Welcome to the 20th midweek update in this virtual space! Have you been beating the heat, enduring it, or enjoying it? This past Sunday I took a dip in the ocean for the first time in years. It has to be really hot for me to get me fully submerged in cold water! Actually it wasn’t very cold, I’m just a water wimp.

Speaking of wimps, actually, the opposite of a wimp; yesterday our Church Calendar honoured John Stuart; he was a missionary among the Mohawks and the first resident priest of upper Canada. He was greatly beloved by the Mohawk people. In a day and age when all aspects of colonialism are denigrated it behooves us to remember that not all relations between indigenous people and those who had first contact with them were oppressive or taken negatively. The overall effect of European culture and settlement on indigenous peoples was and has been horrific in its toll but on an individual level many fine friendships and, indeed, interdependent relations, were and continue to be formed.

I hope and pray that we will be model communities in building relationships across difference and that even as we seek to persuade each other that our persuasion takes the form of love and service.

So a bit of truth-telling, I always want to ask what people are reading but I generally hold off because I know that not all of us are readers. I guess I could expand the question and ask “What are you reading, listening to or watching these days?”

My report goes as follows: I’m reading a book by my favourite Paleoanthropologist Ian Tattersall called *The Rickety Cossack and Other Tales* about the political machinations that accompanied the discovery of ancient hominid fossils and how those discoveries led to a completely new understanding of human origins. I’m struck by how few Christians were part of those discoveries and how afraid of this research many Christians were and still are. On the other hand, finally, and maybe too late Christian thinkers are beginning to ask the serious questions of how this new knowledge needs to be factored into our understanding of the Christian gospel. I’m reading a book by an Anglican priest Andrew Elphinstone called *Freedom, Suffering and Love* that is seeking to demonstrate the beauty of God’s love in light of this sort of new knowledge.

I’m also reading the Massey lectures of Ward Davis, a famous anthropologist whose book based on those lectures *The Wayfinders* is an astounding account of how the knowledge of indigenous peoples around the world is as astounding and complex as anything our technological prowess has come up with. This too has clear implications for our sharing of Christ. On what basis and too what is Christ speaking in relation to the complex cultures and tribes of our earth. There is a message but it must come after much listening and learning, most likely learning and repentance on the part of the proclaimer!

For fun, and as I shared during this past week’s devotional, Denise I are reading “The Martian,” about an astronaut stranded on the red planet without much hope. In contrast to Davis’ book, this book is paeon to the West’s technological superiority and “can fix” attitude. There’s not much humility but oodles of self-reliance, nary a prayer for “help” is uttered.

I’m watching, when I have the time “Better Call Saul” the prequel to what many call TV’s greatest show *Breaking Bad.* BCS is very good and written by the same people. TV is very good for capturing the human descent from “everyday goodness into evil,” but almost hopeless at dramatizing the transformation of reactivity into goodness.

Enough of that, I’m simply copying and pasting into this space what I have for the past 2 weeks, the plan for the return of in-person Eucharist services. We will alternate weeks, one week at ST. Thomas, one week at St. Matthew and the dates are below. This Sunday we’ll have a practice Eucharist at St. Thomas at 9 a.m. but we’ll still have our virtual home prayers service as well. This Sunday is our last Sunday of “Keeping it Real” our summer series on the Hebrew book of Ecclesiastes in conversation with the gospel wisdom of St. Matthew.

A special thanks to Paul Thiessen for leading our summer study!

**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.

**The Covid Chronicles**

I’m pasting in a link here <https://bit.ly/3ggLsHD> from the diocesan webpage that has to do with family spirituality and prayer during this time. The Rev. Jessica Schapp shares a personal story and invites you to send her your stories. Jessica is always fabulous and her passion for Christian formation is second to none!

**The Election**

Still no word on the nominees for bishop but I will let you know as soon as I do and, of course, such a list with info on each candidate will be posted on the diocesan website.

**The Rev. John Sovereign**

Thanks to all of you that contributed to the book of thoughts and prayers and encouragements for the Rev. John Sovereign put together by Irene Tisdale. It’s a lovely book and very encouraging for John and Allyson at this time. I had a lovely in hospital visit with John yesterday and he was an encouragement to me. Let us keep praying for him as he faces his death squarely in the face (talk about an Ecclesiastes moment!).

The prayer for John Stuart’s day:

Lord God,
you drew your servant John Stuart
to share the lot of an exiled people
that the Anglican way might be established
in the scattered settlements of Upper Canada
Grant that, honouring his steadfast labours,
we may show true loyalty to your gospel
and continually strengthen one another
in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

I look forward to worshipping with you this Sunday in the Spirit and I look forward to seeing a few of you at the practice Eucharist at 9 a.m. Sunday at St. Thomas.