated families. All members of the church were welcome to join to watch the pageant live; it was also recorded and made available to the St. Matthew’s community who were unable to attend. Although the format was challenging, the children loved having costumes at home and parish members appreciated seeing the children having fun while keeping this tradition going.

Goals for the future for Children and Families

Submitted by Dawn Mercer

With God as our guide and source of creativity, we will seek renewal of our Ministry with Children and Families. In alignment with our Strategic Plan we will expand and grow by inviting people in person and by phone. As of December, numbers had not grown in Club Matt and Messy Church. The leadership teams will look for more ways to get our children actively engaged with their St. Matthews community and inviting their friends. We will listen to kids and their families and plan activities that will help them expand experiences to learn more about their friend Jesus.

Going forward, one new initiative under development is Family Games Times, with board games or other online games; possibly using Zoom for social interaction. The first event is anticipated to take place in the afternoon of Family Day on Monday, February 15th, 2021.

If guidelines from local health authorities permit, we will plan and offer some fun, safe group activities for children during the summer of 2021. The specific format cannot be

planned at this point, although several possibilities are being considered. Keep watch on the website and the Friday emails for details, if such opportunities become possible.

We trust that by fall the distribution of vaccines will allow us to return to more in-person activities. The way ahead is still very unclear but be assured that the safety of kids and families, grandparents and the glory of God are at the top of our consideration.

Fellowship & Worship (Belonging)

Music Ministry

Submitted by Tyler Versluis

In February I will have officially been at St. Matthew's for one full year. Although 2020 was full of unexpected events and hardship, I still have a full understanding of the community and love at St. Matthew's, despite having never talked to most of you in person. I am also grateful to work with such a motivated leadership team who are responsible for adapting our methods of worship, study, and fellowship to overcome the obstacles caused by the pandemic. We are blessed. It is said that trials and tribulations bring a community together, and I have a feeling that when this pandemic has ended, our love for Jesus Christ and each other will be stronger and more authentic.

After the pandemic lockdown in March 2020 our worship moved online to the Zoom platform, and music was limited to home broadcasts and recordings. In July, we professionally recorded three evensong services for YouTube, which brought high quality music and hymns to parishioners.

We returned to worship in the church building in July, and in-person worship resumed in September. In August, St. Matthew's successfully applied for a Reach Grant which gave us a stipend of \$5000 to improve our equipment for broadcasting services, which we plan to maintain post-pandemic.

The music ministry at St. Matthew's was busy this Christmas and Advent season. Along with our regular Sunday worship, we organized a Lessons and Carols service, a Carol Evensong with a special offering for the church deficit, as well as three Christmas Eve services, a Christmas morning service and a Carol Sing to welcome the new year.

Because the Christmas season is so much about music and singing, we professionally recorded some of our music for the services, similar to what we did for our summer evensongs. We were able to be more cost-effective with this task as we switched to a more affordable recording engineer, who charged \$670.09 for this 3-hour session. You can hear the results of this recording session at our YouTube channel, specifically the

videos titled "2020 Lessons and Carols" and "St. Matthew's Worship Evensong/Fundraiser."

Overall, the goal of the music ministry in these pandemic times is to vary our formats and methods to bring variety to our worship, by balancing our live Zoom services with pre-recorded services using our camcorder and microphones, and professionally recorded music. Our Lent and Easter season will have a similar balance.

The music ministry is also working on preliminary plans to launch a "Virtual Choir" project to re-engage congregational singing in our weekly worship. Although much has to be put in place for this project, this will allow St. Matt's choir members (and everyone else!) to record their singing at home and add it to hymn and worship song recordings.

Over the past year, the digital organ has been malfunctioning, which includes a number of stops ceasing to work and the loss of both expression pedals. As of February 2021, the issue with the stops and expression pedals has been fixed, but a newer, serious problem appeared after the Grand-Orgue manual ceased to work entirely. Luckily, the organ is still under warranty so the repairs cost us nothing, however these frequent problems are both frustrating and troubling. It is uncertain whether these issues are caused by a larger problem and whether the organ needs a larger re-haul of the computer system.

