

MESSAGE FROM ST. JOHN'S CHURCH



Newsletter for July 2023

Rev. Daniel's Message

One Sunday a few weeks back I was sitting in my seat, listening to the Layreader leading us through the Prayers of the People. We got to the prayer for the deceased and those for whom the memorial flowers were given, and it occurred to me that no one in the congregation knew who these people were. That wasn't strange, in itself; many people give flowers for loved ones who are not known to the congregation. What *did* seem strange to me was that the people who had given the flowers weren't in church themselves for the service they wanted their loved ones remembered at and indeed, I hadn't seen them at St John's since long before the pandemic.

We used to send out personal letters, inviting people to attend church on the Sundays when they were giving flowers in memory of loved ones. I stopped this practice for three reasons: 1) it took up a lot of our Administrator's time, keeping track of and preparing letters to be sent out, not to mention the postage costs. 2) it very seldom resulted in the recipient attending anyway, 3) why should people have to be personally invited to a church they say they are members of to pray for people they have specifically asked their own church to pray for?

I found myself musing about this for the next few days – not just the issue of flower memorials, but of attendance at worship in general. Why aren't people coming?

Over 25 years as a parish priest I have heard all the reasons – many valid (*age, sickness, work*); some more excuses than reasons (*I've just got out of the habit*); some an attempt to shift responsibility onto others (*I still hear people blaming lower church attendance on the government opening stores on Sunday. So, let me get this straight. You only came to worship because you couldn't go shopping instead? And that's the government's fault?*)

While the reasons for not attending worship are many, I found myself thinking instead about the reasons FOR attending worship.

There are numerous studies that underscore the many benefits of regular church attendance: increased social interaction and community support which leads to a better quality of life and longer life expectancy; a decrease in the likelihood of indulging in destructive behaviours; a greater ability to feel gratitude and to forgive others; learning to see one's self as part of a larger whole which results in less selfishness, more generosity and a stronger sense of discipline and duty towards others.

The thing is, you can receive all those same benefits from participation in other communities; organizations that are far more conveniently packaged with fewer obligations and expectations attached. You want to meet like-minded friends? Take up a hobby. Join a social club. You want to feel less stressed, feel better and live longer? Join a gym or meditation group. Take up yoga! You want to feel connected to your family history – check out www.ancestry.ca. You will find more there than you ever

will in a church archive. You want to do good? You can volunteer with hundreds of worthy agencies which provide help to far more people with far greater resources than any church will ever have.

So maybe that's why people aren't attending church, they've realized they can find all those things elsewhere. Yet are these the main reasons for regularly attending worship?

So why *should* I attend worship? The short answer is simply: *God tells us to*. The scriptures speak of God's desire that we not be *solitary* followers, but a *community*. True, the Bible doesn't say anywhere that we have to "go to church", but that's because the Bible doesn't understand church to be a building. It does however urge us to gather as a community.

The Letter to the Hebrews states: *let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, all the more as you see the Day of Christ's Coming approaching.* (Hebrews 10: 5)

Jesus tells us that he expects his followers to meet together. In Matthew 18:20 he says: *For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.*

Again, Paul says in Colossians 3:16: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* But how can we learn from one another, or be accountable to one another, or worship with one another, if we never meet together? God's Word makes clear God's desire that we should regularly meet together.

Another reason we gather as church is because *we promised to do so*. In our baptismal promises, we vow *to continue in the apostle's teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers*. Fellowship is impossible if we never see one another. The breaking of the bread (Eucharist) and "the prayers" (liturgy) can only happen when the community gathers. Indeed, unlike our Roman Catholic colleagues, Anglican clergy are not allowed to celebrate the Eucharist unless there is at least one other member of the church present, because if the "community" isn't gathered, it isn't truly "church".

We need to remember that gathering together as church is first and foremost about *obedience*; gathering together because God has told us to and because we promised to do so.

If church is only about "what I get out of it", I stop being a *disciple* and I become a *consumer*; and I begin to do what all consumers do – I start shopping around for the best deal, getting the most I possibly can at the lowest possible cost to myself and opting out when I'm no longer 100% satisfied or it becomes inconvenient.

The Church itself has fallen into this trap – often putting more effort into marketing and re-branding itself *to consumers* than it does in forming and empowering *disciples*. But the church can only form disciples of those who are regularly part of it – who attend worship, take part in learning opportunities and fellowship events and who contribute to the ministry of the church with their own time, talents and treasure.

We will only be a regular part of the church if we stop seeing attendance as *optional*.

Consumers have *options*, concerned with what works best for *them*. *Disciples* have *obligations*, and base decisions not only on what they want, but on what God has asked for.

I would like all those who consider themselves to be members of St. John's Dixie to reflect on this over the summer and perhaps make a renewed commitment for the coming autumn. Have I been more of a consumer of religion than a disciple of Jesus? What are my reasons for not attending worship more regularly? Are they valid reasons? Am I using the existence of livestreaming as an excuse not to attend in person? If I truly can't attend in person, am I making online worship a commitment? *Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. – Exodus 8:20*

Daniel +

SERVICE INFORMATION:

Choir Hiatus

The choir will be on hiatus for the summer months of July and August. The choir will be resuming September 10, 2023. During the summer months, it has been decided by the Corporation to employ one soloist for each Sunday of the summer to help to lead the congregational singing during the choir's absence. We thank our Music Director, Jeff McLeod and all the members of our choir for their commitment and hard work over many services during the past ten months.

