

August 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ;

It has been 20 weeks since we last worshipped together in person. In some ways it feels like a lifetime ago and in other ways it seems like yesterday.

The world had changed a great deal in the last 19 weeks and continues to change. Wearing a mask has become a common place occurrence for many of us. I find myself double-checking I have a mask in my purse before I go out and I have a spare one in my car in case of emergency.

I'm very mindful of where I put my keys when I'm out. I'm very mindful of where I put my hands and find myself, after sanitizing my hands of holding them in a prayer pose to ensure I don't touch things I'm not supposed to. I think, in the past five months, I've touched my face more than I have in the past five years.

There are many things I miss...one of the biggest being seeing all of you. While I do see many of you through our weekly Zoom Worship, it's not the same as being able to hold your hand or stand beside you and give you a hug.

This letter contains good news and some challenging news...please bear with me.

The good news is...our Re-Opening plan is now in the hands of the Diocese of Kootenay and the Pacific Mountain Region. We have requested a 'soft opening' as of Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup> of September. What this would mean is as of Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup> of September we would be able to allow parishioners without access to technology, to attend at Knox United Church, every Sunday at 10:00 am while Reverend Andrea is broadcasting the service through Zoom.

Each parishioner will receive a copy of the Worship Notes so they can follow along with the service. However, there will not be Eucharist or Communion, and there will not be any Congregational singing. A full list of protocols is included in this package.

It would also mean that every Wednesday, from the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, at 10:00 am parishioners will be able to Worship at Christ Church. This will be a no-technology service to whom all are welcome to attend. The service will be printed and left at the pews where parishioner's may sit.

Please know, **we do not yet have permission to re-open**. Once we have received permission, we will be in touch and you will receive a full re-opening protocol package. While it may not be what we were all hoping for, it is the best we can do now, in order to keep everyone as safe as we can.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Church in Corinth says "but God has so arranged the body, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it". (*1 Corinthians 12.24-26, NRSV*)

In other words, we need each other. Just as the eye needs the ear, the finger cannot be the stomach. We each have our unique identities and we cannot be part of the body [of Christ] without each other. We need to remove the word "normal" from our vocabulary. We are not looking at "a new normal". What we are looking at is a gradual move forward into a previously unexplored way of worship. The way things were back in March, will not be realised again for a very long time.

So, let us focus on our ability to come together as we feel able, comfortable and safe to do so. Let us continue to meet online, as we feel able, comfortable and safe to do so. I have been overwhelmed with the community that has grown together online. With attendees from the Elk Valley as well as other parts of British Columbia, Ontario, Florida, Montana and even, occasionally, England, we have become an online family... dare I say, an online body!

The challenging news is that although we were hoping to be back to our buildings straight away, it's going to take some time as we monitor the situation with COVID-19 in our province. If the provincial authorities roll back opening, we will be following suit. Our primary responsibility is to keep everyone as safe as possible.

A couple of exciting things that are happening:

**Sunday 30 August** we will be celebrating our First Anniversary of Shared Ministry together. A service will be held online at 10:00 am. This will be our opportunity to come together and share in a special 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday service. We will renew our Covenantal Promises made by us last September.

**Thursday 24 to Sunday 27 September** will be Kootenay Faith Fest where folks from around the Kootenays will come together online for a time of Worship, conversation, virtual gathering with Knox United Fernie as the host Church. There will be a fabulous **Worship Service on Sunday 27 September at 11:00 am MDT** which will be open to everyone, whether you attend KFF or not! Reverend Andrea will be the Celebrant as Fernie is the host and is looking forward to uplifting and celebratory worship.

If you want to discuss any of the news contained in this letter I will be happy to chat with you. Please note I will be on Staycation/Sabbath from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of August. Thank you to everyone for your prayers and thoughts. I'm sorry I haven't been able to speak with each of you individually. Please be assured you have been in my thoughts and prayers as we move through this time of dismay and wonder.

A phrase I've been using often lately, is we are walking on a path as we pave it. In other words, we've never been here before and we might not be exactly sure where we're going, yet with God's love and guidance, and each other, the journey will be equally as important as the destination.

Your servant,

*Andrea+*

