



Martin Luther  
Evangelical  
Lutheran  
Church

**Inside:**  
**Projects for Seniors**  
**Building Project full report**  
**Laypreachers Conference in Bogota**  
**Marlena Celebrates 10 Years of service**  
**Service schedule Advent to Easter**

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Member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and Partnered with the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)

# Merry Christmas!

December 2023 Congregational Newsletter

## Christmas and the Cross

Dear congregation!

I took this photo on a Way of the Cross in Colombia in October: Next to the depictions of Christ's suffering, you could see Christmas trees, stars and candy canes everywhere!

At first, it made me laugh, but then this picture got me thinking. Could it be that the decorators of this garden were unintentionally pointing out something very important? Our longing for harmony and peace is constantly challenged by the suffering we see and experience ourselves. As in the following poem by Iris Macke:



### Change of perspective

Advent means waiting.  
No, the truth is,  
That Advent is just loud and shrill,  
I do not believe,  
That I can find peace during these weeks  
That I can find my way inwards  
That I can focus on what is to come  
It's true,  
That time is racing,  
I refuse to believe,  
That something greater is shining into my world  
That I can see with different eyes  
It is quite clear  
God is missing,  
I can't possibly believe,  
Nothing will change,  
It would be a lie, if I would say:  
God is coming to earth!

And now please read the poem the other way round, from the bottom to the top!!!

Cross and Christmas are like two poles of my faith, between them I swing back and forth. Both are part of my life: Suffering AND hope. Grief AND what makes life sweet. The lament over what is difficult AND the hallelujah of the angels that illuminates the darkest night. May this year's Advent season invite us once again to become aware of this. Between hypocrisy and despair, the miracle of Christmas is waiting to be rediscovered by us. I hope you enjoy it!

Pastor Annika Klappert

# Messages & updates

## Message from the Co-Vice President

Dear Congregation,

It is hard to believe how fast time has gone by and this is already our last newsletter of 2023!

We have had a busy fall and are truly grateful for the many services, projects and events that have taken place in our congregation. I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you on behalf of Council to Pastor Klappert for her spiritual leadership, to Marlena, who has been the soul of our church office for ten years and has been providing invaluable support to Council and our congregation, to all volunteers for your many contributions and your dedication, as well as to all of you for your ongoing financial support. Some of the highlights this fall for me were our Church Council retreat hosted by our President Mona Frantzke, having Jessica Glasner with us during her internship, and the start of our renovations.

This year has brought changes for many of us on a personal and/or professional level. While our church building is transformed into a space that better meets our needs, we thank you for your patience throughout the construction phase. However, it is not only our building that is under construction - we also need more volunteers to strengthen our many teams and Council for our congregation to thrive. You all have so many wonderful skills and talents! If you can see yourself as part of one of our following teams, please reach out to Council, Pastor Klappert, or Marlena:

- Church Council (read on for more information)
- Web and Social Media Team
- Ministry Team (i.e. Lay Preachers, Child, Youth and Family Ministry)
- Dinner Church Team
- Bowls and Blessings Team
- Maintenance Team
- Newsletter and Translation Team
- Hospitality Team

I wish you and your loved ones a peaceful season of advent and Christmas time and a blessed 2024.

With gratitude,

- Andrea Dannecker  
 Co-Vice-President of Martin Luther Church Council  
[vicepresident@martinluther.ca](mailto:vicepresident@martinluther.ca)



*Pictured from left to right, top row: Intern Jessica Glasner, Co-Vice President Andrea Dannecker, Treasurer Kai Herrmann, Andrew Schultz, Tim Buechner. Bottom row: President Mona Frantzke, Co-Vice President Jocelyn Sommerfeld, Administrative and Pastoral Assistant Marlena Muller, Former Vicar Adam McComb, Pastor Annika Klappert, Secretary Tanya Zielke. Also on council but not pictured is Andy Boettcher*

## Christmas and Year End Donations

We ask you to give generously. Martin Luther Church, like all Canadian churches, is completely dependent on donations, grants and volunteers. Contrary to the German model, it receives no funding from tax dollars. As a registered charity, we will be providing you with a contribution receipt early next year. Your receipt can then be submitted with your annual tax return to receive a tax credit of up to 53 percent of your donation! Plus, you also save on capital gains tax when you donate securities directly. This ensures more dollars are going to helping others because you will be able to give more to your favourite charity. Take advantage of these financial benefits.

