

Parish Update – March 27, 2020

Hello folks,

I pray that you are all well and surviving this anxious time with a measure of peace.

I'm writing to let you know that as of March 25, Archbishop Ron has **extended our closure of worship, programs and events for two months**. This means that **Holy Week and Easter will now be an online reality**. Watch the website and my emails for information about what will be online for Holy Week. It will be a pared down version of what we normally do, but we will provide something for your journey!

**Worship for Sunday, March 29** has been prepared using the Zoom platform with the participants speaking from their homes. We made this decision in light of the tightening regulations for the number of people who can gather in one place and to show compliance and leadership on social distancing. **You can access the service on Sunday by going to the parish website ([www.stjohnstruro.ca](http://www.stjohnstruro.ca)) and clicking on the web-cast button on the right hand side of the page**. Using electronic means of communication for worship has been a steep learning curve for the parish leadership, but God is good and we are getting more comfortable. Please bear with us!

The parish office remains closed. Messages left at the office will be returned as they are monitored remotely. The 2020 Committee wishes you to know that the current closure also means that the next up-coming event for the 2020 Celebration – **the Anniversary Tea has been cancelled for its original date of May 9**. The fate of many of our planned celebrations is up in the air. Stay tuned for further information TBA.

**We will not be producing a physical Easter letter** this year, for a host of reasons, not the least being the cost. There will be an email version, of course. Without the physical letter, there will be no Easter offering envelope. Easter is a significant offering time for the parish, usually producing a sizeable portion of our budget. **So, let me gently remind you of the need to keep the financial functioning of the parish in mind**. Though the White bequest means that our buildings will keep functioning, our weekly offerings pay all other ministry costs including salaries and outreach. We have not yet had to make any difficult decisions about either, but that may come in the near future if this closure is extended. We acknowledge that some of our households may experience a change in income during this time, but we ask that if possible, you could be keeping up your offerings. You may do this by dropping your envelope into the secure mail slot on the crypt door (between the church and hall) on the right, by using the parish website (press the green Giving symbol and you may donate through [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org)) or by PAR (pre-authorized remittance). If you are not on PAR and would like to join, our office administrator, Angela Burton is available by phone to get you registered at 902-671-2887. Thank you for your consideration of this need.

One of the very weird things about this shut-down is the change to how we have to do **pastoral ministry work**. I have been spending time emailing and texting our folks and have started taking the afternoons for phone ministry, beginning with those on the parish list who are alone and those whose health is compromised. It has been wonderful to spend that time with our people. There is a significant amount of loneliness and anxiety out there. I want you to know that several of our younger members have offered their services for shopping and delivery to those who are in need of that kind of help during this time. I have been offering that service to the people as I speak with them. If you know of anyone who is in need of that help, please contact me. Please also be mindful of those you may be able to help with a phone call. **A repeat reminder, the clergy no longer have access to an up-to-date listing of who is hospitalized.** If you wish us to contact your loved one in hospital, please call to let us know that they are there and we can call them through the patient switchboard. For now, that is as much as we are allowed. Visits for end-of-life care may be allowed, but require scheduling through the hospital authorities. Again, please call us.

I know that many of you have been reaching out to each other in many ways. I wouldn't expect anything less of St. John's people! I know that some folks began passing the peace by phone, text and email last Sunday after the worship. You each lead by example! We have also been thinking and brainstorming ways to make our contact during this time more effective and interactive. We're thinking that we will start asking, by email, a question each week to which we hope you will answer. All answers will be shared by email with our folks. It will be good to hear each other's thoughts and to see each other's names and to be reminded that our faith community is still out there! Stay tuned.

In closing, I pray you stay healthy and are kind to those around you. I pray you are making time for God in quietness and stillness. I pray that things are deepening for you and what is really life-giving and vital is becoming clearer for you. We will get through this with each other and with God's help!

