



Connecting  
people  
with God  
and  
each other

**St. Paul's Anglican Church**

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Dear Parish of St Paul,

As I head out on my holidays for the rest of August, I want to give you an update on my situation, particularly in regard to the issues I've been having with my low back pain. First, though, I want to thank all of you who have prayed for me - some of you have done this in private, but many of you have prayed with me, laid hands on me, and some have borne the spiritual weight of it with me. I cannot overstate what this means to me! Thank you! Your prayers, love, and support are an immense blessing to me and to Jodi and I deeply appreciate it. While I have not experienced what might be termed a full healing from this, I have had much relief from the pain and the spiritual weight of it has lifted from me.

It may be helpful to some of you if I give you a quick synopsis of my back issues. My primary condition is a Spondylolisthesis in my L5 - the 5th lumbar vertebra (which is the bottom of the back, before the sacrum). This is a congenital problem (meaning I've had it since birth), but due to age and wear-and-tear there has been deterioration in my condition and I am having increased pain and decreased ability to manage it. There are several other secondary and tertiary conditions in my back that have resulted from this, the worst being the pinching of the lumbar nerve in my lumbosacral joint (between L5/S1). I have tried some non-surgical interventions, including a series of injections into the lumbosacral joint, but they have had very short, limited effect.

There is some good news, though. First, I am enrolled in a study called Alberta Back Care Pathway, conducted by U of A's Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, that is looking at non-pharmaceutical long-term pain management techniques for chronic low back pain. I am very happy to be in this program, as it will give me practices to help manage my specific type of pain over the rest of my life. Second, I am in the que for surgery to correct the two main structural issues with my low back (L5 and pinched lumbar root). While this may not solve the pain issues completely, it will give some structural stability to my low back and provide the foundation for long term pain management through the Alberta Back Care Pathway program. The surgery will not likely happen for 6 mo. - 1 yr. from now (we will set a date at the end of August), but my GP has recommended that I go on short-term disability immediately in order get a better handle on pain management, so that I can return to work and function effectively until the surgery. I will also be receiving another set of injections - different from the others I received - that should help with the nerve pain until the surgery.

What does this mean for my ministry in our parish? I am on holidays now (as of Monday, August 8, 2022) until the end of August 2022, which has been planned for a while now, as we will be (finally!) celebrating Abigail and Mack's wedding. The Rev Thomas Brauer, who has been in our parish before, will fill in for August. I will then go on short term disability for the month of September 2022 (and hopefully no more), while I get going in the Alberta Back Care Pathway program and receive my nerve-block injections. The Rev Thomas Brauer has agreed to continue on with us at St Paul's and act as my interim Rector for this period. In October 2022 I will then, Lord willing, return to St Paul's and continue in my role as Rector until I have the surgery - which may not be this calendar or academic year. Once I have surgery, it will be a 4-5 mo. recovery process, and we will work with the Diocese regarding interim ministry.

So I/we are looking at a year or so of dealing with this issue, but with God's help this should set the stage for productive long-term ministry. We have an incredible parish and the leadership in this parish is far more than just me! We have had meetings with Children's Ministry and other ministries and I am very confident that we will continue on well during my brief hiatus here in Fall 2022. This is very difficult and humbling for me, and, while exceptionally frustrating, I am incredibly grateful to God that He brought us Rev Brauer, and I am very thankful that Rev Brauer is willing to help us. I know that God continues to be faithful to us and that God's purposes are still at work in and through our parish.

My love and prayers continue with you all!

Faithfully,

*Myron+*

**The Rev Myron Penner, PhD**

*Rector*

The Anglican Parish of St Paul, Edmonton