

Harvest Newsletter- Autumn- 2020- Archdeacon Bill Gray
Christ Church, Bobcaygeon, St. John's, Dunsford, St. Luke's Burnt River
Diocese of Toronto, Anglican Church of Canada

At the time of writing I have now completed 24 video sermons, services, additional mid-week hymns/prayers as well as the weekly written corresponding documents during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. These will continue each week for those that either cannot or choose not to return to in person group gatherings. I have now managed to acquire the upgraded computer laptop and software to support a better platform for video editing that will enable involvement from more people in the video recordings. Viewers will note that current worship services include in one continuous video service segments recorded from a variety of locations and at various times. I can also now include added text, background music and additional still pictures that add to and provide commentary on each Sunday's theme. Thank you to all who express your support by watching the YouTube videos, reading the written services/sermons, joining in the responses, sharing and forwarding to other contacts and providing me positive feedback through emails, letters and phone calls.

I am also pleased that pastoral care and parish contact has continued during this unusual time of practising social distancing and isolation. I am grateful to those who maintain contact with parish members and provide support through your prayers and conversations whether by phone, text, email, facebook, Canada Post or social distanced visits. As you know I have attempted the same and have provided regular updates regarding pastoral needs which include those who have endured sickness, surgery and eleven of our fellowship who have died during this time. We continue to support and pray for all who are bereaved.

I also appreciate that the parish supported providing me space for a break from this responsibility for a time this summer so that I could re-charge for the demanding time ahead. As considerable time is required during this time on the computer or on my i-phone it was therapeutic to have time to do something physical such as paint the garage and basement as well as engage in some gardening, lawn care and boating.

As if all this wasn't enough we had to deal with the unfortunate diagnosis that Ruth has a rare form of bone cancer known as multiple myeloma. Ruth has begun treatment and we are feeling hopeful. Thank you again for your overwhelming and appreciated expressions of support and prayer.

As schools and churches begin to re-open as have most businesses and public services over the summer, our parish leadership has met to consider and make decisions regarding our own re-opening plans. Preparations for re-opening are already underway. From these deliberations the following has been decided. Both Christ Church, Bobcaygeon and St.

John's Dunsford have decided to re-open for in person public services of worship on **Thanksgiving Sunday, October 11, 2020** at the usual service times. We have decided to wait until Thanksgiving weekend to re-open out of an abundance of caution to allow time to prepare and to evaluate school re-openings. St. Luke's, Burnt River has decided not to re-open this year as the short time and limited Sundays that remain in our regular worship season would not justify the extensive preparations that would be required by a small number of available volunteers.

It is understandable that there remains a great ambivalence among many regarding returning to in person public worship at church. Many have expressed they are content to continue to enjoy our video and written services from the comfort of their home. This apprehension is a natural result of the tragic loss we experienced locally at the Pinecrest Nursing Home as well as many of our members who are vulnerable due to compromised health or age. No one who is currently uncomfortable with participating in public worship is expected to do so.

On the other hand, there is currently minimal evidence of current community transmissions in our region. Public health, government and diocesan guidelines allow for church re-opening for community worship. Many of us are missing being physically present in community with our other church members. It is required that in order to re-open for public worship that parish leaders sign a document that ensures they have implemented and will practice diocesan protocols as determined by public health and government guidelines for engaging in public worship. Examples of these re-opening protocols will include deep, regular cleaning of public spaces, mandatory mask wearing, hand sanitizing, limited numbers, social distancing, limited music and no congregational singing, people movement in one direction and dedicated entrances only and exits only, one person at a time washroom use, prohibited use of shared hymn books and prayer books, record keeping for contact tracing and many others. We will provide masks if you don't have one and provide multiple, strategically located hand sanitizing stations. Physical contact and shared materials will be prohibited. We have participated in numerous diocesan and parish Zoom meetings, email correspondence, texting, social distanced and phone meetings in order that we might understand and make preparations for re-opening. Extensive parish administration continues for myself, parish officers/volunteers and staff with thanks in church management.

As the ministry of the church and the maintenance of our buildings have continued during this time the financial obligations of being church have continued unabated. As we have experienced a decline in donations during the pandemic lockdown and are facing the possibility of budget deficits by year end, please use the enclosed, return addressed for each congregation, with postage, Harvest Envelope to make your special offering to your church during these challenging times.

Warmest regards; Archdeacon Bill Gray