



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

23 Church Street ▪ New Hamburg, Ontario ▪ N3A 1J1

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Al Junker, president ▪ Tanya Varner, pastor
Jamie Courtney, parish administrator & minister of music ▪ Brian Racho, sexton
Leanne Darlington, interim visitation pastor ▪ Heidi Van Schaik, youth worker
Ron Leonard, honorary assistant pastor ▪ Gywin Murray, emerita director of music

December 16, 2021

Dear members and friends of Trinity,

Last evening at their monthly meeting, our Church Council made a difficult decision to **suspend congregational singing immediately** at in-person worship services.

As you have seen in the news, the more transmissible COVID-19 omicron variant is circulating widely in the Province of Ontario. The omicron variant, on top of the reality that singing creates more aerosols, even while folks are masked, means that we need to act prudently to minimize the risk to in-person worshippers who attend services at Trinity.

Many individuals have sent an RSVP to the church office for one of our two in-person Christmas Eve services. For many folks, simply being together in the church building at Trinity is a highlight of the Christmas season. For others though, we acknowledge that singing carols together in the worship space will be a special tradition that will now be missed two years in a row. **If you have made a reservation for a Christmas Eve and would like to cancel** in light of this change to congregational singing, please do let us in the church office know as soon as possible. A reminder that we will broadcast the 7:30 pm Christmas Eve service on Facebook.

Church Council has also decided to extend our **proof of vaccination requirement** to attend worship services into January. Everyone attending an in-person worship service will need to show proof of vaccination and identification. While the proof of vaccination requirement is in effect, there is no need to RSVP for in-person Sunday worship service. Council will review this decision at their January meeting, and we will communicate an extension or cessation of this policy in the weekly emailer.

To summarize, these are the practices for in-person worship, effective immediately:

- No RSVP required for Sunday worship – just come on Sunday for the 9:30 service.
- An RSVP is required for either 5:00 pm or 7:30 pm on Christmas Eve. (Deadline now passed, but please let us know if you'd like to cancel the reservation.)
- Facemasks are still required.
- Quiet spoken congregational responses are permitted.
- The only singing will be by a masked cantor.
- Please enter through the glass doors on Church Street.
- Proof of vaccination and identification are required for everyone ages 12+.
- An usher will seat you in every other pew.

Council has also opted to keep our pandemic practice of online **education programming** for the time being. Adult learning, confirmation, youth, and programming for younger children will all stay online.

Church Council continues its role in deliberating measures to keep our faith community healthy by minimizing the risk of COVID-19 exposure in our facility. By implementing the measures we now have in place, we are hopeful that we can avoid the need to close our building to in-person worship altogether.

On a personal note, I encourage you to seek a COVID-19 booster shot (3rd dose) as soon as you are eligible. In pandemic times, getting vaccinated is a tangible way of showing our love for our neighbour.

If you have any questions or concerns about these recent decisions, I am available for conversation by phone or email.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tanya Varner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, flowing initial "T".

Rev. Tanya Varner, Pastor
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New Hamburg, ON
varner@telc.ca