

# *South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges*

*Fifth Sunday of Lent - March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020*

## Welcome & Announcements:

Welcome to the Fifth Sunday of Lent. Next week is Palm Sunday, and the week after Easter. We are planning Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. Andrew and I are considering a Zoom - Live service from the Lake Shore – with Andrew at home, and myself on the Lakeshore. With Zoom we can record live from different places and folks can listen and watch on their computers or even phone in and listen – just add the special connection number and hear what’s happening. We’ll keep you informed as we check it all out!

Last Sunday, I got many responses that it was good to worship in your pajamas (some said, “even in bed”) – so “yes” you all look great this morning - in however you are comfortably dressed.

We have tried this week some new ideas. On Wednesday, we held our Faith Talk by telephone. At 10 am, I called everyone on their phone (and after a bit of getting used to 12 people being on the phone together) I think we did pretty good. If you wish to join us on Wednesday morning, just give me a call at 519-689-7555 and we will call you on Wednesday morning at 10 am.

On Thursday, we held a telephone call with the Board members of the Ridgeway Chaplaincy Program. Our 2020 Chaplain’s Gala was to be held this past Friday, but we needed to make the difficult decision to cancel this year’s Gala as the Campus is closed until this is over.

On Friday afternoon, we had our Antler River Watershed Regional Conference Call. This meeting was to be in person, but was changed to online at the last minute. On this Conference call we were briefed on the latest information, and shared what we are doing to keep our faith community connected. For many churches, finances are a big concern. Cheryl Anne reminded us that we do have savings and been holding on them for a rainy day. This IS that rainy day! Also Cheryl Anne encouraged us to keep our ear to the ground because churches will be the first line of defense in our community for those who need assistance. We have always been the first line, but we haven’t been needed to draw upon this past few decades. Let’s be prepared. Let’s allocate funds to help your community. Let us give people opportunities to give to our wider ministries.

I shared on Thursday of the Webinars that I have been involved in and what is happening around the world. This seems to be the way we will meet for the foreseeable future. It helps to keep us informed and to share what we are doing and get some great ideas of how to expand our reach into the wider community.

Blenheim Community Village and Village on the Ridge in Ridgetown are using our services for our folks and any others who are interested. Thank you for the Activity Directors, Sherry and Lori for their help. Lori at Ridgetown had already heard from Florence how wonderful it is to receive these mailings. So thank you Janet!

We are updating our website at [www.southbuxton.ca](http://www.southbuxton.ca) almost daily. We have added a donation page to let you know how you can give financially and included are the addresses to mail your monthly postdated cheques. We are updating [www.talbotstreet.ca](http://www.talbotstreet.ca) to add that information, in the next few days. Don and I are working on it.

This week I have prayed by telephone with those in hospital, and at home. We are part of the 7 pm daily prayer chain (where you pray from home at 7 pm each evening). Sharon Campbell Rayment is encouraging her folks to do a high noon prayer each day at 12:15 pm (to focus ourselves at noon hour, during our lunch break). The folks at Erie Beach are ringing bells, singing, and making noise to support our Health Care Workers and our Emergency Personnel. Each night at 7:30 pm, we are joining them by ringing the bell at St. Andrew's - 5 times. If you want to support this initiative, please join us by making "Joyful Noise" at your place.

It seems that each Service now have two messages; One to let you know what's up in our community and the other service based on scripture and prayer – our faith. This is likely how we need to communicate as we move forward.

Any suggestions you may have to help the process, please share with me by email at [southbuxtonpc@gmail.com](mailto:southbuxtonpc@gmail.com) or text or call me at (519) 689-7555.

Keep praying! WE are all in this together, and WE will prevail. God will provide.

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

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

### **Call to Worship:**

**Eric:** People of God, we are here today to be in conversation with the holy. May the voice of God speak to us and through us.

**People:** Son of God, we are here today to be in conversation with the holy. May the word of God speak to us and through us.

**Eric:** Spirit of God, we are here today to be in conversation with the holy.

**People:** Speak to us and through us, breath of God.

**Eric:** Let us worship!

## **Prayer Of Confession:**

**Eric:** Please join me in this prayer of confession.

**Unwrap the gauze of lament from your heads, hearts, ears, and mouths so we may join the saints in conversation with God. We are often unaware of the ways we can call one another back to life. But you, O God, see us asleep and dying to our old ways and you are filled with compassion for all of us. You reach out toward death so we may hold the hand of compassion and rise up! All you who sleep; all you who were left or lost, awaken and take the hand of compassion. We are in conversation with the Word of God! We raise our voices together.**

**Eric:** We look into one another's faces and proclaim: You are not alone; you are walking together in innocence by the power of all that is holy and always with us. You are alive in Christ.

