

# *South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges*

## *“Back from Vacation Service” – August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020*

**Prelude:** “Revive Us Again” – by Christie Coatsworth

### **Welcome & Announcements:**

Hi folks. We hope you are enjoying the summer weather. This has been an interesting year, and going somewhere this summer is just as interesting. Any place that crowds might gather are closed, which includes all tourist spots and summer events. We are realizing just how much life has changed for us. As we think about going back into our church buildings, we are very much aware of the many different emotions that will come with each of us into the worship space. We have been living our lives in new ways, which are unfamiliar – “We have never done this before”. Adding to the confusion and likely frustration that the news, the rules and life keep changing. In Chatham-Kent, we were doing very well with our COVID numbers until the first week in August, when they spiked to over 80 new cases. Almost immediately the rules were changed – we all had to wear masks, along with other restrictions. All of these changes continue to chip away at our resilience to weather the storm. It’s been a long storm. Our ability to accept change may very well become short. The slogan, “We are all in this together” may provide the courage and hope to continue on.

Why am I telling you all this? This week we polled the Church Boards to feel out their thoughts on reopening our Church buildings. The consensus is to plan for Thanksgiving Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup>. At that time we will have fresh information from our schools and other churches, who are returning to their buildings in the next few weeks.

Just a reminder that all fundraising has been canceled until further notice. This includes St. Andrew’s September 18<sup>th</sup> “Takeout” Broasted Chicken Dinner.

As the Boards reflect on opening the buildings for worship, we all need to be aware that we are coming back into our buildings with 5 months of disruption behind us. That disruption causes expectations. I have heard ministers say, “It will be so good to worship again with our people”. Once they start the process, they find they need to plan and work through all the restrictions and any possible outcomes. It’s a big planning process especially when you do not know what might happen. There is no clear idea of what really works and what doesn’t – so we keep doing it all – hoping we are doing the right things. Add to the confusion, each area’s Health Unit may very well be asking churches to do different things – such as not singing, making reservations to come to church, having volunteers to fill out paperwork and seating people, after washing hands with sanitizer, and that’s all before the service starts. We do understand folks may be coming to church expecting to sit in their normal pew, with friends surrounding them as they did 6 months ago. This will not meet the current Health Board requirements.

So as we plan to re-enter the church buildings for worship, we need to plan for how will we do all that needs to be done. We need to consider what might happen and what back up plans

will we have? How many people will fit in our building with a six foot distancing protocol? How will we safeguard all that we can safeguard? How will we handle people's expectations? How will we remind folks what is required, without alienating them? Who will ensure the extra precautions are handled, and how many people are needed? Thank God we are a small rural church where folks know each other and care for one another. Even though we may have smaller numbers, returning to our buildings will require lots planning and instigation.

Thank you to Andrew and Sharon for offering to fill in with pastoral care, while Annette and I were on vacation. Thank you to Andrew for sharing his services, to add to our website, these past three weeks.

Continue to keep in touch with others and to share our websites; at [southbuxton.ca](http://southbuxton.ca), and [talbotstreet.ca](http://talbotstreet.ca)

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning.

### **Lighting of the Christ Candle:**

If you wish – grab a candle to use while we share our services. The flame of the Candle reminds us of the light of Christ that collects us as the faith community, “We are One in the Spirit”. Thanks be to God.

### **Call To Worship:**

**Eric:** Look, over there, the spark of God's presence calls to us. We must be standing on holy ground!

**People:** **Look, all around, the light of God's love is in each person present. We must be standing on holy ground!**

**Eric:** Look, deep within, the light of God's creativity and compassion are part of our being. We must be standing on holy ground!

**People:** **God is calling for our curiosity and our attention. In this time of worship let us recognize the flame of God's presence everywhere. And let us celebrate that we are standing on Holy Ground!**

**Eric:** Come let us worship.

### **Hymn: VU 376 “Spirit of the Living God”**

- 1 Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.  
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.  
Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.  
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
- 2 Spirit of the living God, move among us all;  
make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love:  
humble, caring, selfless, sharing.  
Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love!

