

To the People of St. Thomas, Bracebridge and Lake of Bays Parish

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

We are now entering into a new journey we would have chosen, yet it brings with it an opportunity to be a great blessing to our communities and to each other.

Our church buildings will be closed commencing this Sunday (tomorrow) for public worship and all other meetings and groups. Paul LeMay, Warden at St. Thomas is even now changing our outdoor sign to give two messages:

- Our services are suspended!
Our Faith and Hope are not! on one side and
- Our building is closed but the Church is praying at home for the welfare of all

That is really what it's all about at this time. We are absolutely saddened to not be able to gather together for a period of time. We love to gather, we love coffee hours, we love Eucharist, we love music, we've even been known to love a sermon or two. But mostly we love each other. And nothing will change that.

In the days to come, you will be receiving a daily encouraging message from me by email, as well as a full sermon for each Sunday. Some folks will be assisting me to ensure every one is telephoned at least once a week, just to be in touch, and tell our stories and ask for help if we need it.

As followers of Jesus, we have a mission to care for the most vulnerable and those in need and those who suffer. One of the ways we can do that is to reduce the possibility that any one of us might carry corona virus out into the community before we know that we ourselves have it. We are giving up many of things we love in order to be a blessing to many of the people we love; including those we do not even know.

I ask your prayers for Archbishop +Anne and Archdeacon Kelly who are extremely busy at this time. We have received amazing God-directed guidance and leadership from our Metropolitan and Archbishop+Anne, the entire House of

Bishops, the Center for Disease Control, the Ministry of Health and many many other experts in the science of containment of this pandemic. We are grateful.

Although we may at times be anxious, and we may indeed become ill, there is no “may be” about the fact the our Lord Jesus Christ is with us through every step of our journey....in the valleys and the mountains and the shadow places and the rainbows. “Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:20 and “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you or forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6). Through all generations, our Lord God leads His people in love. Give 1 Corinthians 13 a good read as well, in thinking about our love for our neighbours. The Word of God will sustain you as you turn to it over and over during this challenging time.

We are not meant to abide in fear, and the Holy Spirit will help us to find hope and faith abundant. If you need help with that, please be in touch with me by phone 705 205 0549, text or email and I will do everything I can to assist you.

There is much we can do. The Winter Pantry at St. Ambrose will be having volunteers deliver food by car and leave it at doors so that folks will not do without their amazing help this month. We will do that as well for people at St. Thomas who may need help getting groceries or necessities if there are self-quarantining. To our summer points, you are much in our prayers and call if any of you need help at this time as well!

Meanwhile, toss some joy into the air every time you can; Hang up a “Praying for everyone” in your window or do whatever your heart leads you to do to make this hard time a little hard for others. And don’t forget to give yourself a great big hug every single day, especially if you alone and miss your hugs at church!

I will be praying for you and getting things ready for great celebration we will have when we re-open, share worship, do Bible Study, have Messy Church, enjoy other groups using our facility, and sing together. Maybe we will even dance!

Please pray for me, as I pray for you. We need each other, all of us, so very much.

Abundant blessings from Rev. Judie+