



THE PARISHIONER

All Saints 2020



GREETINGS EVERYONE from the Rev. Canon Dr. Lorne Mitchell

I hope and pray you are keeping well. This has been a difficult fall here in Stratford. With the COVID virus active in our community, it's been stressful for all of us. We knew that there would be a second wave and we are right in the midst of it now. With the number of cases going up in our province in general, it's so important to be vigilant about following all the protocols. Please wear a mask, keep a safe distance and sanitize your hands frequently.

We are making preparations for our Christmas Services here at St. James. The plan is to have Christmas services available both online and in the church. However, as you know, in this time of the pandemic, things may have to change as Christmas gets closer. I will be keeping you up to date with the details of Christmas Services in our Weekly News email, so stay tuned! It's going to be different not being able to actually sing Christmas carols, but our organist and I have been hatching some plans to deal with this. We are going to record members of our choir singing familiar carols. We're going to hear Christmas Carols one way or another!

Leading up to Christmas, we normally have an Advent Study series. This year it's going to be done by Zoom! Tom Patterson and I are going to be leading a study of the Advent Prophet readings. We will be doing the series on Tuesday evenings from 7-8:30 pm on Nov. 24, Dec. 1, 8 and 15. No need to sign up! Just join us on Zoom.

God bless everyone and stay safe!

WELCOME BACK! by Kyle Gascho, Verger

Leaving St. James on March 8th, who could have imagined that it would be the last time we would be gathering for worship services in our beloved building for 189 days or 27 weeks?

September 13th marked the day St. James was able to open its big red doors to resume in-person worship services. However, resuming in-person worship services required countless hours of hard work and I'm sure I'm not alone in saying that there were some sleepless nights. With an overwhelming number of variables involved in preparing St. James for the return, including adhering to the 29-page Diocesan Guidelines, the everchanging Ontario Government regulations, and striving to make every single person who entered the building feel safe, your parish leadership team did everything in their power to make this happen.

On the planning side of things, Deputy Warden Terry Marklevitz and Back to Church Coordinator Rick Falshaw worked hard to develop plans on how to ensure the safety of everyone, including altering how people enter and exit the building, as well as having ushers guide people to marked pews that ensure everyone is at a safe distance. Rev'd Canon Tom Patterson and I measured the distance from all speaking locations to the pews and Susan Gardiner Marklevitz worked out plans for the contact tracing at the building on Sunday mornings. Karen Haslam's phone has been ringing off the hook since September 7th, as she has been registering people who wish to attend services due to limited space being available in the Church and she prepares the contact tracing forms every week. There are so many more people that have taken on extra tasks to help us get to this point, and I would like to thank each and every one of them for all they have done in making St. James a safe space for worship.



To everyone who has been attending in-person worship services since September 13th, we thank you! For those who aren't quite ready or able to return to worship services right now, I sure hope you're enjoying the online worship services that are being completed and I'd like to thank you for tuning in!

SPECIAL EVENTS UPDATE by David Packham

The special events committee was initially formed in the early summer of 2013. The purpose of this initiative was to plan banquet type meals to engage the church family and others in the wider community. Proceeds from these events were to be given back to the church to assist in providing additional funds and income to support the day-to-day general operating accounts.

The initial committee members were Doug and Pam Ayers; Karen Haslam and Phil Guest; Marie Jones; Dennis and Barb Lawlor; Alan and Jane Slater; and David and Nancy Packham. Together as a group we did have so much fun planning all the events to follow, with our first being the Harvest Blessing ham supper in October of 2013. It was sold out and it quickly became evident that it brought church members and other community members together for a fun and relaxing evening AND the meal was absolutely delicious thanks in a large part to the expertise in the kitchen of one Phil Guest.

The committee then had some changes as Alan and Jane Slater and then Dennis and Barb Lawlor were unable to continue. These two couples were so helpful in the planning and worked so very hard at these events. To both of them, a very heartfelt THANK YOU. We then were very fortunate to have Eric and Jane Whittemore and Chris and Rosemary Fisher join the committee. They certainly fit in

seamlessly and we were so fortunate to have them on the committee.

These events were supported by many church members the day of these events. It was a lot of work preparing and putting the final touches on the meal to be served. The committee wants to extend a huge thank you to all of these volunteers. There were so many that helped us along the way and so many in fact that it would be difficult to name all of them. It did not, however, go unnoticed and your time and effort was so much appreciated.

We have accomplished seven consecutive years of these events. We started with one event and then two events annually, finishing up last year with one event. We have served ham, barbeque your own strip loin steaks, and barbequed prime rib. It has been fun and a satisfying adventure for all involved. In the past seven years we have raised and given to the church a total amount of \$18,450.00.