The battle against COVID-19 is a war of attrition, and as the pandemic stretches on into a new year, we might begin to lose our patience, fortitude, and motivation. Sometimes our faith declines, as it frequently does when things go poorly for us and others. As your Music Director and Organist I covet your prayers, and I pray in return that your faith does not decline, but rather grows exponentially as we journey together through this valley of shadow and death.

"O Lord, in Thee have I trusted : let me never be confounded." -Te Deum

Choir

Submitted by Bruce Gleeson

We were delighted to welcome Tyler Versluis as our new Music Director/ Organist in mid February and had only three choir practices with him before the pandemic lockdown prevented us from continuing to meet. Since that time Tyler has worked tirelessly to provide music for our Sunday worship services and in September, he and our priest Philip Stonhouse, organized and taped three inspirational choral Evensong services. Tyler also assembled a group of talented musician friends to create taped and live performances for a traditional Lessons and Carols Service, our Christmas Eve and

Christmas Day Services. The week after Christmas, Tyler and his wife, Erica, hosted a Zoom Carol Sing that completed a wonderful festival of Christmas music that created true Christmas joy to dispel the darkness and despair of the pandemic. We look forward to resuming regular choir practices once this virus is under control.

Chancel Guild

Submitted by Mary Gleeson and Sandra Wilson

The past year, 2020, has been a very different year for our group. While it began as usual, the pandemic dramatically changed our duty routine beginning in March. As one of our members pointed out, we were essentially laid off from duties when the churches closed down. Sadly, in early April we lost our long-time president, Bridget Farrar. We certainly miss her knowledge of church routines, her sage advice, and her friendship. We will always sense her presence as we go about our chancel duties.

For Palm Sunday, congregants were invited to collect palm branches at the office door and make their own palm crosses. For Easter, we ordered only a couple of lilies. At the end of May, we said goodbye virtually to priest Stephen Blackmore and in July happily welcomed, again virtually, Philip Stonhouse and his wife Mary Anne to St. Matthew's. Over the summer, there were essentially no duties to be taken care of other than colour changes or filling the candle cylinders. However, Sandra Wilson was very busy at this time, sewing together the individual banner pieces so that the completed banners could be hung for our first Sunday back. Her inspiration and expertise are much appreciated and the finished product is enjoyed by all.

In September, under strict guidelines, we were able to reopen and set up for communion but very differently. Only people in the same bubble were allowed in the sacristy, masked of course, and minimal laundry was required. Our priest Philip was the only one allowed to touch the elements. Fortunately, we were able to make use of the beautiful ciborium donated by Richard Farrar in memory of Bridget, and this was dedicated on Thanksgiving Sunday. Again, minimal decoration with fruit and vegetables was set out for that time. Sadly, close to Christmas, we were locked down once again. We thank all those who donated poinsettias to give the church a festive appearance at Christmas, but other than the Advent wreath and the crèche, our usual decor was scaled down. While there was no Mitten Tree, knitted goods were gratefully received and passed on to Lois Armstrong for distribution to the Seneca School. We thank all of our members for their past dedication, and hope to be able to resume our duties together sometime in the not too distant future, when we can welcome Richard Farrar as a new member of our group.

Lay Anointing

Submitted by Marilyn Friedmann, Deborah Hurn, Nancy Hurn, Bob Holloway, Ann Sim, Dorothy Sproule

The Ministry of Lay Anointing has been part of the Celebration of the Eucharist in St. Matthew's since February 2014. In company with Gail Marshall, would-be anointers attended the training course in 2013. Anointing during the Eucharist has been conducted for six full years. Unfortunately, at the start of the seventh year, COVID-19 interrupted our worship services and we still await safe resumption of full Eucharists.

