

December 9, 2020

From the Desk of Canon John



Dear Friends,

Re: Christmas Services

Our worship is central to our faith community. As Anglicans we have a high regard for our rituals – they define us. If we cannot come together, we may feel that we have not honoured or fulfilled our Anglican teachings and traditions. However, we also must be cognizant of the health and welfare of our friends, family, and community.

It is with regret that I must advise you that there will be no live Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. The Sunday services on December 27th (with music) and January 3rd (said service) will be Morning Prayer and not Eucharistic.

These decisions were made in consultation with the Covid Safety Committee, the Corporation, and those who have helped organize the Sunday worship