Most importantly, thanks to all of the people that supported this venture and attended our events. It's been fun and encouraged comradery with all that attended. This unfortunately brings us to the end of these events as with our busy schedules and aging factors we all agreed that it was just too much to continue.

THANKS AGAIN TO ALL



ST. JAMES ARCHIVES by Mary Lou Kingham, Archivist

The process of sorting and filing items continues in the Archives. Dedicated copies of the Book of Common Prayer from the early 1900's and photo albums along with at least two sets of pictures which are not dated have been found. Please remember to identify any items which you wish to donate to the Archives. We are considering adding a small display case in the Archives room.

Since we also house many pictures, it is our hope that we could set up displays from time to time to showcase our past.

For further information or contributions to the Archives, please contact me through the church office.

REFLECTION by Riad Alta'eh

When you wake up in the morning, say: -
Thank you for grace,
Thank you for mercy,
Thank you for wisdom,
Thank you for kindness,
Thank you for peace,
Thank you for love,
Say thank you in advance for what's already yours.

Imagine yourself leaving everything that you love and you worked hard on behind you. Imagine leaving the place you once called home, the place you grew up mostly your whole life, the place that holds your childhood memories. Syria has been suffering from civil war for almost nine years now. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have been killed in the fighting, over a million have been injured and over 12 million have been displaced. How could a peaceful protest

A MEMOIR by Saja Alta'eh

Boom, Boom. "Wake up! wake up!" is all I hear. I thought it was a dream but it was all real. I opened my eyes and all I see is my Mom yelling at me to wake up. At first, I had no idea what was going on but then Mom grabbed me and took me to the livingroom. I saw my little brother, my uncle, my aunt and my uncle's daughter standing in the corner. "The corner is the safest spot in the house" my Mom said. Everyone looked worried which also made me worried. The sounds keep on going. Then I realized what was going on because I heard my Mom and my aunt talking about my uncle almost getting shot! Finally, after two hours of constant terror the shooting decreases. Mom then took us to our grandparents who lived 15 minutes away by walking. We all then left the village and went to a safer place.

After a month we came back but then the shooting kept going on. A few weeks after we came back the shooting kept going. This went on over nine months. In those nine months we lived in fear, sadness, missing home, grief, pain, hunger and of course we were horrified. The next morning at 5:00 a.m. they started shooting air strikes, bombs, guns and tanks. So, we packed and started walking at 7:00 a.m. Mom was pregnant, my sister was 2 1/2 years old and my brother was 6 years old. I was 8. My Mom was under so much pressure because of the clothes, the pregnancy and while we were walking warring shots were flying around us and Mom was scared we'd get shot by accident. As we were walking, I hear people screaming "Run, run". Everyone looked worried and running barefoot and some people were

turn into a civil war? We fled from constant terror and left behind our homes and our families to find a new life, a safe living, because we were suffering from kidnapping, human trafficking and rape. We flew to Lebanon hoping we could find a new life. Unfortunately, it wasn't what we expected. Life there was very difficult, but all that changed when we got a message from the UN to come to Canada. We were a little bit worried and nervous about the move, the language and how we would be able to communicate with the people in Canada; but, we were very anxious. Our whole life changed all thanks to those wonderful people on the committee and the volunteers who helped and supported us through our journey from the beginning until this moment. We wouldn't be where we are now without them. My family and I are very thankful to be here. Canada gave us a new life and the most important, a safe life. So, THANK YOU.

running with shoes in their hands. "In the house, go in the house" my uncle said. We all went in. "GET DOWN" my other uncle shouted. We got down for about two minutes. Vroom.....Booom - it was an airplane throwing a hug barrel bomb. My heart sank. I almost fainted. Thank God no one got hurt. Around 12:00 in the night we finally made it safely to my aunt's (my Mom's sister) house. We stayed there for one month because we were not the only guests. Mom's family also stayed at my aunt's house. While we were there, we had to call Dad to come take us (he works in Lebanon for a few months and then comes back to Syria).

When Dad came, we left to go to Lebanon. Mom was in her ninth month so my parents decided to go to my Mom's other two sisters. My little sister came. Dad said we're going to Lebanon, but when all the papers were finished and we were ready to go they said there was a paper missing for my little sister so we had to wait for Dad to finish it. We waited for him in the streets under the rain with a lot of stuff. When we got to Lebanon we lived with my uncle and his family and my other uncle was there with his family. The house was a rent. People lived under us so we had to walk on our tiptoes. We moved to a different house but it was expensive and smelled horrible. While we lived in Lebanon we moved from house to house and each one we had to clean before and after. Everything was horrific. People, jobs, houses, everything! Until we got a message from the government to go to Canada. We were worried at first but Dad said we had to go to Canada. Canada was a better place.