Initially, anointing by laity was conducted regularly, and only, at the "all ages" and "traditional" Morning Prayer services as well as special services on Christmas Eve and other special services. In early 2020, anointing at the early 8:00 Eucharist began once a month. In the six years of ministry until March 8, 2020, anointing was not available at only one service in six years.

It has been a joy and privilege for each of us to pray with parishioners young and old who asked for prayer support for themselves, for family and friends. Initially, participation by the congregations was a little hesitant because they were not familiar with the sacrament as part of a regular worship. But gradually acceptance increased and it has not been unusual to anoint whole families including babies in arms and children of all ages. At some services, there were no parishioners who came back to the font with a request for anointing and prayer while at other services the number was a dozen or more.

We often are aware that those asking for prayer have received the Lord's blessing during their prayers and we anointers are equally blessed. We anticipate with eager hearts and minds the resumption of our full worship services and praying with and for the members of our faith family of St. Matthew's.

Lectors

Submitted by Bruce Gleeson

We are grateful for the dedicated volunteers whose thoughtful reading of scripture enhances our worship, and we welcome Vanessa and Isabella Shao to our group this year. We also thank Iain and Sharon Shao, their parents, for volunteering, along with many others, to be 'the voice of the people' during our online services each Sunday.

Partners in Prayer

Submitted by Bob Holloway

Partners in Prayer is a group of people who believe strongly in the power of prayer. We are both strongly and loosely knit. We are closely knit by belief and purpose but loosely knit by physical distance.

People who take an active part in the ministry are some present, and some former, parishioners while one was once an employee. Some live close by while some live 1400 km to the west and another 12000 km to the east—both as the crow flies. Each and every one of them receive the request almost simultaneously.

The prayers requested are commonly for parishioners but also for friends, family, acquaintances or even important issues facing this world. Sometimes the person for whom we are asked to pray desires not to reveal personal information or names and the request may will provide only first names, initials, pseudonyms etc. That is acceptable because we believe in a Holy, all knowing Father as described in Psalm 139 who knows everything about each and every one of his children. And the requests are treated as confidential and shared only with the Partners.

We number the requests for no other reason than to make it easier for the Partners to identify individual requests when updates and thank you notes are issued as frequently happens. We are unconcerned if the number of requests diminish just as long as that is not due to lack of knowledge as to our presence and purpose.

Because of the nature and mission of this important Ministry, as well as the way it functions, we have been spared the impact of the Corona virus and continue our mission virtually unchanged.

We are always very happy to welcome any person who knows about this ministry and wishes to pray with us.

Sides People

Submitted by Ron Landry

In 2020 this ministry was responsible for greeting and welcoming both potential new members and current members of St. Matthew's every Sunday morning at the 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. services. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions this ministry was suspended in March for the remainder of the year.

We had a total of 16 people serving on five teams.

The sides people would greet people as they arrived, hand out bulletins and notices, count the attendance, take up the offertory, pace the aisles at communion, tidy the church after the service and deliver the flowers to shut-in or hospitalized Church members. The 11:00 a.m. sides people were also responsible for helping the wardens tally the offerings from the three services.

We sincerely hope that once we are back worshipping together in the church we will be able to resume this very important ministry at St. Matthews.

Hospitality

Submitted by Jean Tovey and Jeff Wright

Hospitality is an important part of our St. Matthew's community. Traditionally we help at special events such as St. Matthew's day and Vestry and provide coffee and refreshments throughout the year after the 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Sunday services. In addition, Jeff and I, along with Margaret Purser, provide lunch and coffee for the 10:30 a.m. Eucharist each Wednesday. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities of this ministry were suspended in early March and have yet to resume.

Matt's Media

Submitted by Kathie Oakden

Matt's Media is the parish newsletter of St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Islington. As in previous years, four issues were published: Lent/Easter (February 23), Pentecost (May 6), Thanksgiving (October 11) and Advent/Christmas (November 29). Matt's Media reports on Parish activities and upcoming Worship Services and Events.