## **Gospel: John 11: 1 – 45 “The Raising of Lazarus” – By George Darnley**

Mary and Martha were worried; their brother Lazarus had been sick for a long time, and he wasn't getting any better. So, the sisters sent a message to Jesus, telling him that his friend was very sick. Jesus received the message, but even though he loved their family very much, he stayed where he was for two more days.

After a while, Jesus told the disciples they needed to go back to Bethany. He knew the journey would be dangerous, but he said to them that Lazarus had fallen asleep and they needed to go wake him up. The disciples were confused –couldn't someone else wake him up?

Then he told them, “Lazarus is dead, and we have to go help him.”

When Jesus got there, he found out that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

Martha was angry, and said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha said, “I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.”

And then Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

And Martha said yes.

Now the other sister, Mary, went to Jesus. She knelt at Jesus' feet and said the same thing: “Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

She started to cry, and so did the friends and family who were with her. She showed Jesus to Lazarus' tomb, and then even Jesus began to cry because it was so sad.

Against the tomb was a giant stone, which Jesus asked the sisters to take away. Martha told him this was a ridiculous idea: Lazarus had been dead for four days, and the inside of the tomb smelled really, really bad. But they took away the stone anyway, and as they did, Jesus prayed, saying, “Thank you, God, for hearing me.”

Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”

And out of the tomb came Lazarus, his hands and feet and face still covered with the bands of cloth they buried him in.

And Jesus said, “Unbind him. And let him go!”

And they unwound the bands of cloth from Lazarus' hands and feet and face, and his sisters kissed him. And some believed, and others spread rumours about Jesus.

And later, after everything that happened with Jesus back in Jerusalem, they would remember that day with Lazarus at the tomb, and how it was the very last time that Jesus was able to walk freely among the people.

**Music:** “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” *by Lauren Daigle*

**Reflection:** “Conversation with God”

Ever had a conversation with someone and they encouraged you to “forget what’s holding you back” and focus on “what you can do”? I think God is working like that with God’s church. In prayer and in conversations with other ministers and church leaders, around the world – that is the message I truly believe God is giving us, as we struggle how to be the church without gathering in our Church buildings.

Since we cannot gather, like we always have – we have two basic choices. Either we can be “paralyzed with fear”, or we can lead by “action in faith”. I have been home in front of my computer for the past week, and a few days, as we are self-isolating. I do not think I’ve ever been busier. There seems to be so much to do. A big part of my day is touching base with our fellow worshipers, ensuring they are doing fine, and ensuring they are receiving, and wanting to receive our Reflections and Sunday Service. Everyone has been sharing how you have been checking base with them, and how much they appreciate that. They share with me who is getting their groceries, and what ever they might need. They share how they are cautious, yet not afraid. God is conversing with us in ways we cannot explain, or even recognize. Nevertheless we do see “action in faith” being lived out.

We talked a bit on Thursday about the fact that many of us will know people who are or will be diagnosed with the Corona Virus. We might even know people who will die from the Corona Virus. If so, these will be significant losses. Our losses could involve more than deaths. It might be the loss of a treasured gift, a job, maybe a friendship or relationship. Can you remember a time when you experienced a significant loss? Who supported you at that time? Who came to you and “wept” with you? In what ways were you supported and felt that someone understood your feelings?

Jesus is having quite a time with his friends Martha and Mary - Sounds like they are blaming Jesus for their brother’s death. “If only you would have been here, He won’t have died”. Then we hear that even Jesus begins to cry, because it was so sad.

Do we expect our support person to sit and cry with us? Do we expect the minister to cry when someone dies? Surely we would not expect Jesus to cry. But Jesus cries for his good friend Lazarus.

“If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Do we wonder where God is when things go wrong? Well why not? God can take it. God loves us so much, that like a parent with a rebellious son or daughter, God will take our anger knowing we need to blame someone. We need to vent our anxieties about God’s response, or lack thereof. When we are upset about something, we usually take it out on the person we love the most. They can take it. Love will triumph.

No matter how much we worry about what could go wrong, God will listen. We may worry about, “What happens if I lose my job? What will happen when I go to the doctor – surely he will find something wrong with me? What if someone we love dies? What if? What if?” God is listening.

This week, I’ve prayed several times with a dying parishioner over the phone. Several hours later I found out she was in a coma. The next morning her daughter put her cell phone against her mother’s ear, and we prayed again, and we did that again yesterday. We prayed that she journey home to God and that journey will be full of love and peace. No more pain!

We cried – God listened! Words could not explain anything that was going on at that moment. We wish maybe it could have been otherwise, but we knew her mom would have spent the next two or three months going in and out of the hospital. Yes, we wish it could have been otherwise – like Martha and Mary. But it wasn’t.

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday and the week following we walk with Jesus towards the cross. Yes we may wonder, “Couldn’t this be otherwise”? Not the cross? But it wasn’t otherwise. Jesus heads to, and Jesus dies on that cross. Yes, it could have been otherwise, but it wasn’t.

