



# THE GOOD NEWS LETTER

FROM ST. JOHN'S STEVENSVILLE UNITED CHURCH

QUARANTINE ISSUE: JUNE 2020

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ;

Here we are moving into June and still finding ourselves quarantined from gathering together in person, yet through the wonders of the internet we still gathering together in Spirit. As strange as this situation is our SJS community has risen to the challenge and we are still praising God and providing pastoral care for one another. Over the last couple of months there have been a number of folks who have stepped forward to help with the worship services through providing readings, acting in skits, and musical gifts. I want to acknowledge those people because we appreciate everyone who has offered leadership. If you think you might also like to help out, just let me know.

One of the special pieces we were able to do was to have a number of individuals record the phrase, "God loves everyone", first in English and then in a second language. The individual recordings were then pieced together and set in the middle of our Pentecost reading, as a nod to the place where it reads that the people in Jerusalem were all able to hear Peter preach in their own language. It was a fun project that we probably would not think to do under non-covid-lockdown times. Everyone was happy to help out, some faces you would have recognized, and some were friends from other parts of Canada or other parts of the world.

There was one person who declined to participate due to theological differences. He did not believe it was true that God loves everyone, but rather God only loves those who have repented of their sins and asked to be saved. Fair enough, I guess. I assured this individual that I respected his decision to not participate as I would not want someone to participate against their conscience, knowing that I would never participate if I had to say anything other than God loves everyone. The interaction however left me feeling very sad. Because I truly believe with all of my heart that there is no greater good news than God's love being for everyone.

And so, as I reflect back on that conversation, I can't help but be thankful for our church community that is inclusive and welcoming of all peoples. And I am also resolved to continue to preach the gospel boldly and widely, because "Divine Love" is the good news that people need to hear. There is already enough negativity and condemnation to be found in the world, so Churches need to be counter-cultural and proclaim the hope found in Jesus Christ.

*Blessings to you all,  
Rev. Cheryl*

LOVE GOD... LIVE JESUS



## Getting Schooled By COVID-19

As I write this short reflection for the newsletter, I am sitting at our dining room table, the sun is shining, the windows are all open and the fan is on at my back. Rev Cheryl is sitting across from me listening to a lecture online, in preparation for the 'residency' portion of her course, 'Gender, Violence and Reconciliation,' part of her Doctor of Ministry program at Northeastern Seminary in Rochester, NY.

I, too, have been doing quite a bit of prep work in advance of the first two classes of my own Doctor of Ministry program, you remember, the one I started this year. Yep, before the severity of the outbreak of the Corona virus was known, I had registered for the program at Acadia University in the beautiful Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia. I had purchased my airline tickets, ready to fly to Halifax on June 1 st . Then, about two months ago I started getting the messages from Swoop ... your flight to Halifax has been changed ... your return flight to Hamilton has been changed ... and each time it became less and less likely that the trip was going to happen. And then the message from Acadia Divinity School sealed the deal ... all Spring/Summer 2020 courses will be offered online. And I traded my Swoop tickets for a Zoom account and Rev Cheryl and I are trying to figure out which room in the house will be her classroom and which will be mine. Yeah, Rev Cheryl's 'residency' is also going to be online and virtual.

I am looking forward to those two weeks in June though. Week one I am doing a course on The Prophets, primarily, Amos, Hosea and Micah. And, week two I shift to thinking about The Holy Spirit and her role in the birth and life of the church.

We had our first online session, kind of an introduction and welcome to the program. All of us first year Doctor of Ministry students were there, gathered around our computer screens. One person's cat jumped up on her console. Another's son ran by, waving joyfully at the camera and saying hi to daddy's new 'friends.' it was good to know that we are all trying to navigate our spaces and the time demands and, to realize that life does indeed go on. It is difficult to maintain that work/school/family/socializing structure in our lives when, these days, it is all happening not only in the same place but often on the same devices. Like us, our grandson Logan stays in contact with the East Coast kinfolk using Zoom. But, unlike us, Logan doesn't necessarily recognize that he can fully participate in Family Game Night but, not in session 3 of DMin 8353 when Dr. Noel is lecturing on The Holy Spirit and Church History.

Anyway, the next newsletter/update will be coming out around the end of June. All of our classes will be finished and the task of paper writing will have begun and I will let you know how it went. Wish me luck, and if you think about it ... maybe say a little prayer, (or ten) for us.

*Peace,  
Rev. Bill*



## Thank You, Carolyn!

The Creative Spirit Program had their last session of the season at the end of May. Some wonderful art work and spiritual clarity has come from the program over the year, and will continue to do so beginning again in September.

A great big THANK YOU to Carolyn Campbell, who has walked us through all the challenges that Creative Spirit brings us. We love what you do for us, and can't wait to see you again in the fall.

