

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Reflection for Tuesday April 7th, 2020

Opening Music: “God’s Wonderful People” - Chorus – Innerkip United Church Quartet

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning!

Thank you for all you are doing to keep our community connected. We had a great outpouring of Food that is being delivered to the Blenheim Food Bank. Cash Donations were given to George to add it to our Food Bank Fund. Talbot Street is keeping tabs on the Wheatley Food Bank, as they help to staff the Wheatley Food Bank once per month. Please remember to stay home (unless you are working) and stay safe and healthy.

Update on What’s Happening in Chatham-Kent:

I’d like to take a few minutes to share some of the latest information in Chatham - Kent. As of Sunday Chatham Kent has one positive in hospital for COVID-19, and one has died from COVID-19. The hospital has 9 patients with suspected or waiting for test results. Out of 322 tests, we have 14 confirmed cases in Chatham-Kent with most isolating at home.

Across Canada, the numbers are about 14,500 confirmed cases. That works out to 4/100th of 1%. Deaths in Canada are 260 – which is less than 2% of confirmed infected cases - compared to other counties which have close to a 10% death rate. Canada and Chatham-Kent are in very good shape. What we are doing seems to be working. We will need to continue staying home, and being safe for a couple more weeks at least.

We are a fluid society, and we meet many people, even hundreds and thousands over a two week period. It takes up to two weeks for COVID-19 to show up. Again from our Community Leaders: Thank you for doing your part, and encouraging your family and friends to do their part. Please be safe. Avoid public places, maintain social distancing (6 feet away from another person), and frequently wash your hands and faces with soap and warm water. Together, we will beat this.

Thank you from all of us to our Health Care and Support Workers, to our Emergency Services, and those who keep us in food. Thank you for all the institutions for keeping their workers safe. This week, many stores are only letting in a few folks at a time to shop – making sure they are going right in and right out. As one leaves, only one more can go in – only one person per family. Store staff ensure you stay away from other shoppers, and safe distance from staff. Hopefully these safeguards will continue to keep the stores open and safe. We each need to do our part.

Again, If you are having difficulty breathing – call the ambulance. Do not have your family take you to the hospital. The Emergency Medical Service Personnel are trained to assess you

and determine what needs to be done. Following this procedure keeps your family safe, and if you are okay, this procedure keeps you safe. Keep healthy!

If in doubt, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000

We are all in this together. It a great time to look after yourself, and to connect with the important people in your lives. Each and every one of us ARE making a difference. Keep courageous. Be prepared. Inspire others by your actions and care.

Today's reflection is based on Exodus 12

Opening Prayer:

Eric: God has called us—we have responded.

People: Some of us sing a joyful hallelujah,

Eric: others give quiet thanks to God.

People: Some of us seek God's ways in the activities of our lives,

Eric: others sense God's ways in contemplation and prayer.

People: Whatever our choice, wherever we go,

Eric: God is with us always.

Scripture: Exodus 12: Selected Verses *from the Contemporary English Version – by Alice Dale*

The Passover

Some time later the Lord said to Moses and Aaron:

Tell the people of Israel that on the tenth day of this month the head of each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for his family to eat. If any family is too small to eat the whole animal, they must share it with their next-door neighbors. Choose either a sheep or a goat, but it must be a one-year-old male that has nothing wrong with it. And it must be large enough for everyone to have some of the meat.

Put some of the blood on the two doorposts and above the door of each house where the animals are to be eaten. That night the animals are to be roasted and eaten, together with bitter herbs and thin bread made without yeast. Eat what you want that night, and the next morning burn whatever is left. When you eat the meal, be dressed and ready to travel. Have your sandals on, carry your walking stick in your hand, and eat quickly. This is the Passover Festival in honor of me, your Lord.

The blood on the houses will show me where you live, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and save you. Then you won't be bothered by the terrible disasters I will bring on Egypt. Remember this day and celebrate it each year as a festival in my honor. For seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. And on the first of these seven days, you must remove all yeast from your homes. Meet together for worship on the first and seventh days of the festival.

Reflection:

Today we hear the reason and instructions for celebrating the Passover. For the Jewish Faith, Passover is the most important festival that reminds them that they are not alone. God is with them. God will save them.

