

November 15, 2020 – At Home Worship

Last Sunday we enjoyed one of the most beautiful days of fine weather, and it was lovely to worship whether in-person together, or online and also enjoy the outdoors. Thanks be to God for blessing us with such beautiful weather, in November no less ☺ Last week we also began a bit of adult study, which we plan to continue in November and into December as follows (details for all studies are in the post-amble):

- Our online writing group began on Google Meet on Monday November 9th, and continues for Monday November 16th and 23rd at 7:00pm. Please email Avery, arobin17@mail.uoguelph.ca to join us.
- Our Bible study of the Gospel of Thomas on ZOOM was rescheduled to November 25th and December 2nd, 7:00pm. Please email Heide emrichheide@gmail.com to join this study.
- We plan for in-person Bible Study using the Daily Discipleship study resource to prepare for Advent: November 19th, November 26th and December 3rd – start time is 2.30 pm at Art Room at church.

With rising infection rates, many discern their best option is to worship at home. We continue to provide an at-home worship offering that is suited for “snail mail”, online and email delivery. This gives you the full freedom to determine your worship mode – a freedom we encourage you to exercise ☺ Your at-home pre-recorded service includes links for audio sermon and hymns prepared by Brad. On Sunday afternoon, following the in-person service, we hope to email to you a link to audio of the sermon as it was preached.

This week, we are additionally offering those of you at home who have internet access and a boatload of patience and grace, the option of joining us via zoom. Heide Emrich has set up a zoom meeting from her home; link is provided below in the post-amble. I will click on the link at 9.50 am from the sanctuary, and limited live access will be possible through this means. Those who are zooming in will need to mute their mics; it is also to be understood that this provision has not been quality tested for sound and we expect hitches. Our hope, in making this available is to explore the possibilities for providing live access to the in-person worship service. As with everything else having to do with technology in these unprecedented times, we are experimenting gently and require your grace and patience with the process.

This year, we will celebrate All Saints on the last Sunday of the liturgical year, November 22, 2020. If you have had a loved one die, whom you would like named in the celebration, please do provide their name to Lorre Calder or the church office by November 15 2020, 6:00pm (voicemail or email will work) to allow for preparation of worship material for November 22nd 2020. As our in-person gathering is a fraction of our membership and regular attendance, we will prepare a “remembering the saints” service by taking all the names we gather and including them in Sunday worship during the Hymn of the Day on November 22, 2020. We will also prepare a Youtube link which will include (such as you request and provide permission for), names and (where provided) photographs set to music played by Brad. We have also received sterile, stay in your spot, communion servings and will celebrate our first communion service since COVID on November 22nd. As many ELCIC churches have been doing, whether online or by telecast, we invite those at home to join in communion with their choice of communion elements – audio will be provided to guide you at home if you have internet access for November 22nd.

It will feel unusual to receive communion in this way, so today’s teachings are focusing on scriptures relating to our communion feast, to help us unpack the theological underpinnings of communing at home, or in our seats at church.

If you need to know how to attend in-person worship, please read the post-amble which follows this pre-amble! Please also check the post-amble for Adult Study offerings, and a zoom link for today’s service (the experiment of the week)! As always, if you need a phone call or distanced visit, please do reach out by email or phone: pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org or 519-653-4721 ... It is not my intention to neglect pastoral visitation ministry during this time, sometimes my shins just need a swift kick ☺

Have a blessing filled week, and please do be in touch if you have any queries around in-person worship or any other stuff!

- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.

Post-Amble Note on in-person worship requirements:

If you are thinking of attending worship in the weeks to come, please read through this page of notes carefully so you know what to expect when you come to church. Our approach at St Peter's is based on protocols taking every possible precaution which include these ... You will need to arrive early for the entry protocol, and come to the Church street accessible entrance, at which you will be asked four assessment questions by an outside Greeter. A face covering is required. These are the assessment questions, and a self-assessment is advisable at home:

1. Have you travelled outside of the province or country within the last 14 days?
2. Have you tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 14 days?
3. Have you been in contact with anyone that has exhibited symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 virus in the past 14 days?
4. Do you have any of the following symptoms that are unusual for you: fever, new cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, chills, headache, new loss of taste or smell?

If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, then you will be asked to return home. Otherwise, you will be allowed into the building, and an inside Greeter will check your temperature (if above 100°F or 37.8°C, you will be asked to return home) and ask you to sanitize your hands. You will be seated by an usher to ensure social distancing in the pew. Families will be seated together. Seating will be assigned from front to back in the sanctuary. All volunteer disciples also want to worship, so please arrive early to ensure seating can be completed in time for 10 am start of worship.

Adult Study Offerings this week:

Writing Group:

The things of these times have given us lots of food for thought, and sometimes it is hard to even pull a thread of thought and follow it through with all that is going on. Writing, whether journaling or for sharing, is a really good way to follow these threads of thought and even prayerfully reflect on the things we have experienced, and the things we anticipate.