The disruption of life caused by the COVID-19 pandemic began with lockdown on March 18, 2020. House-bound parishioners, Clergy and staff experienced church services and parish life by connecting on the Internet and by telephone. Online photographs were taken by computer 'screen-shot' during Zoom gatherings for worship services, meetings and coffee hours. A brief opening of the church for worship was permitted in the Fall.

Electronic copies (PDF file) were distributed as usual by email to all parishioners whose email address is on file at the church office. (Please update your email address if it changes.) Paper copies (a full-colour booklet, 8.5x11") were available by arrangement, although in the Fall when Churches were permitted to open for Worship, Matt's Media copies were available in the Narthex. Paper copies were mailed or delivered to those parishioners who previously received them from Friends for Friends and others who do

not have email access. Even now, if you would like a paper copy of any issue, please request one from the office. It can be printed on demand.

We are grateful for the skills and devotion of Lisa Tait, our Parish Administrator, who typesets, produces, and distributes Matt's Media using Microsoft Publisher. Thank you.

Stewardship

Submitted by Karen Lee

In March 2020 we conducted our annual Joyful Giving Campaign. Along with the annual Intention cards, the campaign package included the Parish's narrative story. Thanks to the staff and volunteers for the editing of our story. We wish to thank, once again, Marguerite Locke and the team of volunteers for the distribution of the packages.

During 2020 there has been an increase in the number of parishioners participating in the Preauthorized Remittance program. This assists with the management of our cash flow greatly.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we were unable to host the Ministry Fair in 2020, however we wish to thank all of our volunteers who continue in their dedication of their respective ministries despite the pandemic.

As outlined in our Strategic Plan, the Stewardship team will continue to support as best possible the work of the Welcome Team.

Despite COVID-19 we are delighted that the display in the Narthex, 'Many Faces, One Heart' was completed. We are indebted to Rev. Mercer, John Lawrence, and the volunteers who participated by sharing their photos and thoughts. Thanks to you all.

Outreach (Behaving)

Community Outreach

Submitted by Marguerite Locke

Given the pandemic, initiatives for Outreach that St. Matthew's had identified in meetings last year, prior to Rev. Stephen Blackmore's departure, were put on hold temporarily. These included ideas to participate with the Deanery Strategic Planning group, the Central Etobicoke Community Hub, local Food Bank support, the City re-development at Cloverdale Mall specifically as it may respond to much needed affordable housing and a youth hub, assisting children in reading challenges, Indigenous issues and other topics. However, as a Parish we did contribute in a meaningful way on

several fronts. A "phone" chain was established to ensure we reached out as a parish to fellow parishioners who were alone, in need of assistance during COVID or who just enjoyed a chance to chat.

As you know, Out of the Cold was closed due to COVID, so thanks to Deborah Hurn, a conference call was held with staff of Holy Trinity (downtown Toronto) and Toronto Urban Native Ministry regarding their needs. While Out of the Cold offered to sort and distribute supplies of donated clothes in the future, we recognized the urgent need for adult clothing at Holy Trinity to assist the homeless in the spring. Thanks to the donations of so many parishioners, on April 30th three car loads of gently used clothes/boots/shoes were delivered. In early winter, a second clothing drive was initiated and on December 1st another clothing delivery was made. These clothing drives may well become a bi-annual event for our Parish. The need for children's clothing has also been identified through the Scott Mission and in early 2021 we will run a touchless drive for gently used items of clothes, boots, shoes, for ages infant to teens.

The Soup's On program started by Nancy and Deborah Hurn has been a wonderful outreach project and is reported below.

Thank you to all the Parish who have made donations in any way to Outreach this past year and once the lockdown is lifted, and it is safe to do so, we hope to meet to discuss opportunities for the coming year.