## The Martin Luther Church Building Project: Backstory and Update

As early as the summer of 2015, Martin Luther Evangelical Lutheran Church was pondering its future by releasing a discussion paper about long-range building options. The little mustard seed had been planted. These options included:

1. Do nothing (assuming the Church is financially sustainable);
2. Renovate/re-purpose (modernize the facilities and/or expand the child care space);
3. Demolish and re-integrate (form part of a new project development), or
4. Sell and build at a new property (considered the most expensive option).

Through the generous Altar art donation given to us in 2018, and the 2019 feasibility study for improving our Church space and expanding the Child Care, the 2020 Martin Luther Church Building Project was born. Its objective was to continue to grow the Church Ministry and preserve its ability to serve the developing area for years to come. The original proposal included a flexible and inspiring Sanctuary, Child Care program expansion, and a renovated front entrance with expanded greeting space for flexible programming. While delays due to Covid-19 and spiralling construction costs forced us to drop one of the planned expansions, the entire project would not have been possible without the incredibly generous donation from a sister Church in the U.S., as well as additional grants and timely fundraising efforts by the Child Care to cover the gaps. We are truly living our mission statement: Lutherans by the Lake - Celebrating Faith, Serving and Inspiring people.

The following is a more detailed description of the current renovation plans:

### Ground Floor Foyer

The front entrance will be refreshed to include more storage space as well as an expanded foyer space complete with kitchenette. Janitorial supplies will be neatly hidden behind cabinet millwork. The former seating area will become a storage room to keep our community outreach supplies neatly tucked away. The underused coat rack area will have bin storage units to allow us to organize and sort new supplies as they arrive. There will be a new fire-rated wall and door added at the existing stairs in the foyer and in the basement. This will provide safe passage when exiting the building through the west side doors on the mid-landing. The dividing wall to the former nursery room will be demolished, providing a new and inviting area for light social gathering before and after worship. Colourful windows and a new kitchenette with cupboards, counter space, sink, and fridge will enliven this interactive space. The newly refurbished entrance area will also be independently climate-controlled allowing for improved heat and air conditioning of the space. A new coat rack will be installed just inside the Sanctuary walls, providing a more secure area to hang garments during services.

We have not forgotten about our hard-working office staff! The removal of the back exit stair to accommodate the Child Care expansion in the basement will give us more floor space. A new window will be added in this area to bring in natural sunlight and provide an observation point to an area that was formally hidden from view. The staff will be provided with an L-shaped kitchenette with cupboards, counter, and sink. This will replace some of the storage space that was lost with the demolition and it will be a great little nook for the team to stock some treats, make a cup of tea or coffee, and welcome anyone who comes in for a visit. A privacy door will also be added to keep the office secure after hours.

### Basement Child Care Expansion

As with our Church, the need to serve our surrounding community was also apparent to the Child Care. Our backroom played host to many groups and events over the years, but the time had come to provide new purpose and meaning. Through careful consideration of the available square footage in the back rooms of the Church, it was determined that the expansion of a 16-child, full-day program could work with some modifications. While the current windows radiate ample light and warmth into the space, a new entrance and ramp is required. This benefits the Church by resolving a long-standing issue, providing direct access to the basement for people with mobility issues. A new child's washroom will be added, as well as a long awaited and much anticipated storage and laundry room with washer and dryer. A commercial dishwasher has also replaced our current model in the kitchen.

Through a long-standing collaboration (since 1970) and new initiatives planned between our Church and the Child Care, we can expand our outreach into the local community. Now, more than ever, we continue to forge a path together and focus on our objectives that were outlined eight years ago. Many heartfelt thanks and immense gratitude to our staff, volunteers, benefactors, and congregational members that walk this path together. This is where our Christian faith is rooted. Our little mustard seed 'Church-by-the-Lake' is becoming a formidable force!