SOME THOUGHTS from Walt Bathe

Of all of the information that is published in the Annual Reports at the Vestry each year the part that is most interesting to this writer are the Parish Statistics. This is valuable to the planning of the future. It is also not a full report of the activities of our community due to the fact that these stats do not fully explain our impact on the people of our community or the wider community of the City of Stratford.

On reviewing these stats, it is concerning that there is significant reduction in the involvement of youth and children. The weekly attendance is declining as is the attendance at our Easter and Christmas services. Active membership has remained somewhat flat as has the Directory Membership. The good sign is that the Jazz Vespers appears to be attracting a very, loyal group.

The main reason for this rhetoric is to highlight the volunteerism that is very evident within the community. On a full review of the Committee Reports there are 72 volunteers named and, as we know, many more who support these volunteers (leaders). To this writer this is the most important statistic, and along with (1) the high quality of these leaders and (2) the degree of interest from the groups, this needs to be celebrated. It has often been said that we have strong leadership which, if true, will take us to the future in good fashion.

It is also important to be aware that more than 20% of this community attended the annual meeting (63 parishioners). By any standard this is exemplary behaviour.

It has been my privilege to serve as a volunteer leader for the past 10 years. I cannot possibly count the benefits I have received. Due to circumstances in my personal life, I have been moved to reduce my involvement, and therefore resign from the Building and Property Committee.

To my committee members, and many friends, I thank you for your support and advice.

THE JOY OF... by Peter B. Mussen

I'm Bored! I'm Depressed! I'm Lonely! These are legitimate feelings that everyone experiences once in a while, but when they occur frequently it's time to ask yourself if you need a major change in your life's focus. Being bored is easily fixed. Go get a job as a Walmart Greeter. The other two feelings are cause for concern.

So..., do I have a DEAL for you! Absolutely free of charge, no medical necessary and guaranteed, yes guaranteed, to make you feel better immediately! And if you sign up before the end of this article, you get this offer doubled with NO extra shipping charges, no contracts and additionally, a whole bunch of endorphins for - all for free! Too good to be true? Nonsense.

What can this be, what is it, you say? Why, it's *volunteering!* Yup. It's as simple as that, volunteering.

Like so many of you (and yes, perhaps I'm preaching to the choir, here) I have been involved in any number of volunteer situations: as a board or committee member, church warden, trustee, as a coordinator of the food bank, as a coach, in the class, at the library and of course, throughout the St. James community. Perhaps the volunteer position I have enjoyed the most recently is my current focus - St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Service. Concurrently, I also serve as an area rep for Golden Rescue™, a non-profit organization dedicated to rescuing and re-homing golden retrievers.

Once you reach your mid-fifties (but a fond memory for me) you can't help but think, "What am I going to do with my time once I retire?" It is well worth thinking about. I have seen several of my Grey County teacher colleagues drift off into isolation and depression and sadly, an early demise, because there was nothing stimulating and SOCIAL in their lives; nothing to get out of bed for.

Although there are so many people who really deserve the Ted Blowes Community Service award, I was dumfounded and honoured to receive it from the City of Stratford in November, 2019. While on stage, I had the chance to tell the assembled throng about the advantages of volunteerism.

Regular volunteer service fixes loneliness and helps moderate depression in a jiffy. It increases your activity level. You should come along with our golden retriever, Sawyer, as we visit Community Living on Tuesday afternoons. I think you would be struck by the warm friendships we have made with the staff and the clients. You would immediately recognize Sean, Wayne and several others! We have fun! I bring along the "Magical Mystery Box" and we play an intense game of 'guess what Peter's got in the box this week?' Sean loves it!

You would be impressed with how important our service in the schools continues to be, especially with autistic, high anxiety and socially isolated teens. Again, marvelous friendships have been established, and the sense of doing something useful is huge.

On Thursdays, Sawyer and I are up in St. Marys at the District High School. We work with Kristie, a dedicated education assistant who runs the STRIVE program for students who need safe space and a caring person to help them with a whole host of problems. An added advantage is that once we're done, we can go over to Dave and Joan Parson's and pester them - maybe even for lunch.

Dr. Lauren Mussen, MD, FRCPC is a psychiatrist and geriatrician. She has a lot to do with neurological issues, and she assures me that the recent medical studies are true: the first line of cognitive defence in people over 50 is maintaining positive daily social contacts and worthwhile activity with others. (Apparently, it also helps keep you happy and NOT grumpy! Can you imagine me being grumpy? Dr. Mussen, please!)

I'll bet that if a list were drawn up at St. James of all the volunteer activities we do individually and collectively, the list would top a thousand descriptions. I'm serious. That's one of the reasons that we remain so active and committed to each other in our church community. The social/emotional/healthy living advantages of getting involved are too obvious to ignore.



