

A Message from our Incumbent Holy Week 2021



Change is in the air! One day last week my wife Susan and I had the glorious experience of sitting out on our deck with the sun pouring down on us with temperatures hovering around 20 degrees and while the cold weather has now returned you can see the signs of the changing seasons all around us. Spring will soon be upon us! I believe that this is also true for us in the church as we contemplate and look ahead to a new reality that vaccinations and a reopening of our buildings will bring to our parish community.

There is no doubt about the fact that when those wonderful days arrive, we will not be the same community we were just over a year ago. We have faced some significant challenges and we have experienced new ways of being the Church and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we would never have believed possible.

Our Working Tables with members from across all the regions of the parish have taken up their work with great excitement and commitment to begin to discern how to pool our gifts and resources and to undertake new initiatives that we would never have accomplished as individual congregations. Each of the four groups; Governance and Finance, Worship and Life-long Learning, Outreach and Volunteer Opportunities and Futures, have all met twice and their first report will come to the next Wardens' meeting scheduled for March 24th. There is much to look forward to in the days to come!

Since the inception of our area parish, we have reaped the benefits of accessing the many gifts and experiences of our clergy team that has brought a depth and comprehensiveness to our ministry that I give thanks for each and every day. One of the challenges that we have faced throughout these three years is the difficulty that exist in scheduling Sunday morning services across twelve congregations and the complexities around offering a meaningful and enriching experience as we gather in community each week. Over the course of the last year and a half, Rev. Matthew has been working with a few of our members who have committed themselves to enter into a two-year program for Lay Reader training and we would now like to give them the opportunity to exercise their important ministries in the life of our parish. It is with profound gratitude that we express our thanks to Bev York, Thérèse Narbonne, Wendy Cayen, Jennifer Cross, Lorna Sibley and our other lay worship leaders for their willingness to serve, or continue to serve, our Parish of the Valley in this way.

As a result, when we return to Amber stage, we will be introducing occasional Morning Prayer liturgies for those congregations of our parish who do not already have Morning Prayer as part of their present Sunday schedule. This shift in our shared worship life will also be a help to our clergy team, as when Rev. Gillian returns to full time ministry in May, she will be serving our parish exclusively from home and supporting all of our online ministries until such time as the COVID-19 pandemic comes to an end. The services of Morning and Evening Prayer or "Mattins" have been a cherished form of worship dating back many centuries in our Anglican liturgical tradition. These non-Eucharistic services are rooted in the vigils that were held by the first Christian communities and in the prayer life of the religious orders. Many of us still remember, with great fondness, the service of Evensong that was widely attended by many members of our congregations.

Like so many other aspects our life in the church in this generation, we are excited to see how this ancient form of prayer can be renewed and enhanced to offer us all a new sense of richness and spiritual vitality as we gather together in common worship and praise. May the renewal of this wonderful tradition be a sign for us of new life and new leadership as we celebrate the joy of Christ's resurrection!

+ Michael Bird

Bishop Michael Bird
Incumbent, Parish of the Valley