

Red Door Chronicle



A newsletter of Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church

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GOING DEEPER IN A TIME OF COVID



Shed a few tears lately? Me too. We've now been under lockdown for almost a year, with no present end in sight . . .

And the fatigue, stress, worry, and fear can sometimes seem unbearable, even for those not otherwise on the frontlines of this pandemic. And as for the latter, one can only imagine what it is like for them:

"Time to start the day," begins a video diary of a frontline ICU nurse—as her alarm goes off.

"I am about to take my temperature:— because every morning and every night I take my temperature, to make sure I stay healthy to take care of my patients. The unit I work in is a Covid-19 quarantined unit, which sees the sickest patients. People are much younger than we expected. I have some tears and crying right now because I'm just so tired.

"Never mind, take a deep breath and keep going on." (I tell myself.) But now I'm going to continue on; I'm powering through . . .

"Stay strong." (I also tell myself.) Back to the unit. Today is day 5 of a 13-hour-shift week. I usually do 3 days a week, and I'm up to five 13-hour shifts, and I'm tired."

"How do such people do it?," we ask. "How do they cope with all of this, without becoming overwhelmed, or swept away, or worse still, broken, or hard as flint??"

Needless to say the same question had been asked of the Lord Jesus, many times. While on earth the Lord was not unlike a frontline health care worker, constantly surrounded by people in need—submerged by them, in fact.

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Just how did he do it? How did he accomplish so much in such a short time, without burning out? How did he cope with the unending stream of human tragedy that was paraded before him, night and day, without giving up or walking away? How did Jesus keep his heart soft, both toward his Father in heaven, and toward people in need?

It's no secret that Jesus was often very tired. The Gospel of Mark tells us that once upon a time, Jesus directed the disciples to accompany him to a quiet place to get some rest. "So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place," writes Mark—not a bad idea if you ask me—"but many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them."

Talk about hijacking the poor man's day off! Nevertheless, when Jesus landed and saw the large crowd that had ran on ahead of him, "he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd," at which point his healing work resumed.

Notwithstanding his own fatigue, Jesus had profound compassion for people in need. When common "sense" would have said, "Danger. Step away. Pull out. Don't touch this; it's too messy," Jesus touched, and took hold. When common "decency" would have said, "It's their own fault they got into this mess, so leave them alone! How else are they going to learn from their mistakes if you keep rescuing them all the time?? You're nothing but an enabler, Lord Jesus. Step away!!—" Jesus stepped in. Jesus walked with people in need all the way from illness to recovery; darkness to light; lostness

to salvation. In fact rather than running away, counterintuitively, Jesus went deeper—and deeper, and deeper.

And when needed, Jesus withdrew to pray, to go deeper with God the Father. In that deeper, quieter, richer place, Jesus rested; and refreshed; and recharged.

The late Fred Rogers, of all people, did the same. Every day Fred Rogers would get up at 5 a.m., and start his day from the deepest of places. He would swim, have breakfast, and then pray. He would pray for his family, and friends. He would pray for new people he had just met. He would pray for children, and families. In praying from the heart to the heart Mr. Rogers went deeper, and that made all the difference for him as a broadcaster and caregiver. In fact it changed the world.

Whenever I am confronted with illness, with loss, with death, even with disillusion—the bread-and-butter of ministry—I find I too have to go to a deeper place; the kind of place you go to when you pray, and worship, and converse with people both face to face, and heart to heart. A real place; a deeper place. "Deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story," C. S. Lewis once wrote in describing what it might be like to encounter heaven itself, God's very abode, face to face; "a story you have never heard but very much want to know."

How will we survive Covid-19? How will we too find rest, and refuge, and ongoing refreshment? By going deeper.

With love,
Colin



WITH COVID-19 ARE YOU SAFER AT A BAR, OR A CHURCH, OR ON A CRUISE SHIP?

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW! THE ANSWER? (Drumroll please.) Not too surprisingly, bars put you at greater risk of catching COVID-19 than going to church! However, according to Dr. Fauci, the USA's leading COVID expert, religious gatherings are a higher risk than going on a cruise vacation. According to Fauci, the 10 most risky places to visit during the pandemic are:

1. Bars
2. Restaurants
3. Air Travel
4. Public Transportation
5. Going to the gym
6. Crowds
7. Indoor gatherings and parties
8. Religious gatherings
9. Cruise ships
10. Outdoor gatherings¹

So why are churches closed when it is still possible to go to a bar or a restaurant? We suspect part of the reason might be to reduce the negative impact on our economy. If the majority of these businesses were unable to survive until the end of the pandemic a significant number of people (and their families) would fall into poverty. This would expose them to self-perpetuating economic stress from which some individuals and families would not recover. And if too many individuals are negatively affected, the economy as a whole will struggle to return to pre-pandemic levels.

