Happy Midweek everyone! It’s my privilege to be back in this virtual space after being away for a week. We were on Vancouver Island and actually had our entire family together for three full days which is remarkable considering that the boys live in New York and London, Ontario and that my oldest son and wife live in Halifax. We were blessed. I’d highly recommend the Comox Valley as a get away spot. There’s spectacular forests hiking and coastline, good coffee shops and don’t get me started on Cumberland ice cream!

Well, how’s everyone doing? I wish I could visit with every one of you and get the inside scoop. Maybe it’s just summer but my calls and emails from you have really dropped off in the last couple of months. Please know that I’d love to know how I can pray for you and serve your spiritual growth at this strange time in our common lives but I need to hear from you first! If that’s not your thing, I get that too, but please know that you’re always welcome in my world and that I’d love to connect in person, on Zoom or on the phone. My phone # is 604-302-1082.

Today in our Church calendar we honour Clare of Assisi, a 13th century abbess who spent all her life in the Italian town of Assisi.

At the age of 18 she was a woman of beauty and wealth when she heard Francis preach about the poverty of Christ. She was so deeply converted that renounced her former life, threw away all her brocades and silks and put on the rough garment of a nun. She then spent the rest of her life living in this poverty, in contemplation and prayer, seeking help other poor people along with a group of other women who took similar vows.

When Denise and I took our “trip of a lifetime” to Italy in 2009 we visited Assisi and the grotto in which she lived; there her body is embalmed, a weird sight to be sure.

Though I have to admit, I can’t quite fathom her choices, I’m in awe of what she and her order were willing to give up. I’m moved to freshly contemplate how little I need to live into core of abundant living and I’m exhorted by her life to reflect on how much clutters my life and takes me away from the life that is truly life.

The next part of this update is a repeat from two weeks ago!

**Phase III**

It’s looks like we’ve got a plan to commence in-person Eucharist! On August 23rd St. Thomas will hold a practice Eucharist at our regular meeting time of 9:00 am (to get us used to getting together at that time). This practice Eucharist will include some instruction on how we’ll be receiving the Eucharist at this time, a shortened homily, a few songs that we can hum along with under our masks and socially distanced coffee time outside.

We will do the same at St. Matthew on August 30th at 11 a.m.

Then starting in September and running to at least Thanksgiving we will alternate weeks of Eucharistic Worship. These will not be “practices” but regular full services but with masks and social distancing.

Sept 6th – St. Thomas 9 a.m.

Sept 13th – St. Matthew 11 a.m.

Sept 20th – St. Thomas 9 a.m.

Sept 27th – St. Matthew 11 a.m.

Oct 4th – St. Thomas 9 a.m.

Oct 11th – St. Matthew 11 a.m.

With livestreaming in place we’ll be able to participate in the worship every week, so if we have a Eucharist at St. Thomas, St. Matthew folk will be able to participate online and vice versa. Alternating for a month and a half will allow us to work out kinks with the online components and help us keep an eye on trends. It limits my exposure as well and makes sure I’m not carrying anything from place to place although I’m hoping the regular protocols would take care of that.

Depending on how things are going in the province, what the councils feel and with your collective input I see us getting back to our regular every week in-person Eucharist by the middle to the end of October. Right now the target date for that is October 18th. Please keep us in your prayers as we try to make wise decisions on behalf of all the people involved in the parishes.

**“Keeping It Real”**

On August 23rd we will finish off our series on Ecclesiastes in conversation with Jesus’ teaching in Matthew. If you have learned something from this series that you’d like to share with others would you be willing to make a voice recording and or a short video and send it to me. If I could collect even a few I could use them in our virtual service for August 23rd. I’d be thrilled if you’d be willing. This doesn’t have to be anything too profound, just something that is “you.”

As you have no doubt have by now heard, the Rev. John Sovereign, former Rector St. Thomas and presently a parishioner at St. Matthew is facing the end of his earthly journey, I’ll let his own FB post speak for itself:

Have been in and out of Emergency and Hospital for about 2 weeks. I am diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, stage 4. It has fully engaged my liver and several other sites. I have days to a few months to live.

I most grieve leaving my family, but also my friends.

I have always known God, although as a young man in my twenties God came into my life in a new and powerful way.

My life has been rich and blessed. Through it all I have grown, and my thirst for wisdom satiated with grace, truth and love. My heart has ever sought to understand, in an earthy sort of way. Of biblical figures, I am a little like David, but not entirely. Maybe Paul is there.

Both in my life in engineering and construction, and as a Priest in the Anglican Church of Canada, I have been blessed by those who have surrounded me to help, ponder, support, and be friends. I have seldom accomplished anything on my own, or by myself.

I am grateful for Allyson, and my children and their spouses (whom I consider my own children). I will miss watching Connor, Mary, and John Jr grow up.

Please don't inundate me on Messenger or Email, or especially phone. I cannot handle much. So please don't. Likes to this post will be enough.

Love you all.

We entrust John (and Allyson) to God’s care. I’ll keep you in touch as we know and learn more. If you want to send thoughts and remembrances please send them to Irene Tisdale at [itisdale@telus.net](mailto:itisdale@telus.net). She’s putting together a book.

I look forward to worshipping virtually with you this Sunday!

Let’s end with the Collect for Clare: “Source and Giver of the eternal Word, teach us to have such love for the example of your holy servant Clare, that above all else we may set our hearts on the gift of life eternal which you alone bestow; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”