



Dear friends,

Grace and peace to you. What a moment we find ourselves in! Amidst worry and concern for our loved ones, ourselves and our communities, I have been inspired by the many acts of kindness, courage, and generosity by people of every background and every walk of life, shown to neighbours and strangers alike. Perhaps we've never been more aware that the human family is truly one: our vital connectedness transcends the entire social, racial, or political boundaries we invent to divide us. I think Jesus would be proud of us!

By now you are likely aware that Bishop Logan has instructed all the parishes of the Diocese to cease in-person gatherings, including worship, for a period of sixty days. While we may not be able to meet in person, we nonetheless remain God's Church, and are One Body in Christ, committed to worship and serving the needs of those around us.

I am so grateful to our wardens, volunteers, staff and clergy for their wisdom, steadiness and the creative ways they have each responded to the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I could not be more proud of the teamwork and leadership they have shown in this anxious and uncertain time. We are in contact with each other multiple times every day, in person or via technology, as together we pursue the twin goals of minimizing the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring on-going ministry to each other and those in the community who depend on our care and services. It's a joy to serve with St. John's entire leadership team.

Last Sunday, we delivered with great success our first livestreaming of the 10 AM Holy Eucharist (<https://www.stjohnthedivine.bc.ca/news/video-recording-of-the-10-am-service-march-15-2020>). It soon proved to be an important means of pastoral care and support, and a fun way to keep St. John's community connected in our weekly worship life. I encourage you to join us online every Sunday morning at 10 AM, as a small team will lead worship and livestream the event on the St. John the Divine Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/pg/StJohnVicBC/>).

We were grateful (and relieved) to receive a message from Alastair, our Incumbent and Archdeacon, assuring us that he and Sabina are safe and well on their honeymoon in India. They will return to Canada on March 20, and remain in self-isolation until April 3. I encourage you to read Alastair's full message (<https://www.stjohnthedivine.bc.ca/news/where-we-are>).

Please visit St. John's website and other social media platforms regularly for updates and new content. Through this period of rapid decision-making and social distancing, our social media platforms provide places we can meet (virtually) to communicate information, minister to each other, and find online opportunities to learn or connect with others.





I commend to you Ruth's on-going exceptional ministry to our children and families, and the activities and resources she provides regularly on Facebook, "Family Ministry News – St. John's Victoria" (<https://www.stjohnthedivine.bc.ca/ministries/family-ministries>). Ruth's ministry gives us an important means to keep our young ones supported and connected to her, and the other wee ones, while practising social distancing.

For those missing the musical grandeur we enjoy regularly at St. John's, I commend to you "Music at St. John's" (<https://www.stjohnthedivine.bc.ca/ministries/music>), where David, our invaluable music director, will continue to provide his ministry of song and music, with the choral scholars and other musicians, as we patiently await the day we will join our voices in person in praise and worship once more.

St. John's clergy are preparing video resources and instruction on practising our devotions at home. It is a great time to explore new forms of liturgy, meditation and personal prayer. These will be posted soon.

Many of us worry about those who rely on St. John's Food Bank or the Out of the Rain Youth Shelter. Working with our partners, the leaders of these outreaches have organized to continue their operation in creative ways for as long as the Provincial Health Officer allows such activities to happen.

Chief among the many unsung heroes of this moment are Alistair and Una Whiteside, whose small business we employ to keep our church and premises clean and in good order. They will take advantage of this opportunity, while St. John's is closed to the public, to perform a far-reaching, thorough deep clean of our entire church plant – nave, offices, kitchen, halls, everything – on March 25-27. Mr. Whiteside is well experienced in hospital deep cleaning protocols. As such, we are exercising due diligence to minimize the COVID-19 risk associated with our buildings and property and look forward to an immaculate church when we return to worship in person.

There is much that can be said. Carol-Ann will continue to send to you updates, notices, things I've forgotten, and details about our common life together in this most uncommon time.

Furthermore, our Pastoral Care team is preparing ways to stay connected with our parishioners by telephone, and to "check-in" with each other to support health and well-being.

As ever, if you have questions, concerns, kudos or ideas, please do not hesitate to contact me, the wardens, or any of St. John's staff members. We are here and ready to respond to ensure ministry and support through this time.

Peace and blessings,

The Reverend Canon Kevin Arndt  
Acting Priest-in-Charge  
St. John the Divine

