

Pastoral Letter, April 17th

Dear Friends,

Our “Zoom Team” as I have begun calling them take time each week to review the service and gathering for the previous Sunday. In this case it was our live Easter Service. This was the first time we tried to do the service without recording it in advance. One of the things that pleased us on Sunday was the growing number of participants. Although not everyone is able to join us using the camera on their computer, tablet or phone we are able to include those who can only participate by telephone. And so while we cannot see them we can hear them and they can hear us.

You may be interested to know that on Sunday we had 26 connections in all but when we take into account couples and families we believe we had the equivalent of a normal good Sunday attendance. Now, one of the added benefits of using the internet is that we can include people who would not be able to attend church even if we did not have the current restrictions in place. And that means that once this is all over- and it will be over at some point- we will have learned how to reach those who would not have been able to attend for various other reasons.

It is also becoming clearer that we are doing something significantly different than others who are doing on-line worship. If you have tuned in to the Cathedral services each week you will see the difference! It is in church, the clergy are all robed and standing in their normal positions at some distance even from the cameras.

If you think of how we have always done the various parts of the service in church on a Sunday morning whether it is the readers, the intercessors, the choir or the priest standing in the pulpit and at the altar it is all ‘at a distance’. I am speaking of those who take leadership of course. Members of the congregation sit together-certainly closer than we are allowed to get to each other under Covid-19 restrictions. We share the peace up close and personal. We line up and kneel beside each other as we receive communion. And so, we have moments of closeness and moments when we are more at a distance, more spread out in church on a Sunday morning.

But now through Zoom at a time we are all diligently observing social distancing protocols at home, at the store on our walks and so on. And when we come to worship it is as if we are sitting across the dining room table or across the coffee table in the living room. This changes our experience. We are both close up and far away at the same time. It is worth thinking about what the effect is.

For instance when I prepare my sermon now I am having to think about the difference it makes with me staring across my lap top as if you are there in front of me, just you. I am not standing up at the lectern standing sideways to the choir and with my back to Lorne trying to make sure I take everybody in. It is just

you and me or you and your spouse or your child or children or cat or dog. I love dogs and cats, by the way. But to come back to my sermon I am having to re-think how I do that. Let me bring this into focus for you. Just imagine me sitting in an easy chair in your living room with you in your favourite chair or me sitting across from you at your kitchen table. What would that be like if I then began to preach a sermon? Aaaargh!

So as I say, I am working on this. There are other pieces in this new puzzle we are all trying to put together. And I will be addressing them in future letters. But if you are finding this way of doing worship interesting and helpful, don't forget to invite a friend. Who knows it may be a way of getting past the nervousness many people not used to church feel when they walk into one of our services. With every blessing, see you Sunday.

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