Indigenous Issues Group

Submitted by Nancy Hurn

During the year-long pandemic in the City of Toronto there has been substantial need for assistance and support for the homeless communities, and the generous people of St. Matthews have offered support in a number of ways. We began the year with a warm clothing drive, mentioned in the Outreach report, above. John Boughton, a local Tim's owner, generously supplied 50 \$5 cards for people in need.

In response to a request from Toronto Urban Native Ministries. St. Matthew's began a program to supply soup and meals to an encampment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people at Holy Trinity Church near the downtown Eaton Centre. Titled "Soup's On," great support came forward from volunteers offering to chop and cook in the Church Kitchen. Deborah Hurn planned the schedule and menus in consultation with the Chef at Holy Trinity. Over \$5,000 was raised to support the cost of the meals which averaged \$100-125 per week to feed about 200 people initially. As people were allocated housing the numbers came down to about 125 and slightly less during the

summer. My understanding is that the Wednesday meals provided by St. Matthew's are among the weekly favourites and they especially like the Shepherds Pie, Stew, Sandra's Corn Salad and the couscous salad. Our vegetarian minestrone soup has also been requested a number of times. This project has been extended so that we are now approaching one year of meal production every Tuesday morning and it should be noted that our kitchen facility worked well for social distancing as we could separate the cooks from the choppers and we used the pass through to safely move the food without contact. Face masks of course are worn while in the church and safe delivery can be done. There is general consensus that the success of this project has been very worthwhile for St. Matthew's and we are delighted to continue to provide food as long as the pandemic continues. Deborah and Nancy Hurn, coordinators, were nominated by Margaret Purser to receive recognition from federal MP Yvan Baker for this work and we were delighted to receive the award at a virtual ceremony on behalf of the parish. CONGRATULATIONS to ALL!

As an added bonus, a small committee from St. Matthew's assembled 100 Christmas gift packs for people living at the Holy Trinity Encampment and on the streets of our City. These were delivered by the Toronto Urban Native Ministry team from the Diocese of Toronto. With the assistance of Ted Hampton from the Out of the Cold Team, a group gathered hats and socks, razors, toothbrushes and paste, 100 face masks made by Pat Currie, cookies, chocolate, and Tim Cards. The packages also gratefully contained Christmas cards and reindeer candy canes made by the Children of St. Matthew's who participated in the pre-Christmas Messy Church. In addition, a number of the great bakers at St. Matthew's delivered over 300 homemade cookies to the encampment to add some Christmas Cheer to their annual feast. They were so very much appreciated by those at the celebration. The program at Holy Trinity has been renamed Unity Kitchen.

Although St. Matthew's Indigenous Issues group (SMIIG) did not have an opportunity to meet this year due to the pandemic, a number of projects were undertaken to assist the indigenous community of Whitedog, Ontario, a Reserve near Kenora Ontario. We were made aware that there is a need for support of newborn babies at the Whitedog Clinic and over the past few years we have sent infant supplies including bibs, pajamas, blankets and toques to be sent home for the newborn babies. This year Lois Armstrong, Bea Wright, Sandra Wilson, and Nesta Burgess provided handmade knitted items which were very much appreciated in the community. Part of the clothing drive materials were also sent to the community of Whitedog.

Many, many thanks to all those who contributed and help with these initiatives!

Out of the Cold

Submitted by William Hampton

The last weeks of the winter 2020 program coincided with growing concern regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing us to operate with special protocols for our last overnight, March 16-17, and shut down two weeks early. We were grateful to have been able to provide for our guests as long as we did.

It soon became clear that we would not be able to operate during fall 2020 and winter 2021. The City of Toronto strongly recommended against opening for overnight or sit-down meal service due to difficulties in maintaining rigorous public health standards. Additionally, all funding to the Out of The Cold program at all locations was cut and redirected to city shelters that are staffed by unionized employees and can conform to safety standards. We pray that this too shall pass. In the meantime, however, we restructured and found new ways to serve our guests.

