

October 25, 2020 – At Home Worship

Last week Sunday we had a respectably sized gathering for in-person worship. With rising infection rates, many discerned their best option was to worship at home, and we will continue to provide an at-home worship offering that is suited for mail, online and email delivery. This gives you the full freedom to assess your own context and determine how you would like to worship ☺ Today, your at home service includes a pre-recorded link to the sermon, as well as a number of hymns prepared by Brad. On Sunday afternoon, following the in-person service, we hope to email to you a recording of the sermon as it was preached.

The second recording is sent to you because preaching to a congregation is very different from preaching to a microphone – and if you want to hear the congregational preaching, not being in attendance should not stop you from accessing the recording of same. The word of God is indeed the living word, and unpacking it within the gathering always leads to nudges of Spirit that will change the way something is said, sometimes change the way examples are given, and overall change the experience from something I prepare in advance, to something Spirit enlivens in the moment. The in-person worship services will have live music, possibly soloists, and possibly slightly different hymnody than the email service will; this allows us to ensure the best quality recordings in the online delivery. Eventually we hope to livestream the service, either on YouTube, Facebook or some other streaming service. But for now, we are working with the gifts and energy levels available.

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. This past week, at least one worship gathering was identified as a source of outbreak (the news did not indicate where this worship gathering was). 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.

As always, if you need a phone call or distanced visits, 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.

I want to offer a word of thanks for those of you who have allowed us to use your photos, or who have offered the use of your photos in the creation of our music videos. It truly adds to our worshipping community and makes worship more of a 'group effort'. It's not too late to get in on the fun! Providing permissions are given, you may include photos that include people, not just scenery. If you have some photos you might like to send along, please be in touch with me by email, lorre.calder@sympatico.ca . We can arrange how best to co-ordinate access to your photos. Full credit will of course be given.

—Lorre Calder

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, your will for us is that we also would be Holy. Our sacredness is based on relationship: with you, with each other and with all creation. Your teachings remind us to put you in the centre of our lives, and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Help us in this journey of self-love, so that we do not mistake ego-centric, pride-filled ways for self-love. Help us to grow in self-love, so that we have a good measure of love to share with others. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Lesson: Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.'"

'You shall not do injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor show a preference for the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. You shall not go around as a gossip among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor [with slander or false testimony]; I am the Lord.'

'You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you may most certainly rebuke your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take revenge nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor (acquaintance, associate, companion) as yourself; I am the Lord.' [The Amplified Translation]

Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.** *

Reading Homework: 1 Thessalonians 2, Psalm 1

Gospel Acclamation: How Beautiful by G F Handel feat Julianne Bintakies & Barbara Burden

Click Here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rm9bAUffHK4>

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 22:34-40

C: Glory to you O Lord.

Now when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced (muzzled) the Sadducees, they gathered together. One of them, a lawyer [an expert in Mosaic Law], asked Jesus *a question*, to test Him: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" And Jesus replied to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for others].' The whole Law and the [writings of the] Prophets depend on these two commandments." [The Amplified Translation]

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

Sermon (by Pastor Janaki): Click Here: https://youtu.be/Rhz_b35w21I

During the past seven months, I have many a time met with those in our congregation who are what I consider “frontline workers” ... our teachers and ECE’s for example had a period of time in the late winter and spring, when their work was done mostly online. I remember one teacher telling me that she liked preparing lessons in this way because it provided the opportunity to tailor each lesson plan for the individual child: something which in-person classroom teaching to a group did not allow in the same way.

Someone else who works in a classroom setting described to me the in-person classroom experience since fall. It includes washing and sanitizing of learning objects sometimes a few times a day, washing tables and chairs, wearing goggles and a mask or a face shield and a mask, and of course dealing with the energies of children in this setting. But this educator also told me about a monkey named Moovlee. He is a cartoon monkey who leads small yoga sessions on YouTube, and I was told these videos are used in the kindergarten classroom to help the children come to calm and settle down, or even to help dispel “big emotions”¹.

I watched a few Moovlee videos, and as I watched this little brown cartoon monkey do these calming moves to calming music, I pictured a classroom full of masked kindergarten children with their masked and goggled teacher, doing these calming yoga moves to calming yoga music and my heart felt like it would burst:

- With admiration at the courage and love of our educators.
- With sadness for the generation of youngsters who will grow up masked and not touching.
- With wonder as I realized this is the sacred work of love.