Think About Joining the Choir

Calling all singers! We are looking for more members of the choir!! No matter your experience, if you enjoy singing, please consider joining this friendly and fun community. As music plays a large role in Anglican Liturgy, it is a very important and valuable way to participate in church life while offering your talents. Come hone your singing skills while making new friends! Reading music is not a requirement. Jeff makes practice tracks for music anthems that we learn, so you can hear and practice exactly what your part is from the comfort of your home. Please don't worry, you will never be put in a position to do a solo. There is also the option to join only for the music heavy seasons of Advent and Lent - but you might have so much fun that you decide to stick around for the entire year. We rehearse weekly on Wednesdays, 5:30-6:30pm.

Finally - many anthems include parts for other instruments such as trumpet, flute, violin or cello, and I'd love to know if anybody has any hidden talents that they'd love to share!

Please speak to the music director Jeff after one of the services to let him know that you'd be interested in lending your vocal or instrumental talents! You can also email him at jeffreymcleod@gmail.com. He'd love to hear from you!

Wednesday Services

We hold a Wednesday service at 10:00 a.m. with a small bible study after the service. In the prayers and homily at these services we learn about the lives and ministries of various saints and holy people commemorated in the Church Calendar. The bible study after the service is optional. We will continue through the July but are planning **on taking the month of August off**, resuming in September.

EVENTS INFORMATION:

St. John the Baptist Celebration

We recently celebrated St. John the Baptist Day during the service we honoured people that have contributed to the church in many ways for long periods of time. These people have been part of all aspects of our church life whether it be through worship or social fellowship. The recipients of this honour were as follows: **Thelma and Covey Carter, Allan and Carol Ann Morgan, Lois and Walter Marshall, Alice Dods, John Deen and Kathy Gilbert**. We proceeded to enjoy a BBQ provided by "On the Move Catering Food Truck" which was provided by our Cemetery. There was an opportunity to see the expansion of the Cemetery Niche Room and the new outdoor workers facility. The turn-out was tremendous and a good time was had by all in attendance.

PROGRAM INFORMATION:

Online Bible Study

Beginning Tuesday, July 4th - Tuesday Night Bible Study will spend the summer with Paul's Letter to the Romans. The Epistle each Sunday will be from Romans for the next several weeks, so we decided to tackle the Letter as a whole, studying two chapters of Romans each week, taking us up to the beginning of September (excluding first two weeks of August when Fr. Daniel is on holiday). The link for the Zoom Study can be found at the end of this newsletter.

Our in-person Wednesday study group will continue to look at one of the readings for the upcoming Sunday as is our usual custom.

Gardening Group

Bobby Briones is heading up a group of people interested in tending to our gardens again this year. We are looking into having students help with garden during the summer months in order to get their volunteer hours. We still need to have people to supervise them and also to assist with watering during the week. If you could be available to water during the week, please speak to Bobby Briones.

Contemplative Prayer Group

The group will be meeting on the second and fourth Thursdays of July. The group is being led by Paula Marshall. We are offering it online and in person on the following evenings at 7:00 p.m. July 13, 27th. The link to join us online is provided at the end of the newsletter with the other links.

Open Door

Each month, we are collecting for either the Open Door or the Mississauga Food Bank. Each month we alternate between the two. **July is Open Door Month.**

The Open Door is located in the Square One Shopping centre. It is a Christian based service providing assistance with food, clothing and other needed products to adults and children. Open Door clients are mostly new immigrants. The Open Door also assists newcomers to Canada in navigating various government and community programs. They are collecting hygiene products, diapers and baby products, household cleaning supplies and paper products which are not always available through food banks. They also collect clothing but due to a shortage of storage space request that only clothing appropriate to the current season be donated at that time.

Financially contributing to St. John's

Just a reminder, during the season of summer holidays, we have many options in order to ensure your contributions get to the church when you can't. We do accept e-transfers now. You just have to use the email address of church@stjohnsdixie.com There is no need for a password, we have auto deposit. You can also donate through Canada Helps there is charge for administrative fees taken off your donation. Their website is www.canadahelps.org or you can use the QR code provided. Of course, you can always mail in the offering at St. John's Anglican Church, 719 Dundas Street East, Mississauga, ON L4Y 2B5.



LINKS TO PROGRAMING ABOVE:

St. Johns Church website

www.stjohnsdixie.org

YouTube Sunday Service link: Sunday 10am

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtzI0jSblIfmOd9emgTzjTA>

Online Coffee Hour: July 16 & 30 at 11:30 a.m.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83962667012?pwd=UGljbnZ2WUIMaVlzNlRtU0Q5SmxxZz09>

Meeting ID: 839 6266 7012

Passcode: 112233

Online Bible Study: Tuesdays 7pm .

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82570649568>

Online Prayer Group – Thursdays at 10 a.m.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86710167010>

Online Contemplative Prayer – Thursday, July 13th and 27th at 7pm.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86361768409>



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Incumbent: The Reverend Daniel Brereton

If you would like to receive this Newsletter by email, please call 905-277-0462 or email church@stjohnsdixie.com