We partnered with pre-existing and new programs that were able to provide the comforts our guests enjoyed at St Matthew's. Our aim was to bolster these programs - some overnight and some drop in - with supplies, food, and volunteers. The programs we are supporting are the St. Felix Center and Holy Trinity/TUNM ministries, located in downtown Toronto. We delivered new and used clothing as well as food and supplies as requested and continued to do so into 2021. Please continue your generous donations items and we will make sure that they get into the hands of those that need them during these unprecedented times.

We also worked with members of the parish to provide Christmas packages. These were delivered directly to the front lines. We will be making another delivery in early February. If anyone has clothing items or funds they would like to contribute, please call Ted to arrange for a drop off time.

We thank you for the continued use of the facility.

Food Cupboard

The food cupboard was not operational for most of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only three bags were distributed before the church closed. In early July, and again in November, the contents of the cupboard were inventoried and most items were donated to the food bank to ensure the generous contributions of St. Matthew's parishioners reached those in need, particularly during a time of growing food insecurity. At the time of this report, only a few items dated for 2022 and 2023 remain.

Pastoral Care

Submitted by Mary Gleeson

This year, the pandemic made it necessary to place some limitations on the usual pastoral care carried out by the clergy and lay visitors. Communion visits were mostly curtailed, but phone calls to those in nursing homes, residences and those alone at home helped us to keep in touch. The usual Christmas, Easter, Thinking of You and Get Well cards continued to be sent out, as well as the Cycle of Prayer cards sent weekly to the families we prayed for. Our volunteers still knitted prayer shawls which were distributed to those in mourning, those who were ill, and those going through a trying period in their personal lives. At Christmas, while we were unable to do our usual visits, we were still fortunate to be able to drop off parcels to those alone, unwell, or unable to attend church regularly. We are thankful for the eight gift distributors for taking time to do the deliveries. Special thanks to our clergy, and to all those who assist at all times and in any way to keep this ministry active, particularly during this unusual and difficult year. Since many of our current visitors are reaching the age of those visited, we would welcome new volunteers who feel that they could contribute some time to this ministry.

Welcoming Team

Submitted by Deborah Hurn

The purpose of the Welcoming Ministry Team (WMT) is to develop a 'Welcoming Ministry' that helps newcomers connect with current membership. It is our goal to help long-time parishioners, whether they be weekly or occasional attenders, become more engaged in parish life through the development of personal relationships. It was our intent to accomplish this via a Parish Phone Blitz, newcomers' luncheon and visitation, Narthex reorganization, reinstituting Greeters, etc. Unfortunately, COVID got in the way of our plans and the best of intentions. The team comprises parishioners Barbara Landry, Ann Sim, Kathie Oakden, Lianne Thompson, Sally Martin, Mary Gleeson, Florence Thompson, Pat Currie, Rev. Merv Mercer, Dawn Mercer, Karen Lee, and Rev. Philip Stonhouse.

COVID created its own set of challenges for us. Rather than have a variety of in-person activities for our parish, we have tried to maintain connection with many old and new parishioners via the telephone. We try to contact parishioners every month or so, to ensure they are doing ok, do not have any new needs, offer friendship, and fellowship, or require a pastoral visit from Clergy. If you would like a call or know someone who would benefit, then please let Deborah Hurn know. We often find several people in our community are already reaching out to many in support with groceries, phone calls, or

driving to appointments. This is a testimony to the great loving and supportive congregation of St. Matthew's!

In the fall we initiated a program to support our parishioners heading off to school at University or College. Our goal is to maintain contact with the students as they start their educational advancement. We want them to still feel a part of the St. Matt's family! A few words of encouragement, gift cards, and just knowing they are part of the Family of God offers our support on their educational and spiritual journeys.

