



St. Mary's Pastoral Charge

The United Church of Canada

189 Hwy. 347 Aspen NS B0H 1E0

18 June 2020

Dear Friends,

As of June 18, 2020, the Province of Nova Scotia has announced that groups of persons can meet to a maximum of 50, as long as social distancing and other various precautions can be maintained. We have already made the decision to continue with online worship until the end of June. A board meeting will be held in the coming days to discuss when and how we might begin meeting in person. This will be done prayerfully, slowly and carefully, continuing to follow all public health guidelines and best practice recommendations from the United Church of Canada. We do not want to rush this and regret it later. The health and safety of our community must be paramount. That is what it means to “love thy neighbour.”

Since the World Health Organization declared the Corona Virus Covid 19 a pandemic, and the province declared a State of Emergency, the minister, board chairs and treasurers have been in continual communication. Since March 19, our buildings have been closed, but the church has very much still been open!

We have:

- made contact with every household to check in, keep connected and let them know to be in contact for any pastoral concerns or needs
- ensured that people were able to access information online, could have someone print things out for them, or would like us to print out and mail
- provided a pastoral letter which also outlined general information and government resources about Covid19, available assistance for physical and mental health, and financial giving options
- provided weekly online worship resources (both printable and video links)
- provided Holy Week online worship resources (both printable and video links)
- recognized with worship and imagery the horrific shootings in NS, the military helicopter crash and the Snowbird crash
- recognized with gratitude frontline and essential workers, online, in letter, and with the daily ringing of church bells
- recognized the sin of racism
- communicated with JAM Club, Youth Group and Bible Study participants
- delivered activities and gifts for our young people
- provided weekly online women's bible study via Zoom
- conducted graveside services
- provided ongoing pastoral care
- supported the work of the food bank
- supported the wider mission of the church

These are unprecedented times. Things are continually shifting and changing. We are experiencing many emotions. But there have been blessings as well, as we were forced to slow down, reflect on what is most important, and trust in God with our whole heart. We have been able to connect with new folks and share the good news of Jesus in new ways. We have also seen the love and kindness of people who have reached out in care, kindness, compassion, empathy and generosity. God is good, all the time, and is always faithful! God will continue to be present, guiding and strengthening us as we move forward.

We will provide an update after the boards have met.

Thank you to all who have continued to serve and provide leadership. Thank you to all who have continued to financially support this ministry with your gifts and offerings. As we move into the summer months this will particularly be appreciated!

You are all in my heart, mind and prayers.

In Christ's Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derek Elsworth". The signature is stylized with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke.

Derek Elsworth

Minister