



Ministry Report July 2020

Again, I begin by saying that there's not a whole lot to add to the previous ministry reports. But there is a development in response to the question on many people's minds.

When are we re-opening?

Yes, I had mentioned July 12 as the date when the Diocese was allowing Churches to reopen – but the logistics around a space such as at St John's are complicated, and the hard work of Andrew Gates and Graeme Brown, with others from Property, must not go unmentioned. Our office space has been as re-organised as the limitations of the building will allow us. Our worship space has likewise been arrowed, roped off, and marked up with tape to allow us to consider submitting a reopening plan to the Executive Archdeacon.

Before we re-open, and considering the vulnerabilities of many of those who responded that they would like to come back, we are planning to have a couple of practise gatherings (chat to Bill Tartar about these if you would like more details) and move towards gathering again for physically distanced, carefully stewarded sharing of the Eucharist on September 6th, the Sunday of the Labour Day weekend. It is cautious, and will depend on any updates given by our Provincial Medical Officer, but it is the best time for us to think realistically about having a format and protocols to allow us to gather as safely as possible.

I have had some pressure from both sides about our reopening, both from those who wish to start immediately and from those who believe it irresponsible to have any gatherings whilst this pandemic continues. We have sought to listen to all sides and respect the variety of voices in our community and are moving forward with an abundance of caution, seeking to keep people safe whilst at the same time offering a carefully planned, though very different to what we can do, approach to gathering.

Some of the bullet points:

- Physical distancing will have to remain in place at all times. Including on entry and exit and any movement around the church.
- Everyone wishing to attend will have to book a space, and be seated where placed.
- Families will have to stay together in church in the seats assigned – though we are exploring the possibilities of safe gathering for our young people also.
- Those who attend will need to sign in and leave contact details.
- We must sanitise our hand on entry and exit.
- The church will need to be completely sanitised after the service is done (volunteers?)
- Music will be limited to organ and cantors, no communal singing.
- Masks will be available and we encourage their use.
- The Eucharist will be shared by wafer only – there will not be individual cups (I think we might need a course in Anglicanism 101 as to why this at the heart of our Eucharistic practice)

There is more – much more – and I hope you have the chance to see the light-hearted but hopefully informative videos we have made on www.facebook.com/StJohnVicBC with some sight of the changes we have made and how we are going to put these protocols into practice.

I have said this before, and I make no apologies for repeating myself, that we are doing this because we care for one another. It's not a case of adhering to the rules, but of practicing compassion for each other as we gather. I



know that many of us, like myself, deeply value the sacred space we have created at St John's and being in the presence of others as we worship – we are seeking to balance our pastoral care for one another with our desire to gather together.

We will continue to livestream the services for those unable to come, and to attempt to maintain the zoom coffee hour.

Continuing our prayer life together

One of the wonderful discoveries about this time of COVID19 has been how many people appreciate the opportunity to make space in their lives for prayer. Our daily prayers online often get between 50-200 views and the variety of forms of prayer and the creative ways in which the team have approached these live and recorded prayers has been a delight for many of us. Now we are seeking to broaden out our team of prayers and are happy to work with volunteers to record or go live with daily prayers at noon Monday through Friday. If you would like to be part of a growing team, please email incumbent@stjohnthedivine.bc.ca or psibley@bc.anglican.ca and we will joyously work together with you to create a short act of prayer in the day for wider distribution.

Education and Spirituality

By the time we gather I will have met with Susan Bangrove to discuss what we might be able to offer in the way of learning and education in the coming weeks and months. I have had conversations with a few people about restarting our study of Watershed Discipleship as a weekly zoom meeting (or two, depending on how many wish to join the discussion), my line about Anglicanism 101 above was only in partial jest, some kind of presentation/discussion about Progressive Faith from an Anglican perspective is overdue, there are other books/issues/ideas we may well be able to offer as courses online and I hope to have an update on that in the near future.

Love conquers all

Even in the midst of a Coronavirus Crisis we still have two couples wishing to be married at St John's (with all the appropriate protocols) in the coming weeks. Richard and Alicia, and Miles and Kimberlee will be joined in holy matrimony on 8th and 15th August respectively. Please join with me in praying for them in their celebrations and for their married lives together. Pray for me also, as we seek to creatively navigate how we can mark these important days with new rituals for these COVID19 times.

Thanks again

To you all, for your hard work and dedication in keeping ourselves connected, and acting with compassion and grace in these strange days!

With thanks for our partnership in the Gospel,

Alastair