

Pastoral message from Rev. Scott, with this week's prayer:

Hello, everyone. We are now in week two of our church being "locked down", and I can't help but think about how much has changed, even from last week. Part of this change, of course, has been the number of new cases of COVID-19 that have been diagnosed. This is not necessarily what we want to hear when dealing with a pandemic such as we are experiencing now, but the news is not all bad. We have been informed that the reason for this spike has a lot to do with the fact that there is much more testing going on since the days when this all began. Medical professionals are now much more equipped with resources than they were earlier, which means that people are being tested and diagnosed at a much faster pace. The bad news, of course, is that early infections seemed to happen when someone had close contact with someone who had been out of the country, but now, transmissions within the community are rising, which only means that people have not been vigilant enough in following the proper protocols to protect themselves and others. There are some who have become infected who were being careful and taking precautions, but perhaps they got too close to someone who has the virus and may not have known it. Hopefully, with increased testing, people will have the advantage of knowing whether or not they are infected, and can take immediate steps to get medical attention, and to prevent further transmission. So, we must all do our part to make sure that nothing we do will contribute to the spread of the virus, as much as we are able.

As I have been keeping in touch with people by phone or by email, I have been heartened by people's stories of neighbours offering help and checking-in to see how people are doing. Even when I walk Ben around the neighbourhood, total strangers will ask each other how they are doing, and you can tell that it is different from the usual way we ask "how are you?" There is an attitude of real caring and concern being expressed, and while it is tragic to have to go through an experience such as we are going through, this situation has brought people together (not physically, of course) in a way that restores my faith in humanity.

I am so thankful for all those who are working on the front lines these days: the grocery store clerks, the medical professionals whose challenges I cannot even imagine, and all those who stay on the job to help us all through this. Bravo to all of you! I will continue, in the days to come, to keep in touch with people and to make sure that people have what they need, but if you would like to contact me, even if you "just want to talk", I would be happy to hear from you. Stay safe, be kind, and let's all do what we can to beat this thing.

You can reach me at 514-694-0214, or scottieap@aol.com.

The weekly prayer follows:

Just to remind you, I sent out a message last week asking whoever wishes to join us in group prayer everyday at 11:00 a.m. Feel free to pray the words I have suggested, knowing others will be praying the same prayer with you, or use your own words and thoughts, knowing that God hears all our prayers, both spoken and silent. I will offer a new prayer every Wednesday as long as this crisis lasts. Here is this week's prayer.

Gracious God, who loves and cares for each one of us, we come to you in prayer, seeking your peace, hoping for some reassurance, finding our faith tested in many ways. We know that there are some who have lost loved ones to COVID-19, we know there are some who are all alone and feel that loneliness acutely, we know that there are some who live in fear, and we pray for an end to this pandemic. Help us, in the meantime, to know that you are with us. Help us to be signs of your loving presence to others who need it. We are thankful for all those who stay on the job to help protect us, to feed us, to keep us informed. We are thankful for all those who give generously of themselves and their resources to help others. As we come to you in prayer, loving God, we acknowledge how much we need you. Give us the reassurance of your love and care. Give us a renewed sense of hope so that we can work together to move past this terrible time, and into the fullness of life that is your intention for all people. Bless us, keep us, hold us, and may we live and work in ways that bear witness to your loving presence among us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.