

The Covenanter

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An anyone with a kid – or who remembers being a kid – knows that the weeks leading up to Christmas are dominated by one thing: waiting. Counting down the weeks. Counting down the sleeps. Waiting for Christmas to arrive. In the Church, these weeks before Christmas are also about waiting – waiting for the day when once again we will celebrate the coming of the One who gives us hope.

This year it may seem as though we've been in Advent for months, maybe even since March. This has been a year of so much waiting – waiting for restrictions to lift, waiting for a vaccine to be ready, waiting to see what happens next. 2020 has been a year of Advent. There are two things about Advent we need to remember though. First, even if it does involve waiting (even difficult and sometimes painful waiting), the waiting of Advent isn't meant to be passive. Another word that we associate with this time is "preparation".

This year, some of the preparation we have to do may be very different than in other years. Perhaps we're not decorating to the same extent because we can't have company over. Perhaps the gift shopping will be reduced, or done all on-line, because family gatherings may be "virtual" or simply have to wait.

Yet maybe that means there's room this year for more of a different kind of preparation. Call it "spiritual preparation". Maybe these days of waiting are an invitation to renew or expand your devotional life – to spend more time with the Bible, being reminded that God has intervened in this world in startling and history-changing ways. Or maybe you can spend more time in prayer. As one of the saints of St. Andrew's used to tell me regularly, even when you can do nothing else, you can still pray! And there is so much that we could be praying about! Or put on some Christmas music – not about Rudolf or Frosty, but about the One who gives this holiday both its meaning and its name. Be reminded of that holy night – a night which we can still celebrate, and which still matters, even if we can't be together. Perhaps it's possible to

see the waiting that we're doing this year as a gift rather than a burden – an “unprecedented” chance to really focus on the Saviour's birth.

The second thing about Advent we need to remember is that it does eventually end. Eventually there are no more sleeps to count down. Eventually we'll be able to again gather as family, as friends, as the Body of Christ. Eventually a vaccine will be available. Eventually the kingdom will come. All those “eventuallys” remind us that, in the midst of life, there is always waiting to be done – until that final day when there isn't! *The day when, as the Bible puts it, Jesus will be all in all.*

Waiting is tough, there's no denying that. But a new day is coming! That's something for us to hold onto. And, in this long Advent of 2020, it's something for us to remind each other of -- so that we do not lose heart. Jesus said “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.” That trust is what allows us to wait in hope!

May you experience that hope this Christmas!

Duncan and Monica



“The Longest Night of the Year” Service 2020



The time of joy and expectation that accompanies the Christmas season is sometimes overshadowed by sadness due to the deaths of family members and friends. This year in particular, many people have been touched by illness and death and are grieving the loss of loved ones. Some people have experienced other significant losses too as a result of the pandemic.

This year we are planning to have a worship service for those who are grieving losses at Christmas. As we cannot meet in person in the sanctuary, this will be a virtual service on-line. There will be a short service of prayer, scripture reading, music, and a meditation. We will also have some time set aside for private reflection and prayer. You can participate in this service from the comfort of your own home.

The “Longest Night of the Year Service” will be pre-recorded and posted on-line **on Monday, Dec. 21st at 7 pm**. It will also be available for viewing at a later date. We encourage you to reach out to invite family, friends, and neighbours who may be encouraged by participating in a service of remembrance this Christmas season. It’s our prayer that this service will be a blessing to many. The service will be posted on our Facebook page as well as on the website www.standrewsscarborough.com.

Pastor Duncan and Pastor Monica

Stewardship

Firstly, thank you for your financial support of St. Andrew's through a challenging year impacted by Covid 19.

Church services early in the year followed the traditional way but the first shutdown caused transitioning into recorded and then live streaming and now back to recorded services. We are very fortunate to have a "First Rate Tech. Team" that swiftly accommodated this way of transmitting services. Many thanks!

In fact, the church has unexpectedly found a way for attracting new worshippers through this technology. Also, an expansion of ways to give financially now includes Electronic Transfers in addition to our PAR programme and envelope offerings. The Manse mailbox has been well used during this time.

As of the end of October, 2020, General Offerings indicate a shortfall of nearly \$9,000 against General Expenses. While this deficit has been eliminated by other income plus an allocation from the Van Renssen Trust for Church Ministry Expansion, the ideal position would be a surplus.

Accordingly, at the Church's Congregational Budget Meeting on December 1, 2020, the Board of Managers presented a proposal for the year 2021 which was approved, resulting in a 1% decrease over the 2020 Budget.