Other frontline workers in our congregation include folks like Lorre, Bonnie Scott, Brad and all our worship leaders, all those who help with safe welcome to church on Sunday, all those who have helped behind the scenes to ensure that we have a safe worship setting in this context of COVID. From making calls to schedule volunteer disciples, to week over week ensuring that everyone receives a worship package by some means, we are all engaging in this sacred work of love (some of us while also doing non voluntary day jobs that serve the public too – like Lorre who has continued to work on the frontline since the beginning of the pandemic, and has not missed a Sunday of supporting our worship sharing). These are all sacred acts of love.

This small four letter word: LOVE gets a lot of airplay. In movies, on TV, on gift cards, in thousands of different ways that are promotional or marketing ploys, this four-letter word, LOVE gets all kinds of focus. But love in action, love being lived out is often far less sexy than the way big screen or Hallmark might portray it.

In order for any of us to keep practicing real love with others, we have to practice self-love. Another way to put this is: we have to keep our own buckets filled. We are able to give and serve others with compassion (as opposed to with grumpy passive aggressive reticence) when our own hearts are filled with love. This love comes in two ways:

- **Making time for a meaningful connection with God, so that the Source of everything can attend to us.** I put this one in bold because this is the first and foremost, as we hear in both the gospel reading and the Leviticus reading ... from both ends of the Bible so to speak, we are instructed to give God lots of room in our lives by loving God first with everything that we have.

¹ Calming Down After Big Emotions with Moovlee

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUG1Nhv037s&list=PLgSMIhBpFrcook04xeD4LyJVM0Y7BX6-R&index=4>

- Making room for ourselves (what I call self-love) ... this might include things like taking some down time for yourself (reading a book, napping, taking a bath, going for a walk, playing with a pet or working in the garden to name just a few).

If I were to use a plumbing analogy, I would say God's love is the source or the well to which we must remain connected. Self-love would be the piping that allows God's love to reach us so practicing good self-care and self-compassion keeps the plumbing nice and clear so that God can refill us.

Sometimes, the call to be a caregiver or an employee or a relative (brother, sister, daughter, son, wife, husband) – the call to serve someone else comes about as a matter of obligation or social or legal contract. I am thankful, for example to be here to worship today, and at the same time I am contractually bound as an employee of the church.

If I did “my job” without love today, it would hinder all of us in the collective practice of worship; I would be hindering the work of an unfolding Kingdom of God.

Likewise, if Alex did his job at Strassburger windows, or Luis did his job for the Catholic School Board, or Karl did his work with the Waterloo Region just out of contractual obligation and without love – then these brothers in Christ would be delivering on legal and social obligations, but actually hindering the Kingdom work of love: the work that Jesus invites us into with his very active love – a love that goes to the cross to die for us, making us all potential partners in this work of unfolding, unwrapping, unveiling the sacred Kingdom of God every day in our midst ... work that relies not only on our own abilities and energies, but work in which we are replenished: in, with and through Jesus in every moment of our work.

For you see, this work is not reserved for animated monkeys named Movelee who do yoga for classrooms!

For all of us: the educators, the frontline workers, for Bonnie Scott, Brad, Lorre, for Alex, Luis, Karl and I – if we do not attend to our own spiritual plumbing to ensure that we have unclogged and clear pathways for God to refill us **AND USE THEM REGULARLY** we will find ourselves working not for the purposes of loving our neighbours as ourselves (for there is no self-love in ignoring our own needs). Rather we will find ourselves working in ways that countermand the unfolding Kingdom of God.

If we do not have self-love, if we are not attending to ourselves in good ways, to keep good minds and hearts (which is not unlike weeding a garden, or washing dishes – you have to keep at it!) we cannot “love our neighbours as ourselves” because we are not loving ourselves.

Likewise, if we are not putting God first, we are not connected to the source which will always faithfully refill us when we are close to or running on fumes. Both things are necessary: connection to the Source, and attendance to our personal self-love plumbing. When these are in order, being wellsprings of living water, being people of replenishment in a world of tiredness and less-than-ideal-ness – being the hands and feet of Jesus becomes not only an easier task, but one that brings us joy rather than just empty, annoyed exhaustion.

Perhaps nothing before in all time has affected the entire planet in the way COVID has: bringing not only ill-health and danger, but an incredible opportunity for collective, community-exercised LOVE. As followers of Jesus, whose faith is based on the Old Testament traditions and laws, we are reminded today that the most important source is GOD ... and we are reminded that loving ourselves and God provides us with what is needed to love our neighbours. Hear and heed what the Word of God tells us. Amen.

Hymn of the Day: #659 Will You Let Me Be Your Servant

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

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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 – Lay Me Low Text: Shaker, adapted; Tune: Daniel Schwandt, Bradley Moggach, Vocal and Piano

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtOKV85Rk1w>

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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: ELW 885 Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTzPCCw2h6M&feature=youtu.be>

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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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