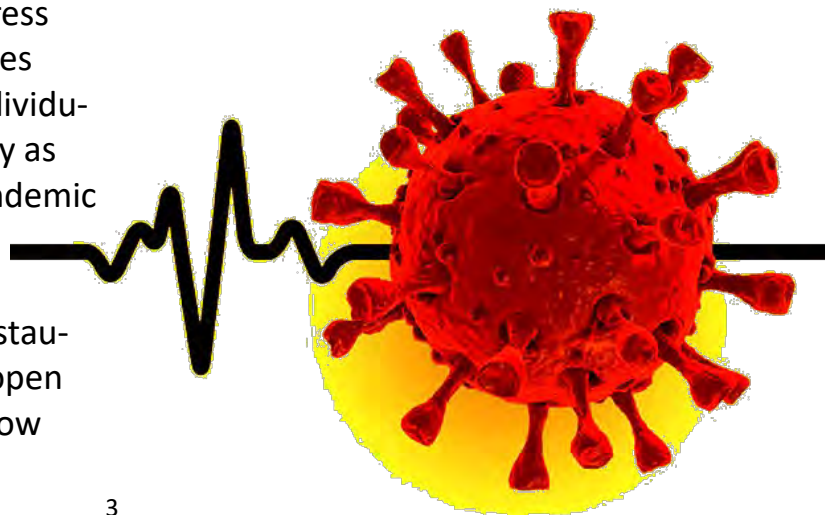
Some have assumed that since bars, restaurants and gyms are allowed to remain open that must mean they have a relatively low

COVID-19 risk. They have not. And sadly, churches are not that safe either. In fact sometimes churches have been COVID-19 "super-spreaders." Even if we intend to do our best to follow COVID-19 guidelines we humans are social creatures. We want to communicate and as we enter into conversation, unconsciously we are drawn closer to each other, in (physical) proximity. This happens in churches as in other locations. Part of the reason that BC is doing relatively well compared to the other provinces is our government and medical leaders have been quicker to enact restrictions.

Although we dearly miss seeing you all face to face, we are not one of those churches that is willing to defy our health authorities. We hope that this difficult sense of isolation we are having to endure now will allow us to more quickly arrive to a time when we can be together again.

Bob and Nadia Pushak

1. <https://bgr.com/2020/12/23/coronavirus-update-fauci-risky-places-bars-church-gym-travel/>



VACCINES: HOW SAFE ARE THEY?



THE NEW COVID-19 VACCINES ARE SEEN BY many as light at the end of the tunnel—so too new therapeutics—promising happier times when we can all meet again, safely, face to face. We all miss our community so much!

There is, however, a number of people who are hesitant about vaccination. After all, never before in history has a vaccination program been developed so quickly, without the benefit of longer-term studies on the Covid-19 vaccines' safety and viability. (A little over a year ago virtually no one knew the virus even existed!)

In spite of these concerns, when the vaccines become available in our area, Colin and the church elders will be among those getting vaccinated. We will do this because the research indicates our choice to be vaccinated could save our lives and at the same time possibly save the lives of others, such as you dear people; since it will be less likely that we pass the virus on.

And has been noted, it is never possible for any vaccine to be completely risk-free for all people. We find reassurance however, that never before in human history have there been so many scientists spanning the globe,

working together to address the same problem; that is, to find a safe and effective solution to this incapacitating and deadly illness. As the new vaccines were developed multiple trials in different locations were conducted simultaneously, which allowed the vaccines' safety to be determined more quickly than has ever been possible before. The broad consensus of medical experts is that the risk of side-effects is far less concerning than allowing this deadly pandemic, with its various new strains (some of which are more contagious, i.e. more easily caught from person-to-person, though not more deadly) to spread unchecked and unabated. Without vaccines there are no other lights shining in the distance of our dark tunnel and no clear path to life returning to normal.

If you have any concerns about vaccinations, we would be happy to hear from you and hear what you have to say. You can contact me at bnpushak@gmail.com. I will do my best to carefully listen to you and to work with you, if possible, on finding out more information that might address your concerns. (Please note that social media is not a good source for reliable medical information.) Your medical doctor is someone who can provide accurate information and will know if there are any concerns about how your specific health issues might be affected by taking the vaccine.