- Dan Sommerfeld

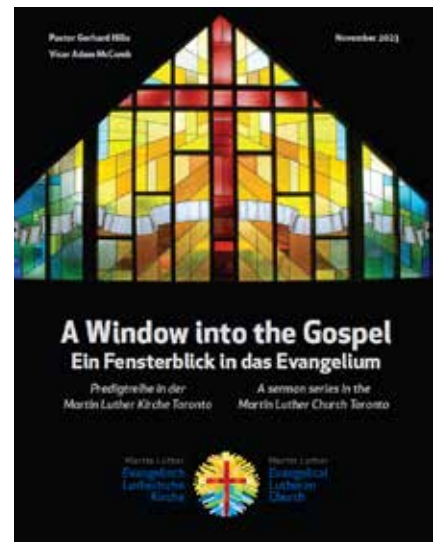
*Building Project Team Member*

*November 2023*

## Special projects with seniors in mind

We received a grant from the Eastern Synod Mission Committee (<https://easternsynod.org/faith-in-action/mission-committee/>) for projects that would especially benefit seniors. We used the grant for the grief workshop led by Rev. Dr. Anne Simmonds on November 18. We had 18 people participate, including visiting ministry volunteers, church and community members. We had opportunities for learning, reflecting and sharing, a hearty pea soup for lunch and healing activities including chakra tai chi and creating a loss and transition life line with symbols.

We also created a booklet with the written version of sermons that Pastor Dr. Gerhard Hille and Vicar Adam McComb prepared about our church's stained glass windows. The sermons are in both German and English. The booklet is available just in time for Christmas! Please consider a donation of \$20 for a copy of this special keepsake. We thank everyone who helped with this project.



## Altar Art

The Altar Art Committee extended the deadline for submissions of interest to November 15, 2023. By the October deadline, they already received 6 responses from artists who are interested in working on our Altar Art Project. They will be reviewing submissions mid-December and aim to submit a final selection for review/approval to Church Council mid-to-end of January 2024.

## What's happening?



### Choir Practice

Choir practices for Christmas Eve are held at 6 pm every Tuesday under the direction of our organist Linda Marcinkus. The church choir performed on four occasions over the past few months: German Thanksgiving on October 1, All Saints Sunday November 5, Alfred Uhl's funeral service on November 25 and the 1st Sunday of Advent, December 3. Performances can be viewed on our church's YouTube channel.

Please attend a practice or speak to Linda or the office if you are interested in singing with the choir!

## Annual General Meeting Feb 25, 2024 Invitation for members to vote and join church council

We are seeking a few dedicated members to join our 12-person church council - currently only at 6 persons - to fill the vacancies. We generally meet monthly in person and/or online. (For some projects and tasks we often form committees that can also include non-council members). We welcome members from a broad range of different perspectives and backgrounds. Commitment is 1-6 years. Experience, interest and/or knowledge in any of the following areas would complement our existing team:

- Buildings, grounds, property management and maintenance
- Rentals, hospitality, event planning
- Fund-raising, grant writing, marketing and promotion
- Record-keeping and communications (i.e. agendas, data for statistics, minutes, newsletter writers and editors, etc.)
- Membership secretary

Candidates must be at least 18 years of age and active members in good standing at Martin Luther Church.

Please direct all applications and inquiries to [office@martinluther.ca](mailto:office@martinluther.ca)

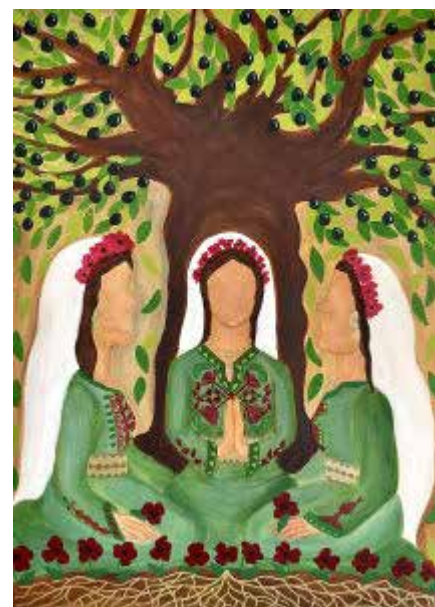
## Candlelight Gathering

Candlelight Gathering with Christmas tree decorating, caroling, wellness activities and potluck dinner on Wed Dec 20 at 7 pm. RSVP with the office. Come early to help set up at 6 pm!



## Our Church as Part of a Bigger Team for Important Causes

For 3 years we have been serving soup, bread and other treats outside to our neighbours. Our community has grown as volunteers and participants have attended other church programs like Sunday worship, Dinner Church, drumming and gardening. We are able to work with other churches and organizations to respond to needs that we cannot meet ourselves. We appreciate the work of Friends of Humber Bay Park to clean up the waterfront and educate the public about nature. We are also grateful to the Wesley Mimico United Church Food Bank and Christ Church St. James Food Pantry for serving increasing numbers of hungry people. The Clothing Outlet at Long Branch Baptist Church is well suited to accept and distribute clothing. Catherine with Bags of Love does a little bit of everything to help in the community.



