Midweek Update #15 June 24th, 2020

Welcome to another Midweek update! It’s great to catch up with you in virtual space! Let’s begin with the big news! Happy Birthday John the Baptist! Yup, today, the worldwide Church does something it only does for one other person, Jesus of Nazareth, set a aside a day to celebrate his birth.

And it does so because he is the prophetic forerunner of Jesus and because as a prophetic forerunner, his birth announces what so many famous births in the Bible do: the possibility of something new where nothing seemed possible: think about Abraham and Sarah conceiving when in old age, or Moses spared miraculously after birth by being picked out of the reeds by Pharoah’s daughter, the same reeds he would stand amidst, but now on dry ground as the Israelites streamed past him into freedom. Or Hannah’s plea to God and her resulting pregnancy with Samuel and of course, after John, Mary

Elizabeth hadn’t been able to conceive but an angel appeared to Zechariah and voila, John! And whatever you make of these stories, they stand as a massive testament to God’s involvement in birth, in fostering, making possible the conditions of life, new life and hope! And we celebrate John’s birth as a sign of hope and as a sign that prophetic truth, the telling of truth is not dead in our own time. God will raise up truth-tellers, counter-cultural symbols of hope that will call us to change our ways, and what we hear will bring us hope even as it rends our hearts!

Thanks for your comments regarding the our summer study; keep them coming. I realize that for some of you it may be a bit of an odd book to spend our reflective time with but I hope at the end of the day you’ll be enriched. I certainly feel like a fellow traveller on this journey and I know that without each other the journey is rather pointless.

The longer we go without actually being in the same room the harder it is to feel connected. Now is when we need to pay special attention to reaching out to each other. How about this, phone someone or email someone from the parish this week! Just that act of care will make you feel good and will no doubt life the heart of the person you call!

Someone dropped off a nice little gift for me in the St. Thomas office this week, a face mask for a clergy person! Collar and all! Thanks Rev. Jennifer! She’s sewing up a storm, making masks for folks that need them. I hesitate to recommend her because I don’t want her to be too busy but if you ask her she may be able to make you a mask as well!

It’s getting harder to feel connected as time goes along and our diocese has entered Phase II which means we can begin to have gatherings within certain restrictions. Both parishes are going to have a practice gathering in July; St. Matthew on July 5th and St. Thomas on July 12th. Both will be at 11 a.m.

July 5th at St. Matthew at 11 a.m. – Come with a mask, if you don’t have one and can’t get one there will be some available. If the weather allows there will be a table set up outside where a greeter will ask for your name and number. This so you can be contacted if someone happens to test positive in the following 10 days. It most likely won’t be an issue but we need to comply with the regulations. The greeter may ask if you’ve been sick lately or if you’ve been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for Covid-19. You’ll be directed into the building to use hand sanitizer and then you’ll pick up a bulletin and choose a seat marked with an X. Families and couples can, of course sit together. We’ll discourage use of the washrooms but if you need to we’ll ask you to use the spray bottle and paper towel to wipe down what you’ve touched.

What to expect from our gathering. This is a practice gathering; a gathering in which we can help each other get used to some of the restrictions that will be in place for the remainder of Phase II and many of which will be in place for Phase III. We need to get the kinks out and the only way to do that is practice.

This will not be a full worship service, we will still have our virtual church service on our website. There will be some readings, some prayers, some songs performed for us since we’re not allowed to have congregational singing at this point. We’ll then open it up for a Question/Answer time; this will be a time for you to ask anything you want about church life as we go forward together. In total our aim is to spend about 45 minutes inside. Weather permitting there will be an optional juice box/water bottle time outside where we can say hi to one another respecting the appropriate physical distancing.

I’m really looking forward to seeing you at these practice gatherings. Of course, if you do not feel comfortable coming that is perfectly fine. But please know that you are welcome.

July 12th at St. Thomas 11 a.m. – the only difference for the St. Thomas gathering on the 12th is we’d like you to call the church (604) 792-8521 or use the church email stthomaschilliwack@gmail.com to preregister your attendance. Please preregister by July 10th, Friday. You can call the People’s Warden, Jan Guretzki (604) 703-1301. Both are in the hard copy of this update. Preregistering will help us figure out if there’s any adjustments we need to make in St. Thomas’ smaller building.

Now that we’re allowed to travel in our province, are you planning any holidays? I’ve heard of some people going camping. It seems like we’re an incredibly fortunate bunch in B.C. not only have we flattened the curve, but if we have to stay in our province in order to have vacation, we are in one of the most beautiful spots on earth to do that! Here’s praying that you’ll be wise and safe if you head out.

This past week we had our parish council meetings and it was great to see familiar faces on Zoom for the fourth month in a row! Your parish councils are doing a great job planning everything from a fence to help with the drug user problem in front of St. Thomas hall to making a snow removal plan at St. Matthew. A special thanks to our treasurers Ted Tisdale and Kerri Onken who do such a good job keeping the council informed as to the state of our giving and finance. Suffice to say that we’re all thankful for your gifts to God’s work in and through our parishes.

Here’s a couple of pieces of feedback from my question last week regarding the helpfulness, or not, of these updates:

I appreciate these mid week updates and hope you keep doing them. I think they help keep us connected as a church body and I find it encouraging to hear about what is going on with people and the various activities at both churches each week

I have been enjoying the Tuesday night online bible studies on next Sunday’s scripture readings. Paul does a great job creating a welcoming atmosphere and safe place to express ideas and share what we have been learning from the passages. There were 17 people participating this past Tuesday.

Another person wrote: Thank you very much for the mid-week update. I really appreciate receiving them and hearing the most recent news. I hope they will continue.

Loved the Bethany Baptist Church video, particularly the time of fellowship with tea, coffee, and biscuits, and the sanitizing exiting protocol! Definitely well thought out!

Really appreciate Sunday worship, too, though definitely miss the in-person services and Eucharist. Exciting to hear that we may have a 'test' service at St Thomas in July.

Well folks, I hope you’re doing well; practicing the safety, calmness and kindness that is urged on us weekly. We’re all in this together and we will find ways to connect and bring joy to each other in the weeks and months to come!

In Christ,

Allen+