You likely have a friend or relative who is less than engaged. Get them involved in something. Do you know that if you are in a wheelchair you can roll right into the Children's Section of the Library and read with kids? Places like our local elementary schools, the Hospital, L'Arche and Community Living can use volunteers. Sheltered living places like Greenwood, the OSPCA, the Annual Stratford Spring Food Drive and all sorts of local sports associations need volunteers. And for heaven's sake, if all that doesn't interest you, just drop into St. James (when we are able to do so) and get busy with the Mistletoe Market, the Variety Sale, the Plant Sale, the garden group or volunteering in the kitchen for one of the many, many meals we cook AND clean up

after. You can clean up in the making friends department, too! Don't just go fishing. Go out and *Carpe Diem!* Seize the carp and the day. Protect your brain and your social life: VOLUNTEER! JUST DO IT!

(Note: Article written prior to COVID 19)



CHRISTIAN MEDITATION



"Silence is necessary for the human spirit if it is to thrive. Not only thrive, but to be creative to respond creatively to life, to our environment, to friends. Silence gives our spirit room to breathe, room to be... The silence is there, within us. What we have to do is enter into it, to become silent, to become the silence... Silence is the language of the spirit." (John Main)

The community of Christian Meditators is a global and inclusive contemplative family. The roots of the World Community lie in the desert tradition of early Christianity dating back to the 4th century. In 1975 John Main, an Irish Benedictine monk (1926-1982), started the first Christian Meditation Centre in London. The first of the family of weekly meditation groups around the world began to meet then. John Main said that the 'best way to teach others how to pray is to pray with them. In contact with others, we awaken to the deeper truth of our being and so learn to travel beyond ourselves. That is why meditating regularly, whether daily or weekly, with the same community, is such a source of sustenance to our pilgrimage'. (*Letters from the Heart*)

With the restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, our Wednesday and Saturday meetings have had to be postponed. This does not mean that we, as meditators, have to discontinue our practice of daily meditation in our quiet places at home. It does mean, however, that we are missing our weekly group meditation which encourages us in our daily practice. After each of our group meditations we listened to talks which had been distributed on CDs for our use. These talks can be downloaded from the WCCM (World Community of Christian Meditation) at <http://tiny.cc/MeditatioCDs> or by downloading the WCCM app where you will find the talks as well as many other resources. The Canadian Christian Meditation Community site also provides many resources as well. Should you wish further information about our St. James Meditation Groups please contact Doug Ayres at (519) 273-0494 or Nancy McCallum at 519-273-0297.

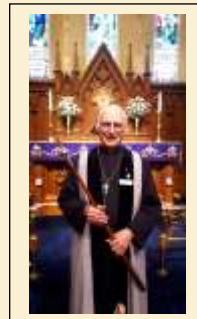
FROM THE ASSISTANT VERGER by Rick Falshaw

The history of Vergers goes back over 700 years. Vergers have been noted in the annals of many English cathedrals, such as Lincoln and Salisbury, as far back as the 12th century. In medieval times, the Verger or Protector of the Procession led the procession from the vestry to the front doors of the church or cathedral, often through crowds of people and animals. The Verger would swing his virge (also known as a mace) to clear a path for clergy and choir.

Today's verger is a lay person engaged in the ministry of service and welcome. On March 8, I had the honour of being commissioned as Assistant Verger to the Parish of St. James. It was a very special moment as Head Verger Kyle vested me and presented me with virge and cross.

As Assistant Verger, I work alongside Rev. Lorne and Kyle. Primary duties are seeing that the church is in order for worship and assisting at weddings and funerals.

The final words Lorne spoke to me at the commissioning ceremony were "You are now a servant of the parish." These words have resonated with me since that time. I count it a privilege to serve St. James



Rick with the virge.



Kyle Gascho and Rick Falshaw
Vergers of St. James, Stratford

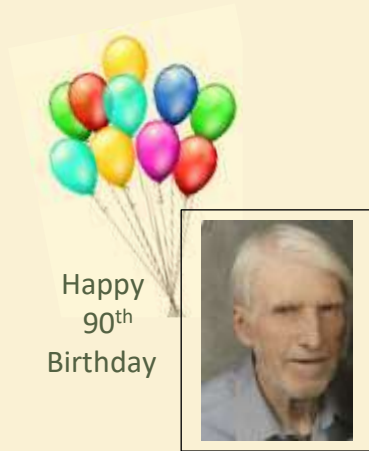
C
E
L
E
B
R
A
T
I
O
N
S

Birthdays ...



