

November/December 2020

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe that Advent is upon us. We have had a difficult year with 2020 bringing us many challenging and trying times. When we rang in the new year, we never would have expected that we would spend most of the year dealing with a world-wide pandemic and having to distance ourselves from loved ones and friends.

In March, with cases on the rise and for the protection of us all, we entered into a lock down mode and faced the closure of schools, businesses and our church buildings. Though this was a difficult decision and meant that we would not be able to come together for worship and fellowship as we were used to, we adapted quickly and knew that what was most important was keeping everyone safe and well until we could meet again.

In learning to use technology in new ways so that we could worship together online and find ways to connect that were much different than what we were used to, we also had to work diligently to ensure our financial status in the parish would be stable enough to get us through until we could be in full operation again.

We had no idea of knowing how long the lock down of our buildings would last and so it meant many long days and hours spent on a new financial plan. Myself, our parish administrator Madonna Scott and our parish treasurer Philip Gavell spent many full days and nights in correspondence with one another via phone, email and zoom. The entire 2020 budget had to be re-worked, meaning that we had to look at every budget line and decide what we could do without for a period of time and where we could save funds. In those early days we put a stop on garbage collection, Stella's Circle cleaning, photocopies, ordering of supplies, and any unnecessary expenditures. We kept the heat in the building to a minimal to ensure that no pipes would freeze, our fridges and freezers were unplugged and we did everything we could to ensure less spending of the parish funds. From the very beginning we, along with vestry, made a decision that we wanted to keep up to date with all of our financial obligations, including the electric bill, phone and internet, our main office bills and above all our monthly synod assessment, payroll expenses, and our CRA taxes. We knew this would not be easy as this is the largest expenditures in our parish, but one that we have committed ourselves to over the years.

While working from home, myself and Madonna rotated our days so that we could be at the office daily. We encouraged you to continue with your financial contributions by dropping envelopes in the locked drop box, signing up for pre-authorized debit and e-transfers. When everyone's budget was tight, the financial support we received during the lock down was tremendous and we give thanks for your support to your parish during those very difficult months, especially when we did not qualify for full government funding each month that it was available. It was because of your support and the hard work of our parish administrator and treasurer that we were able to see our way through.

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Our online presence was in full force with weekly services, live check in's on Facebook, emails, texts and phone calls and it was wonderful to see how many people were reached via this means and the support we received was truly uplifting. In September, we were delighted with a low number of cases in our province and the re-opening of many public spaces that we were able to return to in-person worship. We have been going strong now for the past couple of months and even with many restrictions in place, it is wonderful to come together once again.

We are still restricted however in what we can do and the types of gatherings we can have which has meant that our usual fall fundraising which brings in the majority of our budgeted income was unable to take place. We have come up with several new ways to fundraise this fall and we know that it is difficult to be constantly asking for donations and support, however that said, we truly appreciate the support you are able to give to your parish. Whatever you are able to give to the parish ministries here at St. John the Evangelist will be greatly appreciated and we ask that you keep our staff, ministries and the work of this church in your prayers as we go forward.

I give thanks for the privilege to journey alongside you for the past five years. It has been a rich blessing in my life to be with you and I will give thanks for this parish and its rich history as I move forward in life. At this point in the church's history, we must be open and welcome all people into our midst and celebrate along with them as they walk through life and be there to support them when they face times of trial.

I invite you to reach out and connect with me personally anytime you wish to do so. Do not hesitate to email me at [jolenepeters1@gmail.com](mailto:jolenepeters1@gmail.com), call me at 834-2336 or drop by the parish office.

I offer you this prayer for Advent.

*In this Advent of expectation draw us together in unity, that our praise and worship might echo in these walls and also through our lives. In this Advent of expectation draw us together in mission, that the hope within might be the song we sing, and the melody of our lives. In this Advent of expectation draw us together in service, that the path we follow might lead us from a stable to a glimpse of eternity. amen.*

With my every Blessings,

Reverend Jolene