



GEORGE STREET UNITED CHURCH



25 Buchanan Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 0A4

The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

1 John 4: 21

28 May 2020

To the Scattered Saints of the George Street Pastoral Charge:

Grace and peace to you in the midst of your isolation.

By now most of you have heard that my appointment to George Street United Church comes to an end on June 30, 2020. This is good news. It means that my time here as a placeholder comes to an end and George Street United Church can begin a long and productive ministry with their new minister. Beginning on July 1, 2020, I am here indefinitely—with all of you. So that means that the congregation of George Street United Church is well on their way to living out their most recent vision of who they believe themselves called to be in this corner of God's vineyard.

The celebration, however, is going to go on hold for a bit. We can still be happy about that if we are so inclined. I'm happy about it.

With that in mind, here is what we know about returning to the Church building for worship. The province's graduated alert levels mentions worship opening in Alert Level 2, though they have yet to tell us what the guidelines for that will be. First Dawn Eastern Edge Region (formerly Newfoundland and Labrador Conference) has provided some guidelines as well. Without going into what guidelines ask for in this letter, let me just offer that worship in Alert Level 2 will not look anything at all like worship pre-pandemic. Some of our most cherished worship practices, such as passing the peace and congregational singing represent the greatest threat for the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Do not expect to see them return as soon as we are able to return to the sanctuary together. We will be able to be together so long as we keep our distance from one another.



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This is going to be difficult.

This is going to be necessary.

It is with all of this in mind that I chose the text from 1 John 4: 21. It reminds us that if we truly want to love God we are going to have to learn how to love our brothers and our sisters first. Knowing that what we miss and what we desire can represent a very real threat to our more vulnerable brothers and sisters means that we will have to do without for a little while longer.

I wish that we could be more clear about what to expect from our communal worship moving forward. I also wish that public health would be a little more clear, moving forward, about what it expects from our communal worship. While we may not know what is going to be allowed and when we will know that, we are called by our Lord Jesus Christ to love one another. Loving one another is as good a place as any for us to begin.

So, as we seek to begin again let us be mindful of the call to love one another in this new place we find ourselves: in our (soon) new pastoral relationship, with our (still very) new structure and a new plan to articulate the core mission of George Street United Church in the context of our wider community. Let us love one another and our neighbour as Christ first loved us.

If we can manage that, everything else will be a breeze.

Remember, we are not alone. We live in God's world.

Your Servant in Christ Jesus,

Reverend John Maich