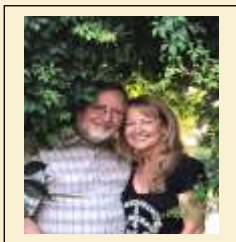
Marie Jones and Grandson, James

Following the 10:30 Church service on February 2nd, friends and family were invited to celebrate Marie's 85th birthday in the Lower Hall. The hall was festively decorated in shades of pink, lavender and fuchsia. In keeping with Marie's impeccable taste, her outfit for the day matched perfectly with her surroundings.



Ted Jeffrey

Wedding Anniversaries ...



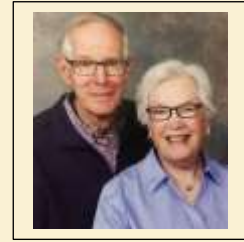
Lorne and Karen celebrating 1st year



Neal and Joan celebrating 30 years



Doug and Pam celebrating 50 years



David and Glenda celebrating 60 years



Beloved, let us love one another;
for love is from God,
and everyone who loves is
born of God and knows God.

COVID-19 EXPLORATIONS by Barbara Hargin

I have been spending time during COVID-19 doing online workshops. One of the workshops I attended was bibliodrama. I've been familiar with this way of exploring the underlying meaning of stories for a long time. I have even taught a simple form, but this workshop was with the person who created bibliodrama, Peter Pitzele, and I was intrigued.

Bibliodrama takes a story, or a section of the story and people imagine themselves in the role of some aspect of that story. For instance, take the story of Adam and Eve. Not the whole story, but maybe Chapter 3 of Genesis, the part where Eve talks to the serpent and then chooses to pick and eat the fruit of the tree of good and evil. If you were the serpent, what would you be feeling as she reaches for the fruit. What would you be thinking? If you were Eve what would be going through your mind at that moment? How would you be feeling? Why? What would you be seeing? If you chose to be the tree watching Eve make her fateful choice, what would your thoughts be? How would you feel? Each person will answer the questions differently. We hear the story through the filter of our own personality so the answers create a complex layering of thoughts, ideas, feeling as each person shares their answers. This produces a new perspective on the story. A group can explore any story this way, each person taking on one and then perhaps another role so the characters become real and the story comes alive. I certainly intend to do more online workshops with Peter Pitzele.

COFFEE KLATSCH by Robert Parkinson

The pandemic has forced us all to “do church” in a myriad of ways. I know that we certainly miss our regular Sunday worship at St. James; however, at the same time, we know that we have to be safe and think outside of the box in order to continue to see each other and have some social time together.



July 29th marked the first larger Wednesday gathering of the St. James Coffee Klatsch, as I call it. When Peter Mussen proposed the idea to me, I immediately jumped on it and we have had very welcome and pleasant Wednesday morning gatherings ever since. Even with the weather getting cooler these days, those brave souls are still out there every Wednesday morning, as long as the rain is not falling too hard! I say “those folks” because, due to something called work, I had to suspend my regular Wednesday attendance at the end of August.

To be sure, the social time together is splendid. Just as splendid and certainly as entertaining are the wonderful, eloquent emails that Peter sends out in advance of each klatsch meeting. To say that Peter is a wordsmith is a terrible understatement! I know that we look forward to getting his emails, as it is probably the most pleasant reading that one can do these days, given the situation that we find ourselves in at the present time. If nothing else, we sure do get a great chuckle out of them and we hope that they keep coming!

If you have not already done so, please head to Upper Queens Park near the Duke's food concession building on Wednesday morning at 9:00 and you will not regret it!

Keep safe everyone and I hope to see you all again very soon!

As we welcome the autumn months, may the earlier setting of the sun remind us to take time to rest.



May the brilliant colors of the leaves remind us of the wonder of your creation.

May the steam of our breath in the cool air remind us that it is you who give us the breath of life.

May the harvest from the fields remind us of the abundance we have been given and bounty we are to share with others.

May the dying of summer's spirit remind us of your great promise that death is temporary and life is eternal.

A SPECIAL REFLECTION FOR:

"The St. James Boys of Early Morning Breakfast" by Comrade Chef Peter Mussen, 2nd Class

I'm sure you'll agree with my favourite expression, "Aging is a Commie Plot." With that inspiration in mind, I want you to forget the arthritis boys! Look at this list and note how many you recognize. (This may apply to female members, but generally they age much more gracefully.)

You know you're aging –

1. If you can't clip your own toenails...
2. If you time your "get up routine" and discover that it takes almost as much as two quarters of football...
3. If you feel that your nose hairs are beginning to feel like steel wool...
4. If you discover that it's Wednesday and you could've sworn on a stack of Bibles that it was Friday...
5. If attractive young women start holding doors open for you with sympathetic expressions on their faces...
6. If your doctor looks at you and starts to laugh...
7. If Ovaltine or Metamucil start to look better than a 'nightcap'....
8. If you waste 45 minutes looking for your glasses only to be told, "They're on the top of your head"....
9. If you find that you are planning your day based upon the location of available washrooms....
10. If you greet your pill box (lying on the breakfast table) like it's an old friend and you begin to talk to it...
11. If you express disappointment with the Stratford Summer Music fireworks because you couldn't hear them....
12. And, if you come to Men's breakfast and you are prevented from enjoying the fare because of the medications you're taking...

