



St George's
ANGLICAN CHURCH
CADBORO BAY

Dear friends in Christ:

I pray you are safe and well this day. I know with our fall weather coming on we are all wondering what this change of season will mean for our community life and worship. It has been truly a joy to gather for worship under our beautiful maple tree – what some have named our “Outdoor Cathedral.” Back in July when we were given the option to resume in-person gathering with numerous safety protocols in place we surveyed the congregation to ascertain how to proceed. The results of the survey indicated that far more people were comfortable with outdoor gathering than indoor gathering and so we proceeded likewise. A huge thankyou to the staff and volunteers who put in a great deal of effort to make outdoor worship possible – especially our wardens Joy Carroll and Gary Fisher, our Music Director, Marlon Narciso, our Parish Administrator, Vicky Hayward Wrench, and Peter Rowand who has put in many volunteer hours as our “technology guru.”

While some Anglican churches in the Diocese have returned to indoor gathering, we have not. I understand that for some of you this has been frustrating and confusing. Weekly worship in a church building has been part of some of your lives from birth and it has been a profound loss to be separated from this important ritual. We have not returned to indoor worship at St. George's for two reasons. Firstly, we wished to continue outdoor gathering as long as we could since the survey clearly showed that more people were comfortable gathering outdoors. Secondly, because I have a child in school we felt it prudent to await for the school restart plan to be disseminated in order to assess how far this would widen my bubble and potentially bring risk into the community. Unfortunately, the choices made at the secondary school level mean that my bubble now includes 120 teenagers. While my daughter is extremely cautious and we follow very strict sanitation procedures in our household to protect my wife, Danelle, who is highly vulnerable, this is more risk than I am willing to bring into the St. George's community where so many of our members are vulnerable.

However, I have some good news. I believe we have come up with a plan that will allow us to return to indoor gathering and Eucharistic worship. The plan involves some complex technological arrangements enabling me to lead worship from my office. (I'll be present with you through screens in the sanctuary). The technological arrangements needed to make this possible are going to take some time to put into place. I ask for your patience as we strive to work as quickly as we can. In the meantime, we will continue with online gathering via Zoom.

I encourage you to avail yourselves of the Morning and Night Prayer available through our website (or ask to have paper copies mailed to you), to connect with members of St. George's in ways that strengthen our bonds to one another, and to consider attending worship at a nearby parish that has already opened for indoor worship. I know that sometimes Anglican parishes have seen themselves in competition with one another and attending worship at another parish has been discouraged. I invite us instead to view ourselves as not just members of St. George's, but of the whole Diocese. And, while we understandably join one parish where we can grow in love with a particular community and be spiritually uplifted with a style of worship that resonates with us, it also can be refreshing and nourishing to worship elsewhere once in awhile. I love each of you and all of you together and I am not trying to send you elsewhere – you would be greatly missed! Rather, I encourage you to know that in this

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Anglican Diocese of Islands and Inlets we are an extended family, and while we feel most comfortable in our own house, it can be a joy to share a meal at the home of an extended family member from time to time. St. Luke's, Cedar Hill and St. Mary's, Oak Bay are both holding in-person worship at this time.

I know that especially for those of you who do not have access to online worship or connecting, this has been an extremely difficult time. You are very often in my prayers. I am deeply sorry that my own family situation impacts our ability to gather safely for indoor worship. As we make the modifications necessary to allow for safe indoor gathering, I encourage you to reach out for connection and support. I am happy to connect by phone to offer support and prayer as are members of the Pastoral Care Team. You can always reach me through the church office; I am here for you.

Finally, I would encourage that during this very stressful time we remember to connect with one another in ways that build healthy community. This includes speaking "to one another," rather than "about one another" and expressing our concerns or frustrations directly rather than indirectly. The wardens and I are more than happy to address whatever might be on your mind. As always, you can contact the church office to get in touch with us.

I will conclude with this beautiful prayer from the Corrymeela community:

God of the fallen grain,
God of the children of light:
It was in your being broken down that you were lifted up.
It is in releasing our lives to others that we bear your lasting truth.
As uncertainty abounds,
may our relinquishing of self,
and our selfless love for others
broadcast wide the great good news
that even in death there is glorious new life,
and that darkness will not overcome it. Amen

In Faith,
Rev. Elizabeth