"Praying Palestinian Women" By Halima Aziz

Advocating for policy changes that lead to poverty reduction and affordable housing is a central focus of ECULINKS Etobicoke, a group of people from a variety of churches in Etobicoke. This group tries to address and confront social justice and outreach issues that are both short-term immediate need and longer-term

with deeper root cause. We meet on Zoom every few months. Visit [eclinks.ca](http://eclinks.ca) and contact the church office to join.

In March 2024, our church will host the World Day of Prayer. Join the team of people from neighbouring churches to present a service prepared by women in Palestine. The theme is: "I Beg You... Bear With One Another in Love." (Ephesians 4:1-3) This is thought-provoking and timely given current events. Contact the church office to sign up.

## Reflections

### Martin Luther Church at the German International School Christmas Bazaar



On Sat., 2nd Dec. 2023, a team from Martin Luther Church represented our congregation at the Christmas Bazaar of the German International School (GIST) with an activity table whose centrepiece --our ubiquitous Martin Luther statue adorned with a Santa cap-- caught the eye of many visitors: young and old alike! Staffed by a 3-person team consisting of office stalwart, Marlena Muller; Andy (Church Council) and Alex Boettcher (Youth Volunteer); we engaged kids from ages 8 to 88 in a fun Punkte-Party Christmas survey as well as provided information and invitations to people regarding our church's Advent and Christmas activities and services. The Punkte-Party Christmas survey activity involved a large green poster

with the heading "Christmas is..." across the top and different "baskets"(circles) representing various Christmas activities/themes in which respondents placed stickers respectively to indicate the three topics they associate most with Christmas. It came as a pleasant surprise that the two most popular categories were Family + Friends and Church / Jesus!

#### Survey results

- Family + Friends (42)
- Church / Jesus (28)
- Food & Drink (21)
- Time off school / work (18)
- Presents (11)
- Caroling (10)
- Other (9) such as Christmas movies, skiing, warm vacations, Advent calendars, baking, regretting having no boyfriend for the holidays...
- Stress (5)

## Report about my internship at the MLC Toronto

Adieu, bye bye and auf Wiedersehen! My time with all of you has flown by. And I don't mean the flight on the airplane. The four weeks in September seemed like two at most.



Before my internship, I had already been able to get used to the warmth of Canadian culture with a short trip to Montreal and Ottawa, so my arrival in Toronto was smooth. And my internship did not disappoint. On the contrary – I found it so nice that I was able to participate in a wide variety of events and learn from everyone.

In my first week there was Labor Day, Bowls&Blessings, the service for the first day of school at the German International

School and the family service with a baptism. Then I was able to attend two bereavement talks, two visits, the Council Retreat (where you get to know people from a whole new level), went to the Prayer Meeting at Humber College, was at the meeting of the Lutheran churches from Toronto, and participated in a radio devotion. And I was able to grow and to do the service with dialogue sermon on a Sunday together with Annika.

Of course, not to be forgotten is my "Punkteparty" (sticker survey): I did it with the themes of church and Thanksgiving. I collected points at Amos Waites Park, Humber College, Bowls&Blessings, and after a Sunday service. Thank you to everyone who supported me in this endeavor! My posters allowed people to vote on specific statements, such as "I connect church with..." or "Thanksgiving is...". Open statements could also be made, such as "My suggestions..." or "Today I'm grateful for...". The result was just so beautiful to look at - it was incredibly colorful and expressive. And I was pleased to see that only for very few Thanksgiving is unimportant or causes a lot of stress; and that very few have had bad experiences with church (a denominational distinction wasn't indicated, by the way). What I also found particularly touching is that under the heading "Today I'm grateful for...", someone wrote 'being alive' and that response subsequently got a lot of points. I didn't meet anyone who didn't have anything to be grateful for. Everyone shared something! What I also found very nice was that at Humber College so many students eagerly added stickers, whereas it took longer to collect points at the other places. Maybe this is a good place to start conversations with people.

The culmination of my time was Dinner Church. It was really nice to make stick bread with all of you for the last time in Canada and to listen to the Coconut song once again. Here I presented my Punkte party project again and linked it with a little guessing game.

In my free time, I visited downtown Toronto, went out to the islands by bike (thanks for providing me with a bike), went on a day trip to Niagara Falls.