Then come to Men's Breakfast anyway and we'll make you a plate of toast! (When, of course, we are able to resume our meeting.)

p.s. The author denies having difficulty with the majority of these items...despite the outrageous lies and fake news propagated by his family members.



STRATFORD PERTH TREE TRUST by Dave Allely



On October 16th, a short ceremony was conducted at St. James followed by the pruning of the maple tree on the corner of Hamilton and Mornington Streets. Approximately twenty-five people attended as we were subject to COVID-19 restrictions.

In the spring, we were contacted by the newly formed Stratford-Perth Tree Trust. This local non-profit group focusses on the sustainability of mature trees in our city. The idea behind the Tree Trust is to use their funds to service mature trees rather than simply plant new ones.

The program opened with Jeffrey George welcoming us with words and music. Jane Eligh-Feryn explained the goals of the Tree Trust and Marianne Van den Heuvel spoke on the science behind carbon sequestration. Veronica Douglas, leader of our Gardening Group, provided a history of our grounds at St. James and its importance to our parish and community. Geoff Love discussed how the group's funds are used, and Jeffrey George brought the program to a close. A video of the ceremony will be on our YouTube channel in the near future.

Tim Lott, from Tim's Tree Service, led his team in the pruning of the large red maple. It was wonderful to witness their work and see what a difference pruning can make to a large tree.

St. James is grateful to the Tree Trust for working with us. If you would like any additional information on the Stratford-Perth Tree Trust it may be found on their website at: www.stratfordperthtreetrust.ca



Dave Allely and
Veronica Douglas



Jeffrey George

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE AND A SIGN FROM GOD by Kyle Gascho, Verger

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen our world change in many different ways. Many of these changes can seem pretty challenging and negative. Before COVID-19 hit with one fell swoop, my grandfather (who lives in a long-term care facility) was in very poor condition. Not being able to see him because of the pandemic has been upsetting to say the least, and knowing the stress and fear my grandma is experiencing right now about losing too much time with him makes it all the worse.

I believe this pandemic to be a blessing in disguise. I also believe it to be a sign from God. Set in our habits, rituals and very structured way of “doing” church, the word change (for many) was not necessarily at the forefront of our vocabularies. This pandemic has forced drastic change on parishes throughout the Diocese of Huron and the wider church. These are changes that could only have been dreamed about or changes that would have taken many years to develop and implement. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many parishes to seek alternative means of delivering worship and nurturing faith and spirituality in parishioners and beyond. Many parishes across the Diocese have started utilizing necessary technology to achieve this. With pre-recorded worship services uploaded to YouTube, worship services livestreamed on the internet through YouTube, Facebook, Zoom, etc., we have broadened the scope of our reach to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom. While all of this technology may seem scary to a lot of people, in many instances, it has helped us to grow together as parishes, faith communities and church families. It has also helped us collaborate with one another through many different obstacles to keep moving the Church forward into this crazy new world we are living in. While things will never completely go back to normal after COVID-19 starts winding down, we need to be careful of letting ourselves fall back into old habits.



We need to keep up with the technology we have started using in our churches, even after COVID-19. I truly believe this pandemic to be a sign from God. It is the push we need to bring our Church into the 21st Century (or at least to the 20th Century depending on who you ask). These new methods of “doing” church may just help us to bring more people into our faith communities. As parishes, we need to look beyond the end of this pandemic and continue to look into the long-term future of who we (Anglican Churches) will be in and what we will look like in our communities in the many years to come.

As the Verger at St. James Church in Stratford, my role has drastically changed. What was more of a liturgical role and assisting with ensuring the space was ready for worship on Sunday mornings, it has now become more hands on with the day-to-day operations of the parish in an IT or techie role. When COVID-19 hit and it was no longer an option to have staff working on-site and being open to the public, the daunting task of setting up our office administrator with the ability to work remotely was something I tackled. There will always be some hiccups when big changes are made but it was accomplished! This task heightened the realization in my parish of the need for technology. I am continuing to work with the parish leadership and members of the congregation to achieve some big goals for the future of our parish and the role some technology will serve in accomplishing these goals. Technology is here to stay, so we may as well use it to our advantage.

Glory to God, whose power working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.

A large, ornate chandelier with many lights is visible in the background of the prayer text.