Be reassured, however, this pandemic world will eventually fade away, and a happier time come when we can fully reexperience the community which is the body of Christ.

Bob Pushak

SELLING THE ANNEX

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, SELLING THE ANNEX has been discussed by the Session, Board, and congregation as a means of covering expenses in the event other fund-raising efforts proved insufficient; and for catalyzing future growth and ministry. Due to the pandemic, we believe this to be the right time to consider this option, other possibilities—renting and/or redeveloping the property, for example—having been vigorously pursued until now.

Since the Annex has now been assessed at \$508,000, the Session has passed a unanimous motion to forward the matter of its sale to the congregation. The sale of the Annex should sufficiently supplement our current income for years to come, and safely take us through the pandemic to the point where we can move forward with confidence. (Just to be clear, the sale is NOT so that we can rest on our laurels, and no longer pursue visionary, missional, or forward-looking ministry. Quite the contrary.) Once the pandemic subsides we will be resuming all of our previous fund-raising efforts (such as dinners, bake sales, plays and special events) and continue to focus on outreach and growth.

The next time we offer the *Walk to Bethlehem*, for example, we will be including a new and special fund-raising component developed by Nadia Pushak. Another new idea for growth is a fascinating strategy set forth in the book *Grow Your Church* by United Church of Christ pastor Tracy Barnowe (2018), shared with us by Jan Higgins. This involves aggressively but graciously following up on newcomers, an approach now used by our sister church in Kelowna, MountainView, which

once faced imminent closure. Its new pastor, Emery Cawsey, now focuses exclusively on newcomers and leaves all pastoral care to the Session. MountainView Church (the former St. David's Presbyterian) has also adopted a profoundly contemporary style of ministry—especially in music and worship design—and no longer advertises itself as Presbyterian, a term considered by MV's leadership to be alien and off-putting. Daring? It is. Our blueprint? Hard to say; every church, every ministry being unique. But it is inspiring. Happily, MV has not only pulled back from the brink of extinction, but grown significantly, all in a town which already boasts stiff competition from several contemporary megachurches, not to mention a number of other large and influential ministries.

Selling the Annex will also eliminate the maintenance and operational costs connected to a second building. And as for the changes required, the Session feels that Colin's office can easily be moved to the Vestry (off the Sanctuary) and Michelle's office, to the Choir Room (off the Lower Hall). The Sunday School, if need be, can be run in the Lower Hall; and storage (important for maintaining our drama and Christmas ministries) managed offsite, with the purchase of a second metal storage container, if needed.

We will be contacting you by phone in the near future, to get your input on selling the Annex. We look forward to speaking with you soon!

Bob & Nadia,
& Colin



PRAYER REQUESTS

*BE ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION,
WITH THANKSGIVING, LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD. (PHILIPPIANS 4:6)*



ON ACCOUNT OF NEW REGULATIONS FROM THE BC MINISTRY OF HEALTH THE ST. ANDREW'S PRAYER Group has suspended operation—for the moment—but faithful people are still praying! Join us as we lift up to God the following concerns:

- Inez Pringle has recovered from the surgery she had in December, but would like prayer for her eyes because she is experiencing some loss of vision;
- Iza MacDonald expresses a prayer of thankfulness because her daughter in-law, Margaret, appears to be doing well since undergoing chemotherapy. Frazer's breathing continues to be a concern;
- Tony Vant Geloof has shown some improvement, but would appreciate ongoing prayer.;
- Michaela Belanger's father Stephan continues to need prayer;
- Yurdle Vant Geloof is testing soon, March 11, for her Class 4 driver's licence which she needs for work. Her daughter Ashlin continues to struggle;
- Debbie Norris's extended family is experiencing significant stress and Debbie is now looking after two grandchildren: Zero and Alexa;
- Please pray for people in long term care. Anna Proudlock is now living at Haven Hill. Anna's 10-year-old great grandson Gavin who lives in Alberta continues to undergo treatment for cancer;
- Carroll Moreland would like prayer for serenity;
- Audrey Nicol, for recovery from recent surgery;
- Margaret Sisley would like prayer as she continues to recover from pneumonia;
- Louise Thorpe would appreciate prayers for relief from pain and more strength;
- In light of beloved Bob Hayhurst's recent passing, Carol would appreciate prayer for peace and comfort, both for herself and her family.
- For Colin as he continues to minister part-time only, which leaves too much undone to make anyone happy (himself included);
- For frontline workers; medical personnel; scientists; service persons; and helpers;
- For all who are vulnerable and alone;
- For all who seek God, that they would find their heart's desire.