Our theological student, Jane asked me to forward this link to you:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eve2y-P-Zjk&list=RDEve2y-P-Zjk&start\\_radio=1&t=0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eve2y-P-Zjk&list=RDEve2y-P-Zjk&start_radio=1&t=0)

With peace,

Rev. Lori



Further Updates – Covid-19  
March 20, 2020

Dear Parishioners:

Some developments since my last email:

- 1) We have recorded a webcast service of Morning Prayer with a homily for this coming Sunday, March 22. We are grateful to the staff of Mattatall-Varner Funeral home for their generous offer to host us and to create the web-cast free of charge to us and other local churches. This is the kind of community co-operation that will help us all to get through this crisis! **The webcast will be live at 8:00 a.m. Sunday morning and can be accessed at our parish website [www.stjohnstruro.ca](http://www.stjohnstruro.ca) or [www.mattatallvarnerfh.com](http://www.mattatallvarnerfh.com). If accessing through Mattatall-Varner's website directly, choose St. John's from the choices under Church Services on the left hand column.** It will be good to worship together! We hope to do this every Sunday as long as we are restricted from meeting.
- 2) Our office is now closed to the public. Angela will return to work on Monday, March 23, though she may do much of her work from home. The messages at the office will be checked regularly by both Angela and myself. For those of you not on PAR, offering envelopes may be deposited in the mail slot on the crypt door. Please be mindful that the expenses of the parish are on-going even though we cannot be together.
- 3) Clergy are no longer allowed access to the hospital for general visiting. No further lists of patients are being produced for spiritual care providers, so we will have no access to information about who is in hospital. If you have a loved one who becomes hospitalized, please call the parish office (897-0566) or my home (895-3534) so that we can pray for your family member and if they have a phone, we can call the patient switchboard to speak with them. We have been told that clergy will only be allowed to visit in extreme or palliative cases and then only at the request of the family. So you will have to be pro-active for your loved ones! Stay tuned as these rules change nearly every day.
- 4) Home visits by the clergy are still an option, though we won't be doing any casual visits in order to maintain social distancing. Visits for important pastoral concerns can still happen as long as you are willing and feel the need. Please call the office to arrange.
- 5) The Community Dinner for March 28 is cancelled as is our Friday morning food gift card ministry until further notice. We have made this decision out of a concern for our volunteers and for the difficulties related to take-out meals and the restrictions on gathering even small groups to do the preparation. As part of our on-going commitment to the homeless and working poor in our community, a donation will be made from the rector's Discretionary Fund to the Food Bank which is still operational. All food already left at the church for the Community Dinner will also be donated. We

are attempting to contact Hub House as well about their status and may make a donation there as well in the coming days.

6) Some other spiritual resources you might wish to check out:

The World Community of Christian Meditation (of which St. John's is a member) is offering a mediation series called Contemplative Path through the Crisis at [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org). Thanks to Diane Yetman for passing this on!

The folks at **Lent Madness** offer a link to Forward Movement Publications at [www.prayer.forwardmovement.org](http://www.prayer.forwardmovement.org) for free daily morning and evening prayer resources and a daily meditation. These are produced by the Episcopal Church in the US.

I continue to pray for all of you, that you are safe, contented and filled with trust in God. Please look after yourselves and your loved ones and don't forget your neighbours. If you can help anyone while maintaining social distance, please do so. Our AST student, Jane Magrath sent this quote to me this week. It bears thinking about:

*Many years ago, a student asked the anthropologist Margaret Mead what she considered to be the first sign of civilization in a culture. The student expected Mead to talk about hooks, clay pots or whetstones. But she didn't. Mead said that the first sign of civilization in an ancient culture was a femur (thigh bone) that had healed from a break. Mead explained that in the animal kingdom, if you break your leg, you die. You can't run from danger, go to the river to drink water or hunt for food – injured animals and humans become fresh meat for predators. No animal survives a broken leg long enough for the bone to heal. A broken femur that healed is evidence that someone cared for the injured, treated the wound, took the person to safety and cared for them until they recovered. Helping someone through difficulty is where civilization begins, said Mead.*

Jesus drew folks together around him and taught them the value of having community together in him. We have much to offer to the wider society in this time of crisis. May we will draw from the resources of the Spirit and find courage to be there for others.