### **Opening Prayer:**

**Gracious and Loving God, You are here with us today. We can feel the Holy Spirit among us. We know we are standing on Holy Ground – for all Creation is holy, and all who abide in it are**

called to be awake in awareness and care. Help us to notice your passion for healing and wholeness everywhere. Help us to turn our heads and be attentive to the lights of your constant compassion around us and among us. May our eyes catch your grace that is in the goodness and mercy of communion and love. Help us always to remember that you are with us. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

**Scripture: Exodus 3: 1 - 15 – Moses is Called by God – In Story Form**

When Moses was a baby, several women kept him safe from the pharaoh's wicked plan to harm the Hebrew boy babies. Moses went to live in the palace with the pharaoh. Pharaoh did not know Moses was one of the Hebrew people. When Moses grew up, he left the palace. Moses did not like to see the Hebrew people work so hard as slaves for the pharaoh.

Moses moved to another country and took care of sheep alone up in the hills. Day after day, Moses tended the sheep and walked the hills. But God still had a plan for Moses. It was time for God to get Moses' attention. It was time for Moses to remember the Hebrew people. It was time for Moses to hear about God's plan for them.

One day while Moses was watching the sheep, he saw a bush on fire. He went to see it. The bush was on fire, but it didn't burn up! Then Moses heard God's voice. "Moses! Take off your shoes," God said. "You are in a holy place." Moses took his shoes off right away. God said, "Moses, go back to Egypt. Go and tell the pharaoh to let my people leave Egypt."

But that wasn't Moses' plan. Moses wanted to stay in the hills, taking care of the sheep. Moses had been away from Egypt for a long time and was afraid to go back. Moses wasn't sure he could do what God was asking. Moses said to God, "Who am I to tell the Pharaoh what to do? What if he won't listen to me? What if the people won't listen to me?"

But God had a plan. God said, "I will be with you. I will help you. I will bring my people out of Egypt." Knowing that God would be with Moses helped Moses to be brave. So Moses listened carefully to God and did just what God said. Moses went back to Egypt to talk to the pharaoh.

I wonder what Moses said to Pharaoh to persuade Pharaoh to let the people go?

I wonder what Pharaoh said to Moses?

I wonder what will happen next in the story?

**Message: "You are Standing on Holy Ground"**

We are aware that God can bring life out of chaos, as in the very beginning. Today God calls Moses to bring life to the Israelites who are slaves in Egypt. The part that attracts me is that God uses a everyday event to call Moses. I imagine Moses sees the burning bush from far away. Where burning bushes a common event in Moses day? Could be, as people may burn wood for charcoal, which was much easier to carry than wood. This fire is different. Although the bush is on fire, it is not being consumed. Moses takes a closer look at the burning bush. Moses is filled with wonder. Out of the burning bush – God speaks. Moses meets God in this burning bush.

Moses is just out doing what a shepherd does as Moses is keeping his Father-in-law's sheep. Moses is taking them to fresh pasture somewhere over there. As he travels with the sheep, he sees a common sight. On closer look the burning bush is not being consumed. This was for Moses, unexpected and surprising. Then the voice of God calls to Moses, "Take off your sandals – you are standing on sacred ground".

Moses has had quite a life up until now. He had escaped Egypt after killing a slave driver. He had met his wife, the daughter of Jethro. Moses was looking after Jethro's sheep and life for Moses has become very comfortable. Going back to Egypt as God was asking Moses to do would upset the apple cart. Moses had much to lose.

You might remember a saying that Jesus offered about to gain a life you need to be ready to let your life go. Moses was being called to let his comfortable life go, because he was needed to be God's servant back in Egypt.

Moses may have been a likely candidate for the job of heading to Egypt to talk to the Pharaoh. The reason Moses had killed the slave driver was Moses' compassion to the suffering of the Israelite people being slaves for the Egyptians. As the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses had risked everything to intervene on behalf of his Hebrew kin who was being abused by an Egyptian. In exile, Moses starts a new life with his family and a livelihood as a shepherd for Jethro, his father-in-law. But Moses curiosity led him to places he might otherwise never go. Moses asked questions as he fought for justice against the abuse of his people. When Moses comes upon a bush that is burning, but not consumed, he heads towards it to investigate. This leads Moses to Holy Ground and to God.

Moses does not always follow God without further questioning. In fact in Chapter 4 Moses is in trouble with God because he would not go to the Pharaoh. Somehow things are straightened out – God gives Aaron to help Moses, and together they head to the Pharaoh. Moses' questioning is getting him in trouble even after God has called Moses.

It may have seemed to the Israelites that God had moved on, and had forgotten about God's people as slaves in Egypt. However it seems that God was silently listening to the cry of their oppression. God calls and sends Moses. God needed someone who could get in front of the Pharaoh without being killed or arrested. Moses was the man God needed. Moses wasn't perfect. He stuttered. God gave Moses his brother, Aaron to speak out with Moses on behalf of justice.