World Day of Prayer

Submitted by Cathy Cross

"Rise! Take your mat and walk" John 5:2-9a

Service written by the world day of prayer committee of Zimbabwe.

The Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC) is a national ecumenical organization with a mission to empower Christians to pursue justice, peace and reconciliation by standing together in prayer and action. It is the home of the World Day of Prayer in Canada. They fulfil their mission through World Day of Prayer Services and grant programs, the Fellowship of the Least Coin and online resource Restore: Ending Violence Against Women.

The World Day of Prayer Services (WDP) are led by women of churches living in various areas.

St. Matthew's area includes Islington Baptist, Islington United, St. Gregory's Roman Catholic, St. James United, St. Philip's Lutheran, Martin Grove Baptist and the Church of South India.

In 2020, St. Matthew's had the pleasure of hosting the World Day of Prayer. The service included participants from St. Gregory's, St. James, and St. Philip's. There were 31 people in attendance.

The Church altar was draped in strips of felt in the colours of the Zimbabwe flag: green representing agriculture; red for blood shed in wars for independence; yellow for minerals; and black representing the ethnic majority. A map of Zimbabwe, musical instruments and a pamphlet showing pictures of Zimbabwe art work provided by WICC were placed on top of the altar along with three candles: red representing love, white representing peace and yellow representing reconciliation.

Everyone received a warm welcome by St. Matthew's volunteers upon entering the church and were invited to sign the World Day of Prayer Registration Book. In keeping

with the theme "Rise, Take Your Mat and Walk", each person received a paper mat made out of construction paper interwoven in the colours of the Zimbabwe flag. They were also handed a WDP offering envelope, a worship bulletin and a pamphlet with the words to the hymns in the order of the service.

Reverend Stephen Blackmore gave the devotional message reflecting on the Bible passage John 5: 2-9a and commented on actions toward love, peace and reconciliation in the family, workplace, church, community and nation.

Tyler Versluis, newly-appointed Organist and Music Director at St. Matthew's, had his first introduction to St. Matthew's and the WDP Service by providing a musical interlude and playing the hymns.

The service was followed by a reception in the parlour. Refreshments were provided by the participants in the service and included samosas, fruit breads, fruit trays, squares, tea, coffee and punch.

Special thanks to Rev. Stephen, Tyler, Bertha Anstey and all the members of our St. Matthew's family who helped as greeters, servers and on clean-up.

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 that have so generously committed to share their gifts over the coming year. Nominations may be submitted from the floor of Vestry, provided nominees have previously agreed to allow their names to be placed in nomination, or that volunteers, seeing the need to sustain our mission of Sharing Jesus' Love, may volunteer to serve in some capacity.

Parish-elected Nominees:

People's Warden:	Stuart Watt
Deputy People's Warden:	Marguerite Locke
Lay Delegates to Synod:	Nancy Hurn; Deborah Hurn
Alternate Lay Delegate to Synod:	Colin Hall
Stewardship:	Karen Lee
Envelope Secretary	Noel Martin
Assistant Envelope Secretary:	Mary Gleeson
Nominating Committee Chair:	Barb Landry
Scrutineers / Parish Tribunal:	Nancy Hurn; Barb Landry

Rector's Appointments:

Rector's Warden:	Karen Lee
Deputy Rector's Warden:	Lianne Thompson
Club Matt Representatives:	Linda Dickson
Messy Church Representative:	Dawn Mercer
Sidespersons:	Ron Landry
Hospitality Chairs:	Jean Tovey; Jeff Wright
Outreach/Social Advocacy Coordinator:	Nancy Hurn
Pastoral Care Representative:	Deborah Hurn
Communications:	Cathy Cross

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Service Times

Sunday 8:00 a.m. Book of Common Prayer

Sunday 9:30 a.m. "All Ages"

Sunday 11:00 a.m. Book of Alternative Services

Wednesday 10:30 a.m. Book of Common Prayer

Messy Church, last Saturday of the month, 4:00 p.m.