God of plenty,
and sustainer of all those in distress,
comfort all those who are anxious
about the financial implications of COVID-19.
Direct our leaders in ways of wisdom and compassion,
direct our businesses in ways of shrewdness and understanding,
direct each one of us in ways of generosity and care,
that through our concern for one another,
individuals, organisations and our whole society
would be given the strength to endure these present challenges,
and to work towards a shared future with hope,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CELTIC CHRISTIANITY AND THE CELTIC TRADITION by Nancy Adams



One of the positive outcomes of the current pandemic is the opportunity and inclination to explore alternative worship forms, and one that we are experimenting with at St. James comes out of the Celtic tradition. On **Thursday mornings at 10:00 a.m.**, various members of our community plus others (thanks to the vast reach of the Internet!) join together via Zoom link on our computers or tablets or phones, and settle into a time of reflection on Scripture and prayer for the world. All are welcome to join in!

Celtic Christianity evolved in Britain and was prevalent there until the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD. Author J. Philip Newell, in a book entitled "Gathered and Scattered: Prayers and Meditations from the Iona Community" summarizes it like this: "A *main characteristic that distinguishes the Celtic tradition from the Mediterranean tradition (i.e., the Christianity that came to be centred in Rome) is the belief that creation is essentially good....and God forever sees what is created as essentially good.*"

Not only is creation viewed as a blessing, it is regarded in essence as an expression of God. In his commentary on the prologue of St. John's Gospel, John Scotus Eriugena says that all things have been uttered into being by God. If God were to stop speaking, he says, creation would cease to exist. Creation is a theophany, i.e., a showing or revealing of God. At the heart of the Christian mystery is the belief that God is love, that God is Self-giving. All that God does, therefore, is a giving of Self. Creation, the great work of God, is essentially an offering of God's Self. It is a Self-disclosure to us of the mystery of God.

In relation to the question, "Where do we look for God?", the answer is not 'Away from creation', but rather, 'Deep within all that has been created'. Within ourselves, within our children, within all that has been spoken into being, we can listen for the expression of God.

Eriugena says that God is speaking to us through two books. One is the 'little book', he says, the Book of Scripture. The other is the 'big book', the Book of Creation. This is not to be naïve about what has gone wrong in creation. It is to affirm that creation is like a sacred text that we can learn to read in our journey of knowing God. It is also to say that what we do to matter is a spiritual issue, whether that be the matter of our human bodies, the matter of the body of creation, or the matter of the body politic, and how we handle the resources of the earth. All these matters are central to spirituality in the Celtic tradition. In the Mediterranean tradition, on the other hand, there has tended to be a separation of spirit and matter. The mystery of God has been distanced from the matter of creation. What we do to creation, therefore, too often has been regarded as not an essential part of our spirituality.

The Celtic tradition was formally rejected by the Synod of Whitby in the year 664 AD. The Synod's rejection of the Celtic tradition was a tragedy for Western Christianity. The reality, of course, is that it had lived on in the Celtic fringes of Britain over the centuries. And today is it being recovered. The reclaiming of it can be an important resource for spirituality in the 21st century. It can help us listen again for the beat of God's presence in this moment and in every moment, in our own lives, and in the life of all that has being. ¹

Worship that is characterized as 'Celtic' takes on much of this flavour – exercising an awareness of issues common to the scope of creation and the human condition, with an emphasis on justice and healing. It is typically offered in language that is inclusive, sensitive, honest, gentle, intimate, and heartfelt. Please join us on **Thursday mornings at 10:00 on Zoom. The link is available in the weekly St. James news, and no pre-registration is required – just come as you are.** Also – if you have the Zoom link, please share it with friends and relatives near or far. Covid-19 has no boundaries, and neither do we!

p.s. John Scotus Eriugena (815 – 877 AD) was an Irish theologian, philosopher and poet.

¹ J. Philip Newell, Columban Christianity & the Celtic Tradition, in *Gathered and Scattered, Readings and Meditations from the Iona Community*, Month 1, Day 13. Compilation © 2007 Neil Paynter, Wild Goose Publications. Edited for length.

STRATFORD ANGLICAN–LUTHERAN TEAM FOR REFUGEES (SALT 2) SPONSORSHIP UPDATE

by Kristin Fox

On October 29, 2019, we welcomed a lovely family of six from South Sudan into our hearts. It is very hard to believe the end of the sponsorship of the family is near. It has been a whirlwind! The pandemic certainly put an unexpected spin on things – changing the way we expected to be able to support and interact with the family; putting an end to their in-person ESL classes and introducing the challenge of learning/teaching how to use Zoom and various other platforms; rethinking how to do just about everything and, unfortunately, greatly reducing the fun and recreational things we would have liked to have done with the family. Thankfully, however, we were able to get in some summer fun at the Lion's Pool and a trip to Wildwood.

