

The Anglican Church of St. Paul, L'Amoreaux

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Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

December 4, 2021

Dear Friends,

Twenty months of Covid! What an extraordinary time, but with us long enough that we begin to see a little further ahead than we could see at first.

Here are three things.

First, significant challenges remain.

Right now, only a fraction of those who used to attend in person are doing so and this will likely continue at least until masks can be removed and Sunday School resumes. Additionally, there is a new caution about gathering in public, and of sufficient weight that it is unlikely to pass quickly. Financially, we were able to make substantial cuts in our expenses in order to operate within the reduced income of 2020 and 2021. This has been successful to date but as the guidelines ease and programs restart, increased activity depends on increased support. This must be watched carefully. We will need your support.

And once the safety measures are withdrawn, it will still take a while for people to place Covid within the ordinary list of risks that we face each day. There will be a period as our people restore the ordinary practices of the Christian life and meet together.

The importance of our life together and in person is interesting. While union with God and a relationship with Jesus Christ in his body the Church is foremost in the Christian invitation, it is also a full life into which we are called. The ordinary practices that fill the Christian life do so in ways that are more than just spiritual. Recently, two Harvard professors wrote about how Christians who pray and serve together and in person have fared much better than those who do not practice a faith or live without one. The advantages were significant: the emotional health of young and old, young people finding their bearings, hope in times of tragedy and loss, a bulwark against matters as serious as depression, divorce and suicide. And as the researchers put it, being together makes the difference: "Our research suggests that religious service attendance specifically, rather than private practices or

self-assessed religiosity or spirituality, most powerfully predicts health.”

Their findings were so strong that they are recommending them to be considered by public health officials and that the decline of church attendance be considered a public health crisis.

www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/november/church-empty-pews-are-american-public-health-crisis.html

The challenges of meeting together will be faced squarely. We’re hoping that a “back to church Sunday” might present itself in the coming year. When that happens, we will use the opportunity to call and write everyone we know, inviting them home (a committee to do so is already in place). We’ll spread the word in our community as widely as possible.

Secondly, the congregation has changed.

We’re all two years older. A dear company has departed from us to be with God. Children have been born and baptized. And new friends have joined us.

Consequently and thirdly, as we’ve been reporting and as you would expect, throughout this season the parish has remained diligent, members have remained faithful and the Lord has presented new opportunities.

Through careful and wise financial management, not only have we kept our team of clergy and staff in place, we’ve also maintained the facility with steps taken to address the restoration of a 45-year-old roof. The roof has been well maintained. A larger restoration is in view and advanced planning will keep it manageable for the parish. We’ve worked hard to maintain the church building and preserve this beautiful place of worship for future generations.

And what’s truly encouraging is that as the doors have been carefully re-opened, not only has the response been strong, but new opportunities have presented themselves.

Mention was made of this on Anniversary Sunday.

New York Times columnist Ross Douthat has noted that while secular forces may be exerting a weakening force in Europe and North America, it is not the case in Africa and Asia where the church thrives, often as a foil to secular and technological regimes in the west. So imagine, Douthat says, “a religious landscape remade by African and Chinese Christianities.” (*The Decadent Society*, p. 228)

Is that something to fear or to welcome?

Right now, here at St. Paul's, where the Lord in his wisdom has gathered the world, the answer is filled with hope.

Over the last few months, new friends at St. Paul's have joined us from Africa, reflecting a pattern of immigration in our neighborhood. We are actively exploring how we can offer the welcome of Christ to these friends in their new home. The first meeting of the fellowship will be in January, anticipating a larger event in February.

Right now, an opportunity may be opening for us to serve as a spiritual centre for First Nation Anglicans in Scarborough and a bridge to the senior services of SPLC. With the help and encouragement of Archbishop Mark MacDonald, bishop to all First Nation Anglicans in Canada, we are looking at this carefully.

In early October, we restarted our steel pans and youth string program, the latter now three times the usual size. The strings and pans, in concert with the beautiful array at St. Paul's, presented a wonderful "Hope is in the Air" Anniversary concert.

And all of this as we continue to build on our outreach to Tamil-speaking friends and throughout southeast Asia; as we build on our outreach to Chinese friends; as we pray for the day - *with hope that it is coming soon* - when we can unlock the gate and let our youth ministry back out into the community at full strength; and when we can sing and pray together at full strength, filling the air with the prayers and praise of St. Paul's.

Every year at this time is our Stewardship emphasis. Its purpose is threefold:

- *To give an account of how the gifts received by the parish are applied.
- *To highlight the fundamental areas in the Christian mission of the parish.
- *And to emphasize the central place and grateful obligation of stewardship in the life of every Christian.

St. Paul's has seven fundamental areas of ministry and service. This remains unchanged and we are pursuing each one of them wholeheartedly, adapting to the new circumstances as quickly and creatively as we can:

*Christian worship - the beating heart of the parish offered through daily prayer, through sacramental service throughout the week and climaxing at the Sunday Eucharist. In exceptional times, the online services were offered, along with a gradual return to the services in the church.

*Outreach - with our gifts and our hands we act out the riddle of the Christian life: that in giving our lives away in the name of Christ, we discover in full the meaning, depth and joy of the life God has given to us. Generous support this year at the Walk-a-thon and Anniversary Concert has encouraged this ministry.

*Pastoral care - by the clergy and by every member, bearing witness in the world that this Christian community will be known by their love for one another (John 13.35).