A big thank you to Gisela, who welcomed me with open arms; to Annika, who made the internship possible for me in the first place and then also took me by the hand again and again and let me challenge myself; and to Marlena, who was always there and radiated good humor and had the overview of everything. And to every other person for whom I lack space here (and the list is long!). Thanks for an unforgettable time and hope to see you again sometime!

- Jessica Glasner

PS: On Instagram @jessiincanada I made a little blog about my time in Canada.



## Professional Church Secretaries and Administrators Conference in September

September 2023 marked 10 years of working in the church office. I started alongside Pastor Christian Ceconi and now retired secretary Anita Ratz. I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn from and grow with the congregation and neighbourhood in my position as administrative and pastoral assistant.

When Manya Brunzema passed away in January 2023, her friend Silke Dorego catered the funeral reception in our church basement. Silke is the administrator at College St. United Church and also works at St. George's Lutheran Church.

She invited me to the Professional Association of Church Secretaries and Administrators Conference. From September 24 to 26, I got to know about 40 of my counterparts, many of whom work for United and Anglican churches. We have many things in common despite differences between rural and urban contexts. We talked about emotional health, volunteers and social media which challenges us as churches to stay current, have fun, engage with people and share calls to action. An auxiliary OPP officer taught us about fraud prevention and personal safety. Please let me know if you'd be interested in a similar training at our church, especially for vulnerable groups like seniors and newcomers to Canada.

Five Oaks Education and Retreat Centre on the Grand River where the conference took place is worth a visit, as is the Mohawk Chapel in Brantford. It is the oldest surviving church building in Ontario and the first Anglican church in Upper Canada. A series of stained-glass windows in the church depict how Indigenous and settler beliefs converged in the area.

I look forward to continuing to work with Pastor Annika and all of you!

-Marlena Muller



## Farewell and Godspeed Sonja Schweiger (until we meet again!)



Although it isn't the first time I've moved across the ocean, it seems this particular journey will constitute my longest time away from Canada, and church, yet! At the start of October my partner and I made the move to Germany, and will be work-travelling our way through Europe and hopefully Asia for about a year and a half. I will sincerely miss everyone in the office and the pews but will continue to be present through the newsletter layout and the Altar Art committee. I am so grateful to Marlena and Annika for their kind send-off in the service on Sunday October 8th, and of course, so very thankful for all the members of the Building Committee for working together with me for the last couple of years and carrying on the work in my absence. Although my travels and the future of this church are shrouded in some uncertainty, I find myself full of hope for both, and are excited to see what new connections we make and what challenges we will rise to, with God's Grace, until we meet again!

-Sonja Schweiger

## EKD Lay Preacher Seminar in Bogota, Colombia 2023

From October 17-22, 2023 I co-led a lay preacher seminar in Colombia together with my colleagues Christhild Grafe from the German Lutheran St. Matteo Congregation in Bogota and Valerie Ebert-Schewe from the Bavarian Worship Institute. The 12 participants came from all over our EKD "region": Bogota (Colombia), La Paz (Bolivia), Santiago de Chile, (Chile), Quito (Ecuador), Caracas (Venezuela) and Guatemala-City (Guatemala). I was especially happy that 4 Torontonians accepted the invitation as well: Katja Brittain and Tanya Zielke from our church, Karin Schemeit from St. Georges and Friedrich Brunzema from 1st Lutheran. All participants were accommodated in host families of the congregation.

I was impressed by the insight that all lay preachers showed in talking about theologian topics and the readiness to learn and try new things. We had two excursions: One to a cathedral underground, a salt mine with stations of the cross and one to the museum of the Colombian Artist Botero. Valerie Ebert - Schewe taught us how a piece of art is always teaching us something that we didn't know before and how our personal experiences can find their way into our sermons in an encouraging way. In small groups we heard sermons prepared for this occasion with a piece of art. In offering and accepting honest and kind feedback, the participants got tips on how to improve their sermons. The seminar ended with a service led by the lay preachers. In teams for liturgy, music and sermon, the participants put together a meaningful and moving worship with communion that strengthened the group and blessed it beyond the time spent together.