Avery Robinson has agreed to be our technology host for an online meeting of a Writing Group. We plan for three Mondays in November: November 9th, 16th and 30th at 7pm, to gather on Google Meet. Our sessions will aim to be an hour long, and will include three small writing exercises:

- A journal writing exercise, where, provided with a reflective prompt, each participant receives some time to write their thoughts, experiences and feelings followed by a time for optional sharing. This first writing exercise looks back and at our current experience.
- A creative writing exercise, where, provided with a creative writing prompt, each participant receives some time to write a short creative piece, followed by a time for optional sharing. In our last session, we will have an online writing editor, Jacob, join us to offer some input to our written offerings.
- Finally, a journal writing exercise, where, provided with a reflective prompt, participants will write about something they are looking forward to in the future, and why. Again, time will be provided for optional sharing at the end.

All you need to join this class is to send your email request to Avery, arobin17@mail.uoguelph.ca to be included in the meet invitation. I will prepare the content, and Avery and I will co-facilitate.

A Taste of Thomas on Zoom:

Before COVID, our in-person Monday Bible Study was studying the Gospel of Thomas. This gospel was not included in the Bible, and gave us a good opportunity to consider the political and social context which framed what got included in the canonization that formed the Bible, and what got left out. By looking at

where there were close parallels between the Gospel of Thomas and Biblical material, and looking at where there were departures, we could imagine together the contexts for inclusion and exclusion of material.

The “Taste of Thomas” study will take a few of the Gospel of Thomas teachings and examine them in tension with the parallels from the Bible. Our discussion allows us to examine the whys of the differences between the canonical and extra canonical writing, as well as share our observations on meaning and nuance. If you have ever wondered about why some items are included in the Bible, and others are not, this study will feed your wonder!

With the help of technology, we are able to offer a small taste of the Gospel of Thomas study, which we will do over two Wednesday nights in November: November 25th and December 2nd at 7pm. Heide Emrich will host the Zoom meeting, and I will facilitate the teaching part. If you are interested in doing this study together, please contact me or Heide. (Heide’s email is emrichheide@gmail.com). If you do not have Zoom, but would like to join, get in touch ahead of time and we will try to organize for you to have print of the study material and the phone number for the call, so that you can dial in. Please invite friends from other contexts than church to join you – this is a study to be shared amongst believers and non-believers alike ☺

In-Person Daily Discipleship:

For many of us, meeting in person is still the preferred way, and the Art Room is set up for in-person gatherings of up to 10 people. Everyone inside our church building needs to wear a face covering for the entire duration of their time inside the building. I am not sure how many are interested in meeting for Bible Study with face coverings, but I want to make this offering available for those who would like to try this. Access to the church building will be at the Church Street Door, and I will be there at 2.15 pm on the listed days, to let folks in with the protocols in place, so that we can begin our study time for 2.30 pm.

We will use the ELCA Daily Discipleship study resource, and our dates are: November 19th, November 26th and December 3rd. Sarah Glinski, one of our newest members and a student from Seminary will be my co-facilitator.

As the room is not able to accommodate more than 10 people, please consider calling the church office to indicate your intention to join so we have an idea of numbers. This is not a requirement – just a strong recommendation ☺

Link for Zoom worship on Sunday:

Heide Emrich is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: St. Peter's Sunday Service

Time: Nov 15, 2020 09:50 AM America/Toronto

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81542653544?pwd=RzNvZy9CRENJWVZmM3FQOTVJdEVSUT09>

Meeting ID: 815 4265 3544

Passcode: 954615

Telephone:

Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location, long distance charges may apply):

Canada: +1 587 328 1099 or
 +1 647 374 4685 or
 +1 647 558 0588 or
 +1 778 907 2071 or
 +1 204 272 7920 or
 +1 438 809 7799

Please take a few moments of silence, prepare your heart, centre yourself for worship.

Prelude: Land acknowledgement with Brad's creative composition ☺

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9Zar8-GeUs>

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

Prayer of the Day: Holy God: All-knowing, ever-present and transcendent, through the mystery of Spirit, you are able to span all time and space, connecting us with all those who have gone ahead, and all those yet to come: in, with and through Jesus. We give thanks for the mystery of your power, taking comfort in your infinitude. Help us to trust in your accompaniment always. Amen.

The Lesson: Matthew 26:26-29.

During the meal, Jesus took and blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to his disciples:

"Take, eat. This is my body."