We mentioned earlier as we started the service – it has been five months since we have been locked out of our church buildings. Do we get the impression that God has moved on and forgotten about us Christians? God has left us in unfamiliar territory – a place we have never been before, and a place that the rules keep changing. How in the world will we do this alone?

Maybe like Moses - God calls us. Moses asks God, "Who do I say has sent me"? God answers, "I am who I am". God does not clearly state who God is. Would we humans understand and comprehend anyway? God's answer carries the mystery of things and whom we do not understand – at least by words.

Yet God's promise to Moses is that God will deliver the oppressed and send them to the land of milk and honey. That is the promise to us today. God will deliver. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

**Hymn: VU 647 "Travel On, Travel On"**

Travel on, travel on, there's a spirit that is flowing,  
a spirit that is flowing night and day.

Travel on, travel on, with the spirit that is flowing,  
the spirit will be with us all the way.

Travel on, travel on, with the river that is flowing,  
the spirit will be with us all the way.

Travel on, travel on, there's a spirit that is growing,  
the spirit grows like flowers night and day.

Travel on, travel on, with the spirit that is growing,  
the spirit will be with us all the way.

Travel on, travel on, with the flower that is growing,  
the spirit will be with us all the way.

Travel on, travel on, there's a spirit that is playing,  
the spirit plays like music every day.

Travel on, travel on, with the spirit that is playing,  
the spirit will be with us all the way.

Travel on, travel on, with the music that is playing,  
the spirit will be with us all the way.

In the kingdom of heaven is our end and our beginning,  
the road that we must travel every day.

Travel on, travel on, to the kingdom that is coming,  
the kingdom will be with us all the way.

Travel on, travel on, to the kingdom that is coming,  
the kingdom will be with us all the way.

**Offering:**

**Eric:** God provides us with our everyday living and with friends and family. In their actions, we can see God's love. We give in love to help our neighbours. Let us trust in God to provide, and let us give in love.

**† Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

## **Offertory Prayer:**

**Giver of all great gifts - here we are – we are your burning bush. With hearts aflame with good intention, we give from our abundance and celebrate the ways your spirit is alive in our souls. Bless this offering toward healing and new life. Amen.**

## **Hymn: VU 400 “Listen To Your Children Praying”**

Lord, listen to your children praying,  
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;  
Lord, listen to your children praying,  
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

## **Pastoral Prayer:** *(the silences are intentional – when we are standing on Holy Ground - it's a time to reflect and discern)*

**Eric:** Loving God, Your Holy Word has caught our attention today.

**People:** **We have noticed your Holy Spirit in our midst, and we recognize that we are on Holy Ground.**

*(silence).*

**Eric:** We bring our compassionate curiosity to you, Loving God.

**People:** **We bring our often reluctant, but honestly caring hearts and ask, “Who are we that you should call us?”**

*(silence).*

**Eric:** Open our eyes to the ways our life is being consumed and requires protection.

**People:** **Encourage us in the promise of new life beyond the pain.**

*(silence).*

**Eric:** We lift our hearts to all who suffer under the oppression of societal systems.

*(silence).*

**People:** **We lift our prayers for all who struggle in physical pain and anguish.**

*(silence).*

**Eric:** We lift our voices in solidarity with all who are imprisoned in body, mind, or spirit.

*(silence).*

**People:** **And we strive to lift our beings in willingness to say “yes” to your invitation to help.**

*(silence).*

**Eric:** May the Holy Ground on which we stand today empower our steps toward the journey of healing in which we have been placed as your people.

**People:** **May the energy of your Earth reach into our beings and give us the strength to say “yes” again and again.**

**Eric:** May the burning bushes all around us continue to call out for attention and transformation, until the new life they reflect is fulfilled.

**People:** **Bless us for this journey, we pray. Help us always to embrace the curiosity, you gift us with.**

**Eric:** All these things we pray in Jesus' Name as we pray his prayer:

*Our Father, Who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven,  
Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who  
trespass against us,*

*And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

**Benediction:**

**Eric:** May every step you take into this world be a step toward new life and renewal, now and forever more.

**Go Now in Peace:**

Go now in peace, never be afraid.  
God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day.  
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.  
Know He will guide you in all you do.  
  
Go now in love, and show you believe.  
Reach out to others, so all the world can see.  
God will be there, watching from above.  
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.  
Amen, Amen, Amen.

**Postlude:** “Four Strong Winds” – Christie Coatsworth