-Pastor Annika Klappert



## Special Thanks!

A big thank you to:

- Everyone who has recently helped with hospitality on Sundays and at special events (Google doc to sign up now available);
- Special helpers this time of year: Dan for putting up the Advent wreath and Christmas tree, Iris and Peter Schweiger for delivering the tree, and Annette Rowles for preparing the altar and windowsills;
- Our volunteers on many teams working on translation, web, tech and design



## Special statement on Marlena's 10 year work anniversary:

Council would like to congratulate Marlena on her ten year anniversary at our office. She is a reliable employee, the best gift a congregation can ask for, and plays a crucial role in maintaining connections both inside and outside our church. Though her tasks only seem to increase, her consistent hard work and dedication to get jobs done is noticed and appreciated. We are sincerely grateful for you, Marlena!

## We celebrate....

**Baptism of Sadie Capstick** on September 10, 2023



**Dinner Church** on September 29 with intern Jessica Glasner, October 27 with Martin Luther trivia led by Tanya Zielke and November 24, 2023 with feedback from our guests



**Thanksgiving  
Worship and Food  
Drive** in October



Our **Christmas Bazaar** on December 3, 2023. Thank you to all of the volunteers who created and helped out!



**Wienecke's 50th  
wedding anniversary**  
was celebrated with a  
special blessing in the  
service on December 3

**Advent Celebration** on the 2nd  
Sunday of Advent, December 10 2023.

## We mourn....

**Dina Wancar** passed away on September 15, 2023 at the age of 65 years.

**Gary Rygus** passed away on September 30, 2023 at the age of 69 years.

**Alfred Uhl** passed away on November 10, 2023 at the age of 91 years.

**Siegfried Ploeger** passed away on November 25, 2023, at the age of 93.

# Upcoming services

## **December 17, 2023, 3rd Sunday of Advent**

11:00 am German-English Family Service with Christmas Play

## **Wednesday, December 20, 2023**

7:00 pm Candlelight Gathering with Christmas tree decorating, carol singing and dinner

## **December 24, 2023, 4th Sunday of Advent & Christmas Eve**

5:00 pm German Service // 6:30 pm English Service  
Both with Choir

## **December 25, 2023, Christmas Day**

No service

## **December 31, 2023, 1st Sunday after Christmas & New Year's Eve**

11:00 am German-English Service

## **January 7, 2024, 1st Sunday after the Epiphany (Baptism of our Lord)**

9:45 am English Devotion with fellowship // 11:00 am German Service

## **January 14, 2024, 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany**

11:00 am German-English Family Service

## **January 21, 2024, 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany**

9:45 am English Devotion with fellowship // 11:00 am German Service with Holy Communion

## **January 28, 2024, 4th Sunday after the Epiphany**

11:00 am German-English Service

## **February 4, 2024, 5th Sunday after the Epiphany**

9:45 am English Devotion with fellowship // 11:00 am German Service

## **February 11, 2024, Last Sunday after the Epiphany (Transfiguration of our Lord)**

11:00 am German-English Family Service

## **February 18, 2024, 1st Sunday of Lent**

9:45 am English Devotion with fellowship // 11:00 am German Service

## **February 25, 2024, 2nd Sunday of Lent**

11:00 am German-English Service with Holy Communion followed by Annual General Meeting 12 - 2:00 pm

## **Friday, March 1, 2024, World Day of Prayer**

Land: Palestine  
Service TBD

## **March 3, 2024, 3rd Sunday of Lent**

9:45 am English Devotion with fellowship  
11:00 am German Service

## **March 10, 2024, 4th Sunday of Lent**

11:00 am German-English FAMILY Service

## **March 17, 2024, 5th Sunday of Lent**

9:45 am English Devotion with fellowship  
11:00 am German Service with Holy Communion

## **March 24, 2024, Palm Sunday**

11:00 am German-English Service  
Installation of Church Council

## **March 28, 2024, Maundy Thursday**

7:00 pm Dinner Church

## **March 29, 2024, Good Friday**

9:45 am English Service // 11:00 am German Service  
Both with Holy Communion and Choir

## **March 31, 2024, Easter**

Sunrise Service at 6:15 am Humber Bay Park West, Etobicoke Point, 2225 Lake Shore Blvd West, followed by an Easter Breakfast in the church basement // 10:00 am German-English FAMILY Service with Choir

# Save the Dates

## **Annual General Meeting February 25, 2024**

12 - 2:00 pm after the service. Please bring your own lunch. We will present a revised constitution for approval, so it is important that we reach a quorum of members!

## **Pentecost May 19, 2024**

Special invitation for everyone who was confirmed 25+ years ago to attend the Pentecost 2024 service and reception. Please RSVP with your Confirmation year.