Yet we know what happens three days later – the resurrection! Again, “It could have been otherwise, but it wasn’t.” Jesus could have stayed dead, but no - God raised Jesus, so God could also raise you and me.

Somehow God is able to have these Holy conversations with us. We may not be totally sure how things are going to turn out. But somehow God speaks to us. We

feel free. We see the light, and we journey towards it, ignoring the darkness around us. We can see new life taking over our long-dead places. When you “hear” God’s voice speaking into your life - It’s time to listen!

In today’s story Jesus brings Lazarus back to life. Some preachers say they feel sorry for Lazarus, because now he has to die again. Lazarus was already in heaven enjoying his new life and Jesus calls out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out”!

And out of the tomb came Lazarus, his hands and feet and face still covered with the bands of cloth they buried him in. What would Lazarus be thinking? A good friend of mine told me about her journey towards the great light. When she thought she was almost there, she heard, “Sorry it’s not your time yet – go back”. Oh was she ticked! Then she decided, “If God sent me back, God must have plans for me here on earth”. For another 15 years, she helped out so many people. When the time came for her to go – she left with a smile on her face. It was not an uncertain journey. She was sure she wasn’t going to be sent back again. What a Holy conversation!

Our ministry, our good works and our relationship with the Christ is complete when we recognize that we are not alone. When we recognize we are part of a living, caring and loving community. We are not alone. God is with us – all the way to that cross, and even after! Thanks be to God.

### **Offering:**

We might not be able to place our money unto the offering plate, but we give of ourselves each Sunday as we also give our gifts of cash. People have been asking me how they might continue to support our ministries. You are welcome to send some monthly postdated cheques to your church treasurer. We have added a ‘Donate’ page to our website at southbuxton.ca - we can accept ETransfers, credit cards, and the information to mail cheques is all there.

In this time of uncertainty, let us continue to share our wonderful gifts of compassion, empathy and love with each other. Continue to share our Spiritual gifts of prayer, of thought, of calling and checking in with others. The longer we are separated; the more we can assume that folks in our community will be affected by job loss, by being sick, or by needing to be quarantined. Food and money may very well become scarce for some in our community. We as followers of Jesus, in faith, will offer our help. If you are doing okay, consider increasing your offering and gifts to support these realities.

Let us take a moment to consider the gifts we may offer today.

## **Offering Music:**

## **Offering Prayer:**

**We connect to one another because of grace. Even strangers or enemies are like family to us because we are all part of God's plan and promises. We share with one another because we have everything we need. God, use these gifts and this sacrifice of our time and talent to lavish your love on the whole family of God. In Jesus' Name, we give with thanks.**

**Music: "Just a Little Talk with Jesus" by The Oakridge Boys at a Gauthier Concert**

## **Pastoral Prayer:**

*Let us pray:*

O Jesus who wept over the death of Lazarus, be with all who grieve. Today we offer our prayers to the Roe family at the loss of Murray. We pray for Sue's family and her daughter Leeann. Be with these folks as they say goodbye to those they love.

O Jesus who wept over the state of Jerusalem, be with our cities, our villages, and our centres of worship in these uncertain times. Be with our brothers and sisters in Christ all around the world. Keep everyone safe and healthy.

O Jesus who wept alone in Gethsemane, be with all who feel alone, all who face difficult decisions. Be with those who are finding it hard to stay at home, because the walls are closing in on them.

O Jesus who wept, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" be with all who are tortured, all who are victims. Be with those in our hospitals and nursing homes - that they may find comfort and joy in one another, when they cannot have visitors or family members to brighten their days.

O Jesus who offered up prayers with loud cries and tears, now hear our prayers of requests . . . . (moment of silence)

O Jesus who wept in sympathy and frustration, be with us as we are grieving those whom we've lost, and yet we do not have the opportunity to support the family or to say goodbye.

Especially be with the doctors and nurses, the hospital and nursing home support staff, our emergency personnel, the store clerks, and the stockers of the shelves – Keep them safe, healthy and strong. May they know their community is praying for them.

Be with each one of us as we struggle to stay at home. Be with those who have been laid off as their place of work is closed. Be with those who are already feeling the pinch. Be with us as we reach out to help those in our community who need our help. Keep us calm and help us to listen when you are showing us the wisdom to do the right things at the right times.

O Living God, who knows all our pain and joy, be with us in our lives. May your healing power flow into a world consumed by fear, of sickness, of powerlessness, of pandemics, of incompetence. All of this we ask 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:** We are called to carry the blessing into the world. At this point, we cannot depart from our own places. Yet we belong to one another. So we move together in spirit, and we will remember – We do not go alone. May God bless each and every one of us – keep us safe and in good health, now and forever more.

### **Chorus:**

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.