Taking the cup and thanking God, he gave it to them:

"Drink this, all of you. This is my blood, God's new covenant poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins. I'll not be drinking wine from this cup again until that new day when I'll drink with you in the kingdom of my Father." [The Message Translation]

This is the Gospel of Jesus. **C: Thanks be to God.** *

Gospel Acclamation: Stay With Us Text/Music: Farquharson/Klusmeier; featuring Bradley Moggach, piano

Click Here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_67Uu7hBsc

Tune: © 1988 Ron Klusmeier, Admin Hope Publishing Co. Carol Stream, IL, 60188

Text: 1983 Walter Farquharson, Admin Hope Publishing Co.;

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The Holy Gospel according to Luke 22:14-20.

C: Glory to you O Christ.

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. [NRSV]

This is the Gospel of our Lord: **Thanks be to Christ.**

Sermon (by Pastor Janaki): <https://youtu.be/f4AwUfV93X4>

A year ago, if someone had told me that we would be worshipping in such a variety of ways this Sunday, I would have thought it was impossible. Today, while some are gathered to worship in person, some are worshipping at home – either with the service content provided by us, or with "TV church". Still others have joined us by zoom today, and some may choose to join a livecast from home. Some will read their service which was mailed to them, others will go for a walk and pray or play their keyboards at home and sing. There are so many ways for us to give thanks and glorify God – and we are blessed to have these various means.

There are also many ways for us to eat and drink together. My sister in Jamaica and I have always been tea drinkers, and how we visit is with a bucket (not a cup, but a large mug) of tea. There is a tradition we have come to gain great comfort from: the teas is brewed to perfection, each of us adding milk and sugar to our taste, then we find a comfy chair, and the visit begins. Back in Jamaica, usually that would have been on the back porch in good weather (providing mosquitos were not too plentiful). Now that I live here, we still do the tea ritual when we need to re-connect: she makes tea at her house, I make tea at my house, and we connect using the telephone or the internet.

The point in these two examples is this: neither distance nor circumstances keeps us from celebrating our relationships with thanksgiving – whether that celebration is one of worshipping God, or whether that celebration is simply with a family member or friend. I am sure many of us can attest that surviving COVID lockdown would have been near impossible had we not been able to experience and celebrate connection somehow during that strange, still, and physically separated time.

Christian denominations have different theological understandings of how the communion meal connects us with God and with each other. In many denominations, the priest or pastor is understood to be the one whose words invoke the transformation of relatively normal grocery store items: juice or wine, bread or wafers into “something that connects us with God” ... I put “something that connects us with God” into [air] quotes because the range of beliefs is very different.

Romans Catholics for example believe in what is called “transubstantiation” – an actual transformation which happens with the priest’s prayers, or words of institution, in which the aforementioned normal grocery store items get converted into the actual body and blood of Christ. My high school years were at a Jesuit (so Roman Catholic) school, and I must have somehow inwardly digested (no pun intended) this theology, although I never partook of the meal ... when I came to Christ (or Christ came to me, depending on one’s perspective), at first I could not bring myself to partake of communion because it felt a bit cannibalistic – somehow I had connected with that transubstantiation understanding of the communion elements and eating the flesh and blood of Jesus just didn’t feel to me like an apt way to glorify God.

I attended adult Lutheran classes before I was baptized though, and after my baptism, I guess the Roman Catholic vise grip on my theological understanding of communion was broken, because, even without having this part specifically explained to me, I found myself able to share in the communion meal and not have that reaction. Perhaps it was because, in the process of joining the congregational community for learning, and in the presence of worship, I came to understand the Lutheran theology which gives room for mystery, and identifies that the presence of God’s Spirit works in, with and through the normal grocery store items to connect us in ways we do not understand, not only to GOD, but also with each other: the communion of saints, the life everlasting.

Still other denominations believe that communion is a “memorial meal” meaning the elements are consumed to remember what Jesus has done for us, rather than being an item of transformation. We all know remembering one who has died is a powerful tonic of encouragement, grounding and revival – so the memorial meal understanding of communion provides that power and comfort too.

Today’s two readings give us pretty much the summative recorded Biblical writing from Jesus about having communion. There are other writings in scripture, notably, St Paul in 1 Corinthians, and I reviewed the other writings carefully before opting to ground our learning today in just the Gospel teachings. The Gospel of Matthew reading draws to our attention not the instruction to do this as a means of remembering or connecting to Jesus, but draws to our attention that Jesus came for the forgiveness of all our sins. “poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins” – it does not specify a pouring out for believers, or baptized, or obedient followers ... but poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins.

The Gospel of Luke reading specifies doing this: breaking the bread, drinking the wine, in remembrance of Jesus. The Lukan rendition also reminds us of the covenantal presence, or the presence of God’s promise, God’s commitment to relationship with us, in the meal that is shared.

