



Pastoral Letter - August 27 2017

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. The commandment we have from him (Jesus) is this, those who love God must love their brothers and sisters. 1 John 4:16b, 21

This fall, we set out on a journey into uncharted territory. To borrow Brian McLaren's term, *we make the road by walking together with God*. As we walk, we will be hearing the story of the Exodus, when the Israelites travel with God and Moses from Egypt, through the wilderness, and on to the land of promise.

Egypt has been their home for over 400 years. The people went there in the time of Joseph to survive a famine. They have prospered in the Land of Goshen but now things have changed so much it's time to leave. By the grace of God, the people journey through the wilderness, with a stop at Sinai to get their set of rules for life with God, and then on to the land of promise.

St. Paul's has been the Anglican church in Almonte for more than 150 years, and it has served folks well. But now things have changed in the world around us and, if we want to continue to be an affective presence in this town, we need to become a church of the 21st century. So, we are on the move. The good news is that we don't have to change our address to make this journey and we have the luxury of time to consider what we need to carry with us as we continue our walk into this new way of being.

The Israelites had Moses and the Sinai commandments. We have the guidance and teachings of Jesus. Brian McLaren refers to our journey as The Great Spiritual Migration. Our focus will be on living the way of Jesus, which is the way of love. To be clear, this is not just some warm and fuzzy feeling of niceness. Agapeic love is hard work. It is an unconditional concern for the well being of all creation. It's hard work and it holds us accountable for our words and actions.

Agapeic love is at the heart and soul of the Hebrew Scriptures and it is the prime directive of Jesus to his disciples - which is why we will be adding the Shema (Hear O Israel) to our 10:30 am services (it's never left the BCP service).

Most people seeking a spiritual home today are looking for safe, welcoming, affirming, nurturing, loving communities. We have so much to offer here at St. Paul's: a rich diversity of music and worship, opportunities to learn and grow and put our faith into action, and a beautiful setting to inspire us all.

Henry Ward Beecher, a 19th century social activist and protestant clergyman, said that, *every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it with the handle of anxiety or the handle of faith*. It is my prayer that we can take hold of our tomorrow with the trinitarian handle of faith, hope and love, then work together for the common good.

As we journey together with God to this new land of promise, may our minds be open to the teachings of Jesus and his call to love be written on our hearts. May we lovingly support one another as we walk along, and may we never lose sight of *'God's lamplighting spirit that is dancing the way, through dark into dawning, from night into day'* (Paraphrase of a Bangalore Litany

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Blessings, pat

FALL SERVICES: Starting September 3, our service times shift to **8:30 am** (BCP spoken) and **10:30 am** (Eucharist with music) **Please see the posted service calendar for details.**

The Choir, Organ and Praise Team return on Sunday, September 10 at 10:30 am.

In general, both praise team and choir / organ music will be at all the regular services (exceptions include services like Evensong, Christmas Eve, and any midweek services). Occasionally, they we may be joined by other musicians.

We will have an opportunity to tweak the 10:30 am is service at the end of October. At the beginning of December, we will be inviting feedback **before** making any decisions about our way forward in January.

When we worship together, we sometimes allow ourselves to get distracted by the different instruments or other people's way of praising. No one is going to be asked to 'dance in aisles' or do anything that makes them uncomfortable. At the same time, those who wish to raise their hands in praise can feel free to do so. I would strongly encourage us all to keep an open heart and mind **and** be mindful of those around us.

WHAT WILL THE SERVICES LOOK LIKE?

Processions / Gospel Processions / Recessions: For now, these will be limited to feast days and special occasions like Thanksgiving, Remembrance Sunday, Evensong and Christmas Eve. The choir will decide when and if they want to wear gowns.

Readings: There will be two readings and the gospel. The Psalm may be the second reading if it is a better fit to theme.

Service Music: We will sing the Agnes Dei (Lamb of God) and This is the Body of Christ each Sunday. The Lord's Prayer will be sung on the first Sunday of the month starting in October. Final doxology (Glory to God, whose power ...) will be sung on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays.

For all other details, please see the enclosed / attached schedule

SYRIAN FAMILY UPDATE

Our family are now through their final security checks and may arrive any day now. Thank you to everyone who stepped up to help them pay the recently imposed 'exit tax' from Lebanon. People who have been living in refugee camps simply don't have a spare \$1000 U.S. laying around and the family is deeply appreciative of your help.

NEW FORMAT FOR 4th WEDNESDAY SERVICE:

Beginning at 7:30 pm, Wednesday, September 27 and every 4th Wednesday there will be a simple Iona evening service with prayers for Justice and Peace and Healing.

THE 5 MARKS OF MISSION OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH:

- to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God
- to teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- to respond to human need by loving service
- to seek to transform the unjust structures of society
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.