*Education - of every member, infant through elder, families and individuals preparing for baptism, young people in their discernment, couples for marriage, all Christians in our faith.

*Evangelism - the presentation to those who seek of what it means to accept and practice the Christian faith in the person of Jesus Christ.

*Fellowship - the responsibility to meet together as the Scripture teaches (Hebrews 10.25). This may be the area of greatest loss, but we do what we can on the phone, online, and in person as the guidelines permit. We do our best to accept the lessons that our Lord is teaching in this time. The beauty of silence and rest. The beauty of the natural world which we are still free to enjoy. The priceless gift of our families. The depth of Holy Scripture. The grace of our Lord's touch when other distractions are laid aside.

*Administration. Like so many other professions, in a matter of days the parish converted much of its daily administration to online methods as well as establishing safe and secure means for receiving the gifts of the parish when receiving them in person was no longer possible. Now as the office re-opens, last year's work of innovation and upgrading has been integrated and is serving us well.

So, three things to say in conclusion.

First and foremost, regular giving according to the standard of the Biblical tithe is one of the fundamental practices of a Christian. It is the offering to God of our first and best gift. It is the support of the body of which Christ has made us a part. For his sake, it is our hand extended in service

to those in need and in invitation to those drawing near to Christ.

Secondly, the ideal is and will remain the gift given on Sunday while attending Sunday services, another of our fundamental practices. But in this time when regular weekly attendance is interrupted, we appeal to everyone to consider alternatives. The recommended alternatives are Pre-Authorized Giving or E-transfers. Both are secure, the P.A.G. is regular and the E-transfer can be made regular, and both are cost efficient, in most cases less expensive than writing a cheque.

With both P.A.G. and E-transfers, the amount is up to you. P.A.G. contributions can be changed with a simple note or a phone call to the Envelope Secretary. They are safe and secure. And they are regular, matching the regular and day to day obligations of the parish.

The regular Sunday giving of our faithful members has made St. Paul's strong and has kept us strong. But so long as this exceptional time continues, we ask you to consider one of the online alternatives. We recommend the P.A.G. or a regular E-transfer.

And thirdly, in our annual Stewardship Emphasis three requests are made.

- 1) First, you are asked to indicate your intended offering for the 2022 fiscal year on the enclosed pledge card. The parish remains strong and stable but we need everyone's support to weather the storm. Your pledge offers enormous help in planning for the year ahead.
- 2) Secondly, as mentioned above, during this time of interrupted Sunday attendance, you are asked to consider a pre-authorized gift (described above) that provides regular support for the regular expenses that the parish faces.
- 3) And thirdly, every member is challenged to give at least 2% on the way toward the Christian ideal of the 10% tithe.

<i>Weekly Offering</i>						
Annual Income	1%	2%	4%	6%	8%	10%
\$20,000	\$4	\$8	\$15	\$23	\$31	\$38
\$30,000	\$6	\$12	\$23	\$35	\$46	\$58
\$40,000	\$8	\$15	\$31	\$46	\$62	\$77
\$50,000	\$10	\$19	\$38	\$58	\$77	\$96
\$75,000	\$14	\$29	\$58	\$87	\$115	\$144
\$100,000	\$19	\$38	\$77	\$115	\$154	\$192

The stewardship of our time and resources is one of the most important aspects of Christian life. The people of St. Paul, L'Amoreaux have given generously from the resources with which they have been blessed so that the church can remain financially sound and vibrant. This generosity is reflected in regular from which the operating costs are met and the various outreach and community programs funded. The people of St. Paul's recognize that while we should enjoy the good things the Lord has provide, we cannot consider ourselves true Christians without giving generously to the work of God.

Despite all the challenges of the last 20 months, the support and generosity of the members St Paul's has remained strong. We thank you. We seek your continuing support. And we pray for the end of the pandemic when we can be together again, filling the air with the praise of God and serving wholeheartedly in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

A COLLECT FOR STEWARDSHIP

O God, in whose image we are created, guide us to make this parish a welcoming home where spiritual growth is encouraged. Inspire us to use the gifts you have entrusted to us to serve Christ in all the communities of the world You love. We pray as disciples of Jesus, and in His name. Amen.

God bless you.

Michael Gregory, Chair of the Stewardship Committee

Fr. Dean Mercer, Parish Priest

Bernie Bellis, Financial Coordinator

Daisy Lucas, Envelope Secretary

Ivy Matthews, Volunteer Coordinator

Peter Conliffe-Layne, Incumbent's Warden; Lucy Fung, People's Warden

George Millington, Keith Morris, Ravi Thirugnanam - Deputy Wardens

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Stewardship 2022
FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT CARD
Together, we weather the storm.

I/We pledge a total of \$ _____ for the year 2022 toward the ministries, programs, and operations of St. Paul's, L'Amoreaux.

My/Our pledge will be paid:

Weekly \$ _____

Monthly \$ _____

One-time \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____
(No. & Street) City

Province Postal Code

Telephone Number: _____

Email: _____

I/We select the following payment option for 2022:

- Continue Pre-Authorized Giving
- Convert to Pre-Authorized Giving
(Contact the office or Envelope Secretary.)
- Convert to Online e-transfers
- Continue to use Weekly Offering Envelopes
- Continue to use Monthly Offering Envelopes

THANK YOU FOR BEING A FAITHFUL STEWARD
Tax receipts are issued for all gifts.
Commitment starts January 2022.

For assistance or information, contact:

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