Have a wonderful summer, and don't hesitate to continue your prayerful practices until we all meet again!

# Announcements

## SPIRIT GIFTS: One Spirit, Many Gifts

A four week exploration of our Spiritual Gifts  
Mondays, July 6, 13, 20, 27 @ 3:00

It was Christ who gave some to be apostles,  
some to be prophets,  
some to be evangelists,  
some to be pastors,  
and some to be teachers  
- Ephesians 4: 11

Using the online platform, Zoom, through the month of July, Rev Bill will be leading this 4 week small group exploration of our spiritual gifts. The passage from Ephesians 4 gives one listing of what Paul understood to be the gifts of the Spirit for the service of the church. There are of course others (Romans 12: 6-8; I Corinthians 12: 8-10; I Corinthians 12: 28-30). Using the resource, Spirit Gifts: One Spirit, Many Gifts, we will establish a strong biblical foundation for an understanding of spiritual gifts and discern 'God's will and direction for our lives as we name, claim and apply our own spiritual gifts.' (from the back cover of the resource).

*Space is limited! Contact Rev Bill at rev.bill.thomas@gmail.com or 289-213-3153.*

## Jam For Sale!



Anyone craving some homemade jam? We had some jams set aside for the spring fundraisers, such as the rummage sale, which of course will not be going forward this year. So, if anyone would like some special jam, it is not up for grabs!  
\$5.50 / Jar

## Lectio Divina and Weekly Prayer:



Format:  
Welcome

Scripture: First Reading  
Silent Meditation  
Scripture: Second Reading  
Silent Meditation  
Scripture: Third Reading  
Silent Meditation  
Prayer  
Benediction  
Refreshment

In Western Christianity, Lectio Divina (Latin for "Divine Reading") is a traditional monastic practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's word. In the view of one commentator, it does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living word.

As restrictions around community gatherings are lifted, starting in August, join Rev Bill at The Embrace Centre on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 for a short time of prayer and community building using the format of Lectio Divina. If social gatherings are still not permitted then, we will try to begin this weekly gathering using Zoom.

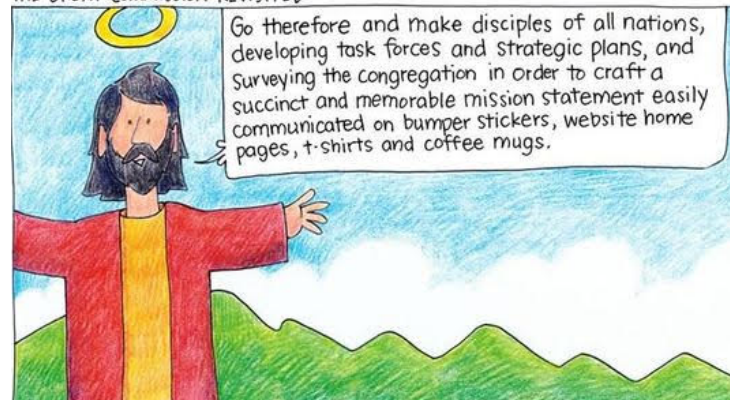


## Looking For Facemasks?



Val Spear is currently taking orders for non-medical facemasks. All proceeds from these sales will go back to the ministry of St. Johns Stevensville United Church.

### THE GREAT COMMISSION REVISITED



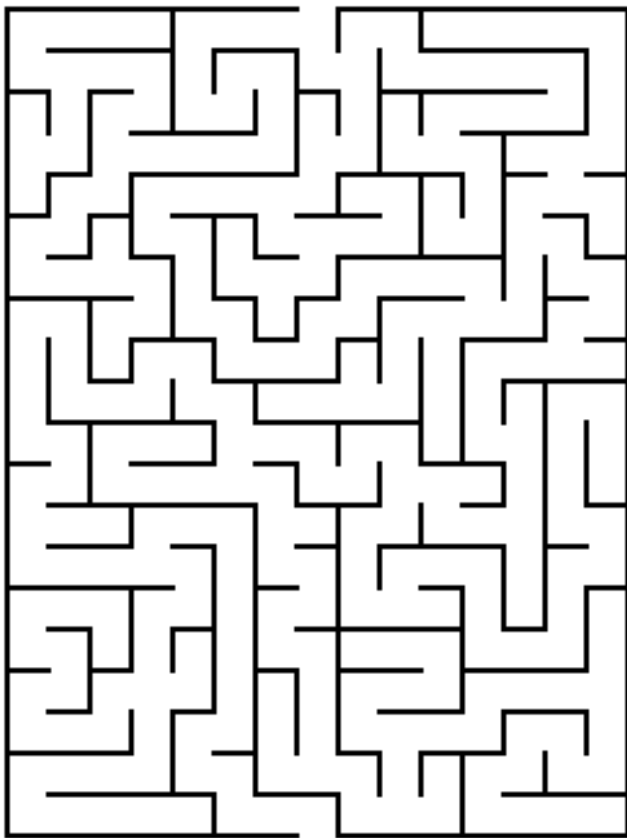


## Something Fun

### Did you know...

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day?

