



St. Mark's Anglican Church est. 1792
Niagara-on-the Lake, ON
Hear the Good News! Hear the Good News!

**E-News to the St. Mark's Pews
90th Edition December 17, 2021**

FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends,

One of the most famous paintings of the last century is *The Dance* by Henri Matisse. It may be familiar to you. Five dancers holding hands form a ring on a background of blue and green. There is a sense of tremendous energy in this painting, and looking at it, you can't help being caught up in its sense of joy and unity and connectedness. But when you look a little more closely, you notice two of the dancers' hands do not quite connect. The one reaches out to the other, but their hands do not meet. The circle is broken; it is not whole.

A broken circle. Perfection and union and wholeness are always just out of reach. We find ourselves dancing our way through life, and we are told that the dance is a joyous one. But we do not feel it, and we dance the steps not exultantly, but frantically, trying to reach out our hands only to find our arms too short. We can drop out of the dance, but of course that just leaves a wider gap. We can go on numbly dancing, no longer trying to reach out and the circle will never be complete.

We are very close to Christmas, the time of the year when we reach out to others and others reach out to us through Christmas cards, telephone calls, friendly greetings to strangers on the street. Families reach out from one generation to another. And, as we grow older, we reach backward through our memories of past Christmases, to treasured and cherished times past. In other words, at Christmas we begin to join hands (even if in these COVID-19 times,

it's a symbolic and spiritual joining of hands) and try a little harder to close the gaps between us.

And when we do this, we get a new perspective on things. We remember and give thanks that once upon a time God reached out to us, to this human family. He reached out in a man very much like us, who faced many of the same trials and tribulations we do. And when he came, he reached out to everyone and said, "Join hands with me."

He is the Lord of the Dance, Jesus, the Son of God. At Christmas he invites us to clasp hands and join in the dance of joy that is at the heart of all things, the dance when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. We will always have a broken circle if we never find new partners to join us. And inviting others to join our dance is what celebrating Christmas is all about. Tell the good news of the season to the whole world; invite everyone to join the dance, for its choreography is to be danced by all of God's creation.

We will never live to see the dance completed, and we must always remember that it is God alone – not us – who can perfect it and finish it. These days it doesn't even feel like a dance of joy, but rather like a grim dirge. There are so many obstacles to navigate these days that we may even feel like we're dancing on sore and wounded feet. But Jesus is leading us with his own wounded feet, and he says to us that the time is coming when imperfections and brokenness and wounded bodies will be gathered up into one and redeemed and made complete in the dance around that place of unity, the throne of God.

That is our Christmas prayer. That is our Christmas joy. That is our Christmas hope.

Grace and peace,
Leighton

FROM THE WARDENS

These are difficult days as the pandemic situation changes daily and we are again confronted by uncertainty, concern and even fear as the Omicron variant rapidly takes hold.

In its weekly COVID-19 update on Thursday, the Diocese issued new ministry guidelines effective immediately. The main changes are: Shifting parish meetings, ministries and fundraising online or outdoors, Mandating masks at all times during worship services for all ministry activities (there is no longer an exception for people with speaking roles), Encouraging people to wear medical masks or respirators rather than cloth masks.

As it is clear that two vaccine doses have a reduced capacity to protect against Omicron, Bishop Susan strongly encourages everyone to get their booster shot as soon as possible. It is expected the third dose will be a requirement of the Diocese's vaccine policy in due course.

At present, it is not anticipated that worship services for Christmas will be restricted.

In other news from the Diocese, we received word this week of a great gift in support of our parish. St. Mark's has been granted \$10,000 towards payment of its Diocesan Mission & Ministry assessment. St. Mark's applied for relief through a Diocese program intended to support parishes facing significant financial hardship as a result of the pandemic. With many parishes applying for a sharing of this funding, we are grateful for this extraordinary gift. It is given as a sacrificial offering from the whole diocese, firm in the knowledge that the Body of Christ in Niagara is stronger when we can support one another.

As you all know, with the loss of the Cherry Festival, concerts, rentals and other fundraising events, St. Mark's has a severe deficit. We remind parishioners about our 13th month appeal. Please help by donating an extra month to your envelope to help cover our costs. Drop off your donation at the office or at the Sunday service. We are grateful!