Peace,  
Rev. Lori



March 17, 2020

To all of our beloved parishioners,

I'm writing to let you know that all worship and programming at St. John's is suspended until at least April 3. Archbishop Ron Cutler made this announcement yesterday and he will revisit it by April 3 to let us know what we should be doing for Holy Week and Easter.

As a result, there will be no regular worship, meetings or programs happening until further notice. It is my hope to have a worship resource featuring a Morning Prayer service with a homily available on our website for each Sunday that we cannot gather. It may be a video or just text – but either way, there will be something posted for us to join together in - from the safety of our homes.

This week March 16-22, our office administrator, Angela Burton is off on vacation. I am still working and checking the office answering machine remotely when I am not in the office. As usual, you can call me at home (902-895-3534) if you have an emergency. So far, I am still able to visit hospital and to do at home visits if you need me. We are not permitted in nursing home facilities at this time.

Choir practice, meditation and Lectionary Lunch are suspended for now. Stone Soup is cancelled for March 23. We are hoping that a modified and scaled back Community Dinner (March 28) may still be able to happen on a take-out basis. But this remains to be seen. Those who signed up to bring food and volunteer for that event are no longer required to do so.

I know that this is a time of anxiety and upheaval. We continue to trust that God is with us. God moves us toward our neighbours in a spirit of sharing and helping even though for a time we must remain socially isolated. Reach out where you can and help your neighbours – even phone call or an errand run and goods passed through the door can be encouraging to those who need us! It is important to continue to find time for prayer and reflection and to spend time with the sacred scriptures. It is a blessing that this year's Lent resource [#Live Lent – Care for Creation](#) has been a take-home one. I hope you will continue to follow it and to work with its wisdom. Lent Madness is also a wonderful online community to keep us connected. Watch our parish website, [stjohnstruro.ca](http://stjohnstruro.ca) for more resources.

Gordon West has sent this beautiful prayer written by an Italian priest:

### **Midwives of the Soul**

Lockdown.

Yes there is fear.

Yes there is isolation.

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,

they say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise  
you can hear the birds again.

They say that just after a few weeks of quiet  
the sky is no longer thick with fumes,  
but blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi  
people are singing to each other across the empty squares,  
keeping their windows open so that those who are alone may  
hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the west of Ireland  
Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know is spreading flyers with her  
number through the neighbourhood,  
so that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, and Temples, are  
preparing to welcome and shelter the homeless, the sick, the  
weary.

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting.  
All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a  
new way.

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality.  
To how big we really are.  
To how little control we really have.  
To what really matters.  
To love.

So we pray and we remember yes there is fear,  
but there does not need to be hate.

Yes there is isolation,  
but there does not have to be loneliness.

Yes, there is panic buying,  
but there does not have to be meanness.

Yes there is sickness,  
but there does not have to be disease of the soul.

Yes there is even death,  
but there can always be a rebirth of love.

Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.  
Today, breathe.

Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic.  
The birds are singing again.  
The sky is clearing.  
Spring is coming,  
and we are always encompassed by love.

Open the windows of your soul,  
and though you may not be able  
to touch across the empty square,  
Sing.

***Fr. Richard Henderick, OFM***  
***March 13, 2020***

Please continue to pray for our public health officials, governments, health care workers, clergy and others on the front lines of this pandemic. Pray for those in research searching for a control or cure. Pray for those whose lives are impacted economically by this virus and for those whose mental health is frail as they try to cope with fear and isolation. Take care of yourself and your loved ones and take all precautions to remain healthy.

Archbishop Ron has sent this prayer to us for use in a time of national distress:

**Eternal God, amid all the turmoil and changes of the world, your love is steadfast and your strength never fails. In this time of danger and trouble, be to us a sure guardian and rock of defence. Guide the leaders of our nation with your wisdom, comfort those in sickness and distress, and grant us courage and hope to face the future, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen**

In God's peace,

Rev. Lori

**\*Please pass this message on to any parishioners you know who do not have email.**