The instruction not to eat bread made with yeast, during the week of Passover, may be where we get the ideal of giving up something for Lent. Personally I am on my last week without coffee. I am drinking tea, so it has not been all that bad.

So this is the week that Jesus and the disciples are celebrating Passover. They actually gather on Maundy Thursday to share the Passover Meal – either literally or metaphorically. We know this meal as the “Last Supper”, as that night Jesus is arrested and sent to trial. Our own Christian Communion Service is based on the Last Supper. During the Last Supper, Jesus uses everyday elements – food and drink to celebrate the Communion of Remembrance of Jesus.

The United Church of Canada deemed about 5 years ago that community gathered – either in person or electronically – are considered the community and therefore can share communion together – linked by the Holy Spirit. So Thursday night, during our Maundy Thursday Service, we will share Communion. If you wish to keep the Maundy Thursday service simple, which would tie it well into the Passover Feast, we invite you to think of a cracker and a grape. That would leave the bread and juice for Easter Sunday. But either way it is your call.

Maybe the biggest message we get from Exodus today, is that we need to be prepared! We are heading with Jesus to the cross this week – actually in 2 days. We will be sharing a Maundy Thursday Service with a hand/foot washing, and last supper opportunities. Keep in mind you will need to gather those elements before the service. Be prepared! Gather a bowl with water and a towel, and the cracker and the grape (or whatever you will use to celebrate the Last Supper). Being prepared can help us to be present during our time together. Being prepared also helps us to not fret about what is coming in the future.

God only knows what is in front of us. We could spend precious energy worrying about what tomorrow will bring. If we do, we are not much help to anyone else. Let’s be prepared by touching base with each other. Be prepared by sharing how we can be the Church at home. We are all learning new this, which in turns helps us to be prepared.

Like the people of Israel, we wait for the word to get going again. God says through the scriptures today, “Be prepared” – grab your sandals, carry your walking stick – be ready! God also says through Exodus to celebrate it each year. Meet together for worship. Be Prepared! We as the church, are prepared to help wherever we are needed.

We are in this together. God will save us as God saved the people of Israel. We must be prepared! Let’s us meet together to worship as the Church gathered. Together and with God we will triumph. This is not the end of the story. The adventure is just about to start. We are not alone. Thanks be to God!

Song: “**God’s Wonderful People**” – Innerkip United Church Quartet

Prayer: *Let us pray...*

God of all seasons, in your pattern of things there is a time for keeping and a time for losing; a time for building up and a time for pulling down. In this holy season of Lent, as we journey to the cross, help us to discern in our lives what we must lay down and what we must take up; what we must end and what we must begin. Give us grace to lead a disciplined life, in glad faithfulness and with the joy which comes from a closer walk with Christ.

Today we pray for those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, and their families. We pray for those whose family member has died, and for the community who grieves. We pray for those others in Hospital, yet we cannot visit; we think of Randy today. We pray for those in Retirement places and Nursing Homes; for the clients, for the staff and for everyone's well being.

Keep our families, friends, neighbours, acquaintances and our faith community safe and healthy. Empower us to care for one another, knowing we do so with the Holy Spirit leading and guiding us. Encourage us to be responsible and protect each other, including the vulnerable in our community.

Lord, we thank you for our Health Care and Emergency Personnel, who are putting themselves and their own health on the line continuously as they care for the sick and the those diagnosed with the Corona Virus. We thank you for those in grocery stores, who are keeping us alive with food and supplies. We pray for everyone who puts their lives at risk as they supply us with our every day needs. Please keep them all safe and healthy.

In this Holy Week, we walk with Jesus to the cross, we reflect on what's happening around us at this time. Our lives are turned upside down and we may fear what will be our future. Thank you for those who have reached out to us, for those who pray for us, and for those who are looking after us.

God, bless our new ways of communicating and meeting as your people. This week as we share communion at home, may we truly feel you with us. Lord, you have called us by our name. We know we are yours. You are God, the One who dwells in us with the Holy Spirit, the One whom we know through Jesus the Christ, the One who can save us, now and forever more. Amen.

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