



July 23, 2020

Dear friends,

As we write this, Paul's words to the Christians in Thessalonica come to mind: "We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord." Despite our physical separation from each other and from our beautiful church, our faith has continued to grow these past few months. We are blessed that our parish has been able not only to stay connected, but also to make a real impact during this time, thanks to each and every one of us. We have all faced some form of hardship and loss, but we have remained a faith community, supporting each other in so many ways.

A huge thank you to Susan, Margie, Scott, Ellen, Peggy, and Dwight, who were able to turn on a dime and offer an entire array of virtual services with music, and keep the church office running seamlessly. Thank you also to our hardworking vestry and committee chairs who have provided such strong leadership during this time. Finally, thanks to each one of you for staying connected and helping to support the wonderful community that is St. John's.

We wanted to highlight some of the events and activities that have been happening while the church building has been closed:

- Multiple services, including Morning and Noonday Prayer, Compline, and Sunday worship, most with musical accompaniment.
- Online recital series, choral works, and Pipes Alive! concerts for our widening online audience, featuring an opportunity to offer financial support to our community partners.
- Youth education, Sunday school, and Vacation Bible School.
- Virtual social events, including Sunday coffee hour and meet-ups for families and adults.
- Vestry phone call and/or e-mail check-ins with all parishioners.
- Intensive pastoral care by Susan and Margie, particularly with those facing illness and isolation.
- Bible Studies, book discussions, and Education for Ministry classes.
- Pen pal correspondence between parish youth and our seniors.
- Susan's use of her discretionary fund to help parishioners and those in our community with immediate needs.
- Our community garden, which has been planted and tended to by a corps of volunteers, with early harvests donated to the Seventh Day Adventist Church Food Pantry and the Hartford Catholic Worker house in the North End.
- Reinvigorated work of our Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation Committee in response to persistent racism and its devastating consequences.
- Ongoing nonperishable food donations to Loaves and Fishes.
- Continued support of our outreach partners and organizations focusing on homelessness, hunger and literacy/ESOL.

All these activities are made possible through your individual efforts and financial support. Despite our closed red doors, pledges and gifts have continued to arrive. Thank you so much to our generous donors who have opened your pockets during this difficult financial time.

We are all looking forward to returning to church. We are pleased to offer outdoor services starting Sunday, July 26th at 5 p.m. We hope that this will be the first step toward gradually and safely opening our doors to worship together inside the church. This process is being carefully shepherded by our Reentry Task Force, who are establishing guidelines and processes to worship together safely.

Save the date for our annual Dine-Around Dinners on Friday, September 11th (rain date: September 12th). These will take place outdoors at parishioners' homes, and provide an opportunity to socialize in person while maintaining social distancing. More details on this to come. Please let the church office know if you would like to attend or host a dinner!

Although this has been a challenging time for all of us, we are blessed to be a part of this vibrant, caring community. We look forward to seeing some of you soon; know that you all are missed! Please let us know if you have any ideas for us as a parish during this transition time.

Your wardens,



Geoff Emerick



Virginia Van Dyk