To celebrate, the Earth Day Network is trying to plant 7.8 Billion trees, one for every person on the planet!



### Challenge!

The Church MICE have a challenge for you. Do you think you've got what it takes to solve this puzzle?

A. (The number of days that it rained during the Great Flood) + (The number of sons that Jacob had) - (The number of Plagues of Egypt) = \_\_\_\_\_

B. (The number of times Joshua marched around Jericho on the Seventh day) - (The number of books in the New Testament called "John") + (The verse number where we find "For God so loved the world...") = \_\_\_\_\_

C. (The number of people converted by Peter during Pentecost) - (The number of Psalms found in the Book of Psalms) - (The number of books found in the Old Testament) = \_\_\_\_\_

D. (The answer to A) + (The answer to B) + (The answer to C) = \_\_\_\_\_

### **PENTECOST PRAYER:**

**GOD, HOLY SPIRIT, COME TO US, COME AMONG US;**

**COME AS THE WIND, AND CLEANSE;**

**COME AS FIRE, AND BURN;**

**COME AS DEW, AND REFRESH:**

**CONVICT, CONVERT, AND CONSECRATE MANY HEARTS AND LIVES  
TO OUR GREAT GOOD AND YOUR GREATER GLORY.**

**AMEN.**

*LOVE GOD... LIVE JESUS*



## June Worship Services

June 7th – Matthew 28 / Great Commission - Rev. Cheryl

June 14th – Special Service with John Bedell

June 21st – Father's Day w/ Communion (please see liturgy) – Rev. Bill

June 28th – Matthew 10 / Cup of Cold Water – Rev. Cheryl

## Reaffirmation of Faith

Communion Liturgy By: Peter Andrew Smith (All Things Are Ready)



The Lord be With you. **And also with you.**  
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right and good to give thanks and praise.**

Almighty God, we thank You that You have invited us to be Your people. You came among us as Jesus Christ to call us to be disciples and apostles. You continue to send prophets to proclaim Your truth, and men and women of faith to share our faith journey.

**We give You thanks, God of glory, that You have not wavered in Your promises. You richly blessed those who came before us. You continue to offer forgiveness and mercy to all who turn to You.**

Loving God, we thank You that You intend a holy purpose for us. You have invited us to use our hands to share Your gospel and our words to light the darkness. You have made us the means by which You share grace.

**We give You thanks, God of mercy, that You have judged us through the cross of Jesus Christ. We thank You for the mercy, forgiveness, and grace which You have lavished upon us through Jesus' death and resurrection.**

Living God, we thank You for Jesus Christ. Through Jesus we have the way to live our lives, You grant us new life here, and in the world to come, and reveal to us the truth that transcends the world.

**Inspire us, God of Grace, to live as Christ's people, being bold and certain in our message and actions. Through our words and deeds, make Your message of hope and love come alive.**

As Christ's people, we remember that on the night that Jesus was crucified He took bread, broke it, and said, "This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance to me."

He also took the cup and shared it with His friends saying, "This cup is the new covenant made in my blood. Each time you drink from this cup, do so in remembrance of me."

We break the bread and share the cup. We remember Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

**We eat the bread and drink from the cup. We recommit ourselves as Christians.**

Send we pray, the Holy Spirit, upon these gifts of bread and wine, so that through them we might again taste Your goodness and know Your grace. With the bread of life and the cup of salvation, fill us with Your Spirit to live and serve in Christ's name.

**We ask this in Christ, for Christ, and through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**



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## Ongoing Events!

If you're really missing your weekly routine, consider tuning in with us through the Facebook Live events.

Tuesday and Thursday @3pm - Bible Study with Rev. Bill  
Sunday @11am - Streamed Church Services

Wondering where our streamed sessions can be found? Check out the following:

-  [www.stjohnsstevensvilleunitedchurch.com](http://www.stjohnsstevensvilleunitedchurch.com)
-  St. John's Stevensville United Church
-  The Embrace Center
-  [www.niagaraonlineworship.com](http://www.niagaraonlineworship.com)

We understand that it can be hard when we are all isolated. So please keep in mind that both Rev. Bill and Rev. Cheryl are available to provide pastoral care over the phone at any time. Do not hesitate to call.

Anyone who is in need of food assistance, do not hesitate to call Rev. Cheryl or Rev. Bill and they will be more than happy to help you out.

## Contact Us

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