

March 21, 2020

Dear Ascension Members,

The Executive Team of Church of the Ascension prays for your good health – both physically and mentally – as the world continues to face the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and the isolation that is necessary to fight it.

We are committed to keeping you up to date with the information about our church and the Diocese of Huron. You will be receiving letters like this one on a regular basis.

Worship Services

Sunday worship services will continue to be recorded and uploaded to Ascension's Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/102383728728/>) and YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_tB27TSdIE3lerNvZwvMvQ). The format may change as the virus progresses, but we believe this weekly connection is important to our congregational life.

Our parish administrator, Elisabeth Geertsma, is continuing to send out by email the weekly bulletin. It will contain Morning Prayer with updated readings and prayers and announcements. (Elisabeth will also be phoning parishioners for whom we do not have email to provide them with information here.)

Our music director Alex Baerg has been recording church music to be posted on the Facebook group to keep our spirits up.

Pastoral Care Guidelines

Bishop Todd Townshend has issued new guidelines for clergy and lay people doing pastoral care during the pandemic. The guidelines include:

- Keep in-person visits to parishioners and others in need to those most in need of care and compassion, where the presence of a minister is essential, for instance, anointing a gravely ill person and/or to comfort the dying.
- In-person pastoral visits should not be undertaken to people who are self-isolating or to those who have been infected by COVID-19.
- Pastoral visiting teams should now make their visits by phone.
- Weddings and funerals should be postponed until further notice. In extraordinary circumstances, permission may be sought from the bishop to conduct a service for which the extraordinary pastoral circumstances are such that postponing the service is

not possible. If permission is granted, such services are to be held in private and in such a way as the number of those gathered is kept as small as possible.

Executive Archdeacon Tanya Phibbs notes: "This will be hard for the people we serve and for us as pastoral care providers, but it is necessary." If you have any concerns about these guidelines, please contact Rev. Canon June Hough at 226-448-3790 or junehough@rogers.com.

The full guidelines can be found on the Diocese of Huron's new COVID-19 Resource Hub at <https://diohuron.org/covid-19-resource-hub/>. By the way, the hub includes other information you may be interested in, including messages from bishops, reschedulings, and links to public health authorities.

Easter

The Anglican bishops in Ontario intend to review their decision to suspend all public worship services on April 8, which is the Wednesday before Easter. While the Executive Team has no advance insight into their decision, we look at the increasing restrictions that governments and health authorities have been placing on everyone and think it is unlikely we will be back for public worship by Easter. It may be time to prepare yourself mentally and spiritually for this possibility.

Rev. June is already thinking ahead to what can be offered for services during Holy Week. And there will be an Easter letter sent out by mail and email.

Finances

Making a financial appeal is a tricky balancing act at the best of times for church leaders. Now, with the country's financial situation as it is, it's like we're doing it without a safety net. However, here we go:

Most of the expenses of the church are continuing, with only small savings in utilities, so your church continues to need your financial support. Thank you to those who dropped off their envelope donation at the church during the week.

There are several ways you can give without leaving your home:

- You can sign up for pre-authorized givings. Contact our church treasurer, Bill McKinstry, at either 226-224-0222 or mck728@mac.com and he will guide you through the process.
- You can mail your donation (include your donation envelope, please) to the church:
Church of the Ascension
2060 Dundas St.
London, ON

N5V 1R2

- If you bank online, you can make an Interac transfer to the church by directing it to office@ascensionlondon.com. If a message space is available, include your collection envelope number.
- If you would like someone to pick up your collection envelope, contact Bill.

Youth Opportunities Unlimited

On Thursday, the weekly email from office included an invitation to assist Youth Opportunities Unlimited with furnishing and stocking its new shelter for homeless youth on Clarke Road.

If you are bringing items to the church, you will not be allowed in the building. Please leave them at the door and wave through the office window to Elisabeth or press the door buzzer button. Elisabeth will come out later to bring the items in. This is done for your safety and hers. Elisabeth is able to work safely at the office for now only because she is in contact with a very small number of people there.

As well, if more than one of you arrives at the same time with a donation, keep a suitable social distance of six feet apart.

Conclusion

The Psalm for this Sunday (March 22) is the famous 23rd Psalm. It speaks directly to our situation today:

“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil because You are with me.”

With you in Christ,

Executive Team

Rev. Canon June Hough

Churchwardens Russ Braley and Mary Grant

Deputy Churchwardens Sandra Coulson and Steve Holmes

Treasurer Bill McKinstry