



David's Dialogue

Dear members and friends of St. Matthew's,

One of the great joys of Christmas is the music, not only the music we hear but perhaps even more so the music we make. For many of us, Christmas is a chance to dust off the old windpipes and join others in song. Some folks come to church on Christmas Eve because the chance to sing Christmas carols is something they deeply cherish, even as most other Christian commitments and traditions have lost their meaning. There is something about singing, and something about the beautiful pieces of music Christians have managed to gather around the season of Christmas that holds great power and beauty for the world.

But the power of song goes beyond Christmas. Some three or four millennia ago the Hebrew people came within a hair's breadth of being completely destroyed. They had been slaves in Egypt, reduced to poverty, hounded by a powerful army, and trapped between a desert and a deep blue sea. But the Spirit moved, the sea opened up, a path formed where none had been, and the threatening army was swallowed up and swept away by a powerful wave. At that moment Miriam stepped forward. Her first words were: Sing to YHWH!

Biblical scholars argue that Miriam's song might be the oldest and earliest fragment of scripture contained in the Bible, so there is a case to make that her song is the beginning of the biblical tradition. Instead of slavery and a watery grave, there was song and praise to God! Instead of nothing, there was a community of faith, a people of the Spirit and music! And here we are!

As a community of faith, St. Matthew's has been so fortunate to have had wonderful leadership in music and singing! As of this past September, Joan Plume has been leading the choir and bell choir for 50 years! For 24 years, our beloved Steve Sallows has supported us on the organ as we raised our voices in song. From time to time he has blessed us with his special vocal talents as well. It is impossible to quantify the ways that music has contributed to our life of faith but it is not hard to call to mind how music has raised the quality of our experience or to testify to the comfort it has provided at important moments on our pilgrimage. We can all remember a piece of music that transported us to realms of beauty and joy, the rumble of the organ in a hymn helped to meld our voices into a glorious communion of sound, a rousing postlude that sent out us into the week with a renewed sense of purpose, courage and joy.

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This month we are saying goodbye to Steve as he embarks on a new chapter of life in London, Ontario. We send him off with heartfelt blessings and deep thanks. And we turn our hearts to welcome Sunny Hong who will come to share her gifts with us in the new year.

The act of singing seems to be programmed in the human DNA. “There is something about human beings that needs to make music,” theologian Don Saliers says. Making sound is the first thing that every human does at birth. This is the very first sign of the baby being born alive. But not only the person is born with that sound, “faith is born and lives in song.” When Mary heard the news that Jesus was to come into the world through her she sang. Her courageous and faithful response to God was celebrated and confirmed in her song, *Magnificat* as she began “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior... for the Mighty One has done great things for me according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever” (Luke 1:49-50, 55). Sometimes God accomplishes these great things through song itself.

Amen and thanks be to God.
Peace like a river,

Rev. David Kim-Cragg ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ *wahkohtowin*;
Minister at St. Matthew’s United Church (he/him)



A storm brewing on the horizon.
Photo by Megan Beddows.

Missed a recent service? Watch it on YouTube.

Recent services at St. Matthew’s

- Oct. 22: [Video recording](#). This sermon talked about Finding the Mother Tree and the wisdom to be gained by supporting each other rather than trying to trick each other.
- Oct. 29: [Video recording](#). This was Anniversary Sunday and the sermon reflected on the growth and change of our ministry.
- Nov. 05: [Video recording](#). Sermon titled “Chucky, Manson, and Coach.” This was our Remembrance Day service featuring Rick Harper on trumpet & Steve Sallows on organ.
- Nov. 12: [Video recording](#). Sermon titled “Trees, Listening Rocks, and Promises.”



Upcoming Services & Activities

Mark your calendars:

- The Craft Group continues to meet on Tuesdays from 12:30 to 3pm in the hall.
- If you know of someone who would appreciate a visit by the minister, please provide their name and contact information to Rev. David.
- Nov. 26. Give your Cash Cards order to Doreen. Last order date of the year. Have a Purdy Chocolate order? Please give to Valery. Truth & Reconciliation Circle after service in the hall.
- Saturday, December 9 - 6pm. Congregational Christmas Dinner
- Saturday, December 2 – 7pm. Chorus York concert at St. Matthew’s with our bell choir
- Sunday, December 3 – Advent 1 – Communion
- Sunday, December 10 – Advent 2 – White Gift
- Sunday, December 17 – Advent 3 - Carol Service
- Sunday, December 24 – Advent 4 - 10:30 service and 7:00 Christmas Eve Service with communion