As always, stay safe and keep well.

Called to Life – Compelled to Love

Your Wardens

PARISH UPDATES

Christmas Services

Christmas Eve there is one service at 5:00 p.m.

(We are currently fully subscribed for the Christmas Eve service)

Christmas Day there is one service at 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, December 26 there is one service at 10:30 a.m.

Christmas Greenery

We thank Jennifer Smith for the festive greenery and window boxes and Marsha Howe for the beautiful Christmas flower arrangements. We are deeply grateful for their dedication in making St. Mark's beautiful for the season.

Parking Notice – December 19

Please note parking on Byron Street may be limited on Sunday, December 19 for the 10:30 am service. There is a 5 kilometer Santa Run/Walk that day which will depart from Simcoe Park at 10 am.

Church Envelopes

Church envelopes are now ready for pick up in the Church Office, Monday to Friday between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm.

Keeping in Touch On-line

Our 10:30 a.m. Sunday morning services are available on [Facebook](#).

Please use this URL to watch:

<https://www.facebook.com/St-Marks-Anglican-Church-Niagara-on-the-Lake-235477056649804/>

The Order of Service is attached and can also be accessed through our website:

<https://stmarksnotl.org/worship-ministry/order-of-service-bulletin>

Use this Link to find this and recent copies of our E-News:

<https://stmarksnotl.org/news/news>

FROZEN CHERRY PIES & CANNED GOODS

The following items are available to purchase from the Church office. Please stop by the office to pick up between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm.

- Cherry Pies \$20 each – Frozen with easy-to-bake instructions
- Pea Soup – Frozen – 1 Litre - \$15
- Cherry Juice – 1 Litre - \$15
- Cherry Juice – ½ Litre - \$8
- Pickled Beets – Medium - \$8
- Cherry Jam – Small - \$5
- Cranberry Sauce – Medium - \$8
- Cranberry Sauce – Small - \$5
- Stewed Tomatoes – 1 Litre - \$15

CHRISTMAS WITH THE NEWARK SINGERS

Carols and Readings for the Festive Season

Sunday, December 19th at 4:00 pm and 7:00pm.

**Both the 4:00 PM and 7:00 PM concerts are fully subscribed.*

Please remember to allow additional time to stop by Addison Hall prior to entering the Church to complete the registration process.

There will be a freewill offering plate at the back of the Church as you leave.

THIS SUNDAY'S READINGS AND PRAYERS

Sunday, December 19, 2021 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5a Micah has told of the humiliation and difficulties Israel must experience in the near future, but he has written that later God will give them victory over their enemies. A shepherd-king will be born of David's line, and put an end to their oppression.

Hebrews 10:5-10 Under Jewish law, each year the high priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of certain sins, but Christ's sacrifice, his total self-offering, once and for all on the Cross, renders continuation of these sacrifices unnecessary.

Luke 1:39-45,(46-55) As an angel foretold, Elizabeth is now six months pregnant with John the Baptist, and her relative Mary carries Jesus, foretold to be the Son of God, in her womb. God will make Jesus a king of David's line; he will rule Israel for ever.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In the parish cycle of prayer we pray for Joyce Brown, Rita Brown, Michael Bruce, and Gill Bryan and their families.

We pray for those shut in their homes, Fred Habermehl, Fred Dixon, Joy Ormsby, Selina Appleby, and Joan Draper.

In the Cycle of Prayer for the Niagara Diocese we pray for St. Saviour, The Brock Memorial Church, Queenston, the Reverend Janet Cashin, Priest in Charge, and the people of that parish.

In the Anglican-Lutheran Cycle of Prayer we pray for the Rev. Dr. Eileen Scully, Director, and the staff of Faith, Worship, and Ministry; Sheilagh McGlynn, Youth Ministries Animator; the Rev. Canon Dr. Scott Sharman, Animator for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, and Rev. Paul Gehrs, Assistant to the National Bishop, Justice and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations; Gretchen Peterson, Assistant to the National Bishop, Youth and Leadership.