



October 8, 2020

It is Harvest Thanksgiving, and it is a time like no other we have witnessed in our lifetimes. As I compose this letter, I think back of the events of this past year, the winter, Snowmageddon, pandemic isolation, daily provincial updates, disruptions of school and work and society, all routines and patterns as we have known them.

It is Harvest Thanksgiving, and in all of this we are called to be thankful. Time spent with close family in our bubbles. The blessings of technology to share photos and memories and communicate. A beautiful summer that has matured into a stunning autumn. Yes, even amid the chaos and uncertainty, there is much for which we can be grateful.

It is Harvest Thanksgiving, and we will hear anew the story of the Ten Lepers from Luke's Gospel. Perhaps we will be touched by the reality of their diseased isolation – having to stay separate from loved ones and from community due to their debilitating illness.

Into all this, we are called to journey with the Holy One here at the Ascension. We are called to rise each morning and pray, move through the moments of our lives in thanks and in service to God, and to the children of God.

It is so hard at times, for as I write this letter, I think of the faces I have not seen, the hands I have not shaken, hugs I have not given, and the interactions that have been solely through screen or telephone. Perhaps like the lepers, we feel as though all is cut off from us, and that we journey separately from the times we have had in the past.

I pray this year we will know and believe that God journeys with us in all our states – in pandemic isolation, in our family bubbles, in our new forms of public and online worship, and in every place where we would go.

We hold on to the reality that God resides with the Parish of the Ascension, and with the entire world. Even in uncertainty God has not abandoned us; God calls us in thanksgiving to take stock of our lives and to offer to God that which is God's, and offer to the community the service and love and care that show the world that we are thankful.

In order to address the challenges in our local area, and in the life of the parish, we need the resources to be able to do so effectively. So I share with you the plan that a small Ad-hoc group of Vestry has proposed for us to consider in thankfulness this Autumn.

### **Parish of the Ascension Pandemic Appeal**

This has been a unique time in our history that has caused us to focus on the things that we had taken for granted in the past. This has presented us with challenges that need to be addressed. By working together, we have proved in the past that we can rise to any challenge. This is no different. As outlined in the recent Chimes, our overall parish revenue is down by \$20,000 from last year. This has affected our cash flow and if this continues, we will have to re-evaluate the delivery of ministry and mission in the parish. To address this, the Vestry has appointed an Ad-Hoc Team from Vestry to look at solutions to address loss of income through fundraisers. This will include focusing on Special Projects, and exploring stewardship methods for funding ministry. If we are unable to continue to fund ministry, then the levels of care and activity at the Ascension will have to adjust accordingly. Unfortunately, this may mean a reduction in staffing at the ascension, a reduction in care for parishioners, or amalgamation with another parish.

The Ad-Hoc Team is proposing a 3-part appeal to take us to the end of 2020. The focus for the month of October is Thanksgiving. Our usual Thanksgiving Offerings and Jiggs dinner will not take place but instead what we are proposing is that parishioners consider contributing and take into account "*What would you have spent*" on this event.

With the Covid situation not expected to change in the near term, we will continue with this Appeal in November and December.

Please, in your prayer and in your thankfulness, consider your resources, and how you might share some of these resources, so that the parish can continue to offer effective ministry in this area.

Blessings to you and peace, always,

***David Burrows***