Layered on top of all of this comes a boatload of tradition, and of course, other writings in the Bible that claim instructional or narrative connection to the last supper: Jesus eats, for example, with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and they do not recognize him until he blesses the bread, breaks it and shares it. St Paul explains that we ought to partake of the meal worthily: Paul talks about discernment, judgment, prior self-examination and unity in 1 Corinthians 11, amongst other things.

Communion will mean different things to each of us. And I trust in Spirit's ability, in mystery, to connect with each of us, and to connect us with Jesus through the normal grocery store items. We have many traditions that articulate "how communion should be taken" – and I remember in seminary, taking my Lutheran Theology professor to task on the tradition of communion for the baptized only. Here are the basics I would encourage us to remember:

- God loves us, you, me, each of us, more than we could ever ask or imagine, and God wants us to know that love.
- Spirit is unlimited in capacity – to reveal knowledge and love, to remove barriers and blockages, to provide connection when we need it the most (even when we don't recognize that need within ourselves).
- Jesus' coming was a means of demonstrating the love and power of God who chooses to be amongst us in ordinary, mortal, dare I say grocery store ways ☺

So, if you have been fed by TV or internet communion, thanks be to God.

If you have been fed by the meal you shared with loved ones around a table, thanks be to God.

If you are hungry for church communion, thanks be to God for your hunger.

Let us focus on how God seeks to connect us through Jesus at every opportunity – even the normal grocery store opportunities, rather than placing obstacles of tradition or theology in the path of entering into God's offers for connection?

These little communion kits might not work well for you next week in church. Those of you worshipping at home might not have them. Normal grocery store items will do perfectly. If you prefer to bring elements: bread, crackers, juice, wine that you can more readily handle because absolutely these small communion kits require acute dexterity, bring what works for you next week, bring it to your seat and have it ready. If you are at home, bring it with you and have it ready when you sit for the service. Then, whether you are in person with us, or at home online, or at home reading, partake of the elements knowing that nothing, not distance, not time, not space, not tradition – nothing can separate you from the love of God in Jesus Christ, and allow the mystery of Spirit to minister to you through these simple items.

Amen.

Hymn of the Day: For the Fruit of All Creation ELW 679; Fred Pratt Green, Welsh Traditional, Bradley Moggach, Piano

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCleDqaJ4Lg>

Text: Fred Pratt Green; Tune: Welsh traditional; arr Ralph Vaughan Williams
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The main wording of the prayer below came from a Thanksgiving message sent out by the Interim Executive Director of the Cambridge Shelter Corporation, Anne Tinker, in an email to staff and volunteers. Anne's message was not worded as a prayer – but her words sounded prayerful and appropriate to me. It captured so well the many things we have to be thankful for, that, with some additional intercessions, edits and Anne's permission I share some of her words in our prayers today.

A Thanksgiving Prayer:

All-powerful God: You bless us in countless ways,

Thereby showing your authority, your grace, your mercy and your boundless love.

We are thankful for the many blessings you give us:

We are thankful that we can turn on a tap and have clean water to drink, shower, or wash clothes, when so many in the world do not.

We are thankful for food in our cupboards and in our refrigerators when so many go hungry.

We are thankful that with a flick of a switch we have light or heat when so many have neither.

We are thankful for roofs over our heads, warm beds to sleep in, and a place to call home when numbers of those experiencing homelessness are climbing everywhere.

We are thankful to be part of an organization that works to serve others and to make our little corner of the world a better place.

Holy God:

Help us to remember to respond to your generosity mindful that we are created in your image and likeness.

Help us to make love our pandemic of choice: make us vectors of infectious love.

Where these times sow fear and insecurity, help us to sow faith, hope and joy.

Make us your instruments of justice, grace and mercy.

Rid us of judgmental attitudes and replenish our reservoirs of compassion.

Help us to live safely; reveal to us new and creative ways to come together in spirit and in solidarity.

We pray that you would also keep us in good spirits, as we feel the colder weather coming,

And as we contend with the reality of rising infection rates ... please keep us in your care.

We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

While you listen to the offertory hymn, continue your prayers and consider how you may be an offering in the coming week.

Offertory: ELW 885 Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTzPCCw2h6M&feature=youtu.be>

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Offering Prayer

God of goodness and growth,

all creation is yours,

and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

Water and word, social distancing and hand-washing:

these are signs of your abundant grace.

Nourish us through these gifts,

that we might proclaim your steadfast love

in our communities and in the world,

through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn: Be Thou My Vision With Lyrics ELW 793; Text Irish; Tune Slane; Bradley Moggach, Organ

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2DkJKyKYN4>

Text: Irish, E. H. Huff, M. E. Byrne; Tune: Slane; Irish Traditional; Words and Music Public Domain
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Blessing:

May God bless us and keep us.

May the face of God shine upon us with grace and mercy.

May God look upon us with favor

and give us ✝ peace.

Amen.

Dismissal: Go in Peace, Go in Hope. *Thanks be to God.*

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