The SALT team has been absolutely fantastic. The team leads a weekly Parish Representatives meeting over Zoom to stay connected and plan how to help the family navigate all the challenges of being newcomers during a time when we are all navigating a new way of living. With creative ideas, like grocery lists left in the mailbox for the shopping volunteers to pick up and drop off the groceries on their doorstep; bags of library books exchanged via the porch; repairs and replacing appliances from a distance; lots of support from the health team managing appointments having to be rescheduled again and again, troubleshooting things like, conference calls with interpreters; learning ESL from home; and a dropped-off Thanksgiving dinner from Swiss Chalet (rather than enjoying Thanksgiving together as a group with them), we have managed to make things work.

Things definitely didn't go according to plan, but most things don't. The pandemic has definitely delayed things like immunizations, dental work, etc. and although they are much more comfortable with finances now, they are still wanting the regular check-ins to help with their budgeting, for now, tutoring for ESL, etc. will still continue. When safe to do so, I am sure we will want to get together, take the family on outings which we have missed out on during the pandemic and celebrate together. The relationships we have built with the family will continue.

The father has been studying the Driver's Handbook and isn't quite ready to start driving yet. Both he and his wife are hoping to start working part-time while continuing to study English. The kids are happy to be back at school and all of the family members'

English has come a long way since they first arrived. Settling in well, the family is eager to be baptised (most of them for the first time) at Stephen's. They have a membership at the YMCA and have made some strong friendship connections here. They have even persuaded some friends from London to start working on making a move to Stratford as well. While they miss friends from Cairo and family back home in South Sudan (especially at times of violence and recent flooding displacing family there), they are very happy to be in Stratford. They hope that they might have the opportunity to welcome some of their family to Canada one day soon.

Sadly, due to winter weather and the pandemic, we weren't able to have the big get-together we had hoped for where we would introduce them to members of the surrounding South Sudanese community, but they themselves have slowly managed to meet people from the community in small numbers. We also are now left having to be creative in how we mark the end of the sponsorship and celebrating the first anniversary of their arrival in Canada; but, we are working on a photobook of the year to present to the family. Hopefully in-person celebrations aren't too far off in the future.

Words cannot express how thankful I am for the support of the SALT team, the core committee and all the volunteers, for their time, their creativity, their patience and for sticking together to overcome many challenges. This didn't turn out the way we had expected – for the volunteer drivers who thought they would be having more rides and more opportunities to connect with the family, only to find that the pandemic cancelled school abruptly, and not only were rides no longer necessary, they were also not recommended. Having to stop getting together to enjoy things like Messy Church or other fun things with the family and some of the team taking on larger or different roles than they originally anticipated.

It has taken many tries, a great deal of troubleshooting and various devices, but the family (and we) are now more comfortable with the technology and we are able now to engage in tutoring, learning and socializing online, so we are ready for lockdowns and for expanding the number of people able to tutor and socialize – now able to include people from a distance, but hoping for the day when we can safely interact in a way more like we were used to.

Feeling blessed to be a part of this journey, thankful for the support of all three parishes and all of the volunteers.

The SALT 2 Committee is comprised of Kristin Fox (Chair), Jan Bennewitz, Mary-Lou Drown, Ken and Gail Mowbray, Rick Falshaw, Chris Fisher, Cindy Morgan, Felicity Sutcliffe, Geoff Williams and Kathy Vassilakos.

FAITHFUL DEPARTED

I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!"

(Revelation 14.13)

Betty Jean Davis	March 1, 2019
Greg Borotsik	March 23, 2019
Robert Sebben	October 17, 2019
June Morris	December 7, 2019
Russell Boone	December 27, 2019
William (Bill) Ashton	January 23, 2020
Robert McCallum	January 24, 2020
Al Nastase	February 25, 2020
Betty Miller	March 28, 2020
George Miller	April 1, 2020
Helen James	April 12, 2020
Don Cole	May 20, 2020
Barbara Colley	May 26, 2020
Patricia (Trish) Brooks	May 31, 2020
Edmund Thomas	October 10, 2020
Robert Boyce	October 17, 2020



Rest eternal grant to them and let light perpetual shine upon them. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

THE WINDOW by Rumi

Your body is away from me
but there is a window open
from my heart to yours.

From this window, like the moon
I keep sending news secretly.



The Parishioner is published by St. James Anglican Church,
6 Hamilton Street, Stratford, ON N5A 4Y9
Telephone: 519-271-3572

Website: www.stjamesstratford.ca
Editor: Nancy McCallum (Parishioner.stjames@outlook.com)
Rector: The Rev'd Canon Dr. Lorne Mitchell
Deacon: The Rev'd Canon Tom Patterson