

Update: March 20, 2020

At St. Paul's United Church the health of our employees, our members, our families and our community is our number one priority. St. Paul's is committed to helping our community, our health agencies, our province and our country address the COVID-19 pandemic and will be supporting and implementing the guidelines of our local health agency and our various levels of government.

It was previously announced that Sunday services will be cancelled for March 22 and 29. What will happen on following Sundays still needs to be determined, but the decision will be well communicated.

As a society, we are currently being challenged in so many ways. Rev. Arlyce has included in this What's Happening a meditation for us to reflect on to give us strength and comfort. In addition, ways for us to worship together, but not in one location, are being investigated. Ways of conducting virtual meetings using internet based solutions are being investigated.

FOR THE SAFETY OF OUR EMPLOYEES THE CHURCH DOORS WILL BE LOCKED THIS COMING WEEK AND UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

During the coming weeks Staff will be available to you by phone and email or in person if necessary, but we ask that you please request an appointment by calling the office or sending Joanne an email before coming to the church. This will help to ensure that our staff is at minimal risk as they conduct the essential business of St. Paul's.

If you do need to enter the church next week following are suggestions to consider:

- First, as you enter St. Paul's please proceed to the closest washroom and wash your hands prior to interacting with staff or attending a meeting.
- Please respect social distancing recommendations when encountering anyone in the building.
 - If meeting with Rev. Arlyce, arrangements will be made so that social distancing can be respected.
 - If you need to discuss business with Joanne please respect social distancing guidelines by not entering her office. If convenient please use the outer office and communicate via the half door.
 - If you need to discuss requirements with Denis please respect social distancing guidelines and communicate your needs via the green service request slips in the outer office if appropriate.
 - If you need to discuss business with Sharon on Monday mornings, please respect social distancing by not entering her office.
- Until March 31st we are discouraging all meetings at St. Paul's. If a Chair deems that a physical meeting is necessary then it is that Chair's responsibility to ensure that all participants practice social distancing and wash their hands prior to and after the meeting.
- If at all possible please conduct the business of the church via email, telephone or via conference call if you have access to such facilities. We hope to be able to offer internet based meeting solutions referred to above soon in the next few days.

Our custodian has implemented additional sanitization routines and does attempt to follow activity in the building in an effort to sanitize areas immediately after they have been used. We are thankful for this extra effort but note that this activity could result in increased exposure for Denis so please consider our employees and your fellow members in your decision to enter and congregate.

We will continue to monitor the latest updates from our local health unit and the United Church of Canada as we move through this difficult time. We will be reacting to new directives and precautions in real time to better protect our employees and members so at this point we cannot guarantee that the building or the office will be open at any given time. We will post any changes to our hours of operation on the St. Paul's Website and post a notice on the entrance door to the office wing. We ask for your patience, your support and your continued prayers as we deal with these issues to the best of our ability. Stay safe, keep informed and consider ways of helping others.

Givings

At March 15 worship, the offering plates were on stands at the rear of the sanctuary. It seemed to work out. But now days are different. How will St Paul's receive offerings in these unique times? In another congregation one person mailed her offering with a note: "not able to get to church, but I know we have to pay our bills." Of course, we give to our Lord not simply to pay the hydro and gas. At St Paul's what motivates our giving is our Lord who has so abundantly given himself to us and the world. So, we then use our resources to care for vulnerable in our community and church, to teach children in Sunday School, to provide a safe and secure space for all the activities like UCW and shuffleboard, and more. Following are the ways that your tithe or offering to the church may be received by the church with deep thanksgiving:

1. Drop a cheque in the outside locked mailbox at the church
2. Mail a cheque to the church: 25 Gore St. W. Perth, ON K7H 2L9
3. Sign up for PAR - contact the Office Administrator: admin@stpaulsperth.ca
4. Click on the Donations link on the website: <https://www.stpaulsperth.ca/donate.html>
5. Work is underway to make E-Transfers possible, transferring funds from your bank account electronically to St Paul's account via e-mail. More to come.

Meditation

REJOICE Sunday, March 22nd. The bulletin for Sunday worship, March 22nd is attached. We are continuing our focus of Psalm 23 with the words: *"yea, though I walk through the valley of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."* Now you may wonder how I was going to reflect on these words as we were planning on welcoming the Bells of St Paul's to worship. Do bells go with walking in a death-like valley? And what about Isaiah 43.1-2: *"But now, O Jacob, listen to the Lord who created you. O Israel, the one who formed you says, Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you."*

I would look at this as Providence, God's presence moving in and around us even when we do not realize it. It is that giving thanks to God, that REJOICING, that comes when we experience, time and again, that God is with us through all the difficult and death-like times of our lives. REJOICE Sunday, Lent 4, is an ancient tradition that comes mid Lent at a time when the rigours of Lent--- fasting, praying, almsgiving, meditation--were getting pretty tough to do. And there is God to hear our

REJOICING. To remind us especially in these totally unique times, that God is with us! Christians are people of hope living in God's promises and experience in the witness of scripture and in our own lives. Life is never the same when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but note that word "through". We are not left on our own, we walk through those times, times that we all have experienced. And once through the valley, the depths, we emerge in a new life. What signs of new life and rejoicing have you experienced or participated in this last week? What valley days are you in? Who is walking with you—friends, professionals, family? What music are you listening to? What are you doing that is deepening your spiritual life? Practical acts of faith toward others? Praying? Walking in prayer?

Children and Youth

Would you be able to draw and colour a picture of Psalm 23? You might include a shepherd, water, hills and a valley, sheep, a rod and a staff, that pole with a crook on top, a house, trees, grass, a sun, clouds and more.

The whole church will be so happy to see your drawings when we next meet all together. We will also be happy to hear what you did during the school break and extra weeks.

If you have suggestions, comments, concerns, please call or send an email. This is the only way we can keep in touch and help each other stay healthy and informed.

Minister: 613-326-0049 or rev@stpaulsperth.ca

Office Administrator: 613-267-2973 or admin@stpaulsperth.ca