

*After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, **Do not be afraid**; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead," and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, **Do not be afraid**; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'*

Dear St. James' family,

These are certainly unusual perhaps frightening times. I'm writing to you in the days when people are being asked not to be in public gatherings. Days when a rush on toilet paper is a thing! Days when people are confused, angry, scared and anxious. We find ourselves not able to have Easter Services on April 12<sup>th</sup> but there will be virtual ways to celebrate. More information will be forth coming as I am advised by our Bishop. However, we will celebrate Easter regardless of the date!!!! We NEED to bring back our "Al.....a's" So the first Sunday back be ready for celebration!

In the above Easter story frightening and unusual things were happening then too. Not only had they witnessed the tortuous death of their beloved Jesus they were shocked that he was now gone from the tomb. They were terrified when an angel spoke. They were terrified when Jesus spoke. There was so much uncertainty and confusion. And yet.... 'Do not be afraid'. So easily said, harder to take in. But there are comfort in these words. Especially when we remember these are Jesus' words. As people of faith we trust in God and the comfort of the Holy Spirit to guide us through difficult times.

Right now we are being asked to do difficult things. Things like staying away from each other and isolate. These are necessary directives, and this is a time that call for courage and obedience for our sake and the sake of the most vulnerable.

Did you know that "be not afraid" (bolded above) appears 365 times in the bible? One for every day, except this year as a leap year we need an extra one! So let's declare an extra day of "do not be afraid" for 2020! We will get through this and be together for worship when the all clear is given.

In the meantime however we do need your help to keep St. James' ministry viable and healthy. I don't often talk about our finances in my letters but these are unprecedented times. With the closures of meetings we no longer have the revenue of renters. We are unable to continue with our fundraisers and we can't regularly receive our weekly offerings. This is a significant loss. If possible, I do ask you to try to please keep up with your weekly giving's.

We have such a generous spirit at St. James' that I know supporting your church and our outreach is vitally important to all. We are looking at electronic ways of deposit through flip give and Canada Helps. But you can still send offerings through the mail as well. This would help immensely and be gratefully appreciated during our shut down. We will also look at all of the ways the government is willing to help.

In the coming weeks I do encourage you to experience Holy Week in its fullness. There are many video links and facebook links to share in the excitement of the Hosannas on Palm Sunday, gather in a new way at the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday, and feel the pain of loss at Christ's crucifixion on Good Friday. Vigil in these new ways and rejoice Saturday Night and then celebrate Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday! Share the good news by placing banners on your doors and letting your neighbours know that Jesus lives!

I pray for an end to this pandemic a blessed and renewed journey with Jesus for us all!

Yours in Christ,

*Canon Linda*