Kindly consider prayerfully your regular offerings for the year 2021, using any of the various methods of giving to sustain our growing Church Family and Ministry.

In these very uncertain times, we trust in our Sovereign God who remains the same yesterday, today and forever.

Yours in Christ,

Alan Leach

Cemetery Update

Many community and church members took the opportunity of a beautiful summer to stroll through the cemetery. A safe and peaceful place. You wouldn't think that much happens in the cemetery from month to month, but it is actually an active and interesting place behind the scenes. Your cemetery trustees are a busy lot! We take seriously the task of maintaining the cemetery, keeping good records, and honouring those who have been buried and their loved ones.

Some interesting cemetery facts:

- We have records of 1700 burials!
- The first 4 burials occurred between 1817- 1819 and were Thomsons.
- Right in the middle of the cemetery was the approximate location of the first frame church erected in 1819.
- There is a gravestone shaped like a tree trunk in the cemetery
- The sextons house was built in 1883.

If you have walked through the cemetery recently, you will note the challenge with erosion of lands abutting Thomson Memorial Park. Although there is a fence along the bottom of the hill, most of the hill is owned by the city. We do however own a triangle of Cemetery land located down the hill in the southwest corner. Some of our monuments and burials are at risk of migrating down the slope in this area.

Over the past few years, the trustees have been actively engaged with the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority and the Bereavement Association of Ontario to come up with a solution. The lands were surveyed, archeologists and engineers assessed the site, and a plan for installing a retaining wall in the southwest corner was recommended. The TRCA is currently in the design approval phase, and surveyors were on site on Dec 2/20 to map out where the wall will go. The construction will impact several grave sites and we will be contacting known family members about the process. The TRCA and the cemetery are sharing costs for this construction process which will most likely not begin until the latter part of 2021.

Another project which we are undertaking is the transition of 200 years of cemetery records to a combination of paper and digital records. We would like to update our contact information. If you or your family have endowment rights or have purchased the rights to a plot, please help us to keep our contact information current by dropping us an email via office@standrewsscarborough.ca or leaving a note at the church.

Thanks!

Your St Andrews Cemetery Trustees

Women's Afternoon Group Update

Al though we haven't had a chance to meet since February, I thought it would be nice, to have a little update. I am hoping we will be able to start getting together in January or February of 2021, either in person or on Zoom, (a work in progress).

Our two meetings in 2020, January, planning and February a little more planning with distributions of donations.

Donations were sent to Evangel Hall, Kirushanthan (Cricket) to help in his educational pursuits, Sleeping Children Around the World (in Jim and Rosalind names). to World Vision for a child we sponsor, also St. Andrew's Church General Funds.

I Pray everyone is Healthy and keeping Safe

Carol Dabene,

Chairperson Afternoon Group.

Congregational Emergency Assistance Fund

At this time of year we all find ourselves confronted by many worthy causes.

However, we would like to remind the people of St. Andrew's that, if things are especially tight for you this year, especially due to the effects of the pandemic, help is available.

The people of St. Andrew's have generously contributed to an emergency assistance fund which allows the pastors to confidentially make help available where it's needed. There are limits to how much help can be offered, but the money available could assist with an unpaid utility bill, the need for transit, or some help with the week's groceries.

Please don't hesitate to approach either Pastor Duncan or Pastor Monica for more information.

MUSIC NOTES 🎵 🎶 🎵

It's been quite a crazy time for everyone. I hope you are able to see and/or listen to the on-line services. Ken Campbell, Eric Motton, and Mark Daly have spent thousands of hours recording and then behind the scenes in preparation. Unable to meet as a choir since mid-March, we have sung in solos, duets, trios, and quartets hymns and special music recording in the sanctuary. We were able to have one reduced bell choir September to mid-October, masked and well-spaced. The praise team worked together in the fall to 'bank' songs for upcoming services. Bandlab for the praise team March to August, tablet submissions by Helen and Pascal, what a learning curve!

I hope choir and praise team members are practising at home with 'siren' and 'humming' warm-ups and singing along to the service music, and bell ringers playing cutlery for bell dexterity. We hope and pray that we can meet again in 2021 as in-person musical groups and congregation at St. Andrew's.

Keep in touch by telephone, email, post, access services on-line, however you are able -- we are a wonderful church family -- Merry Christmas!

Best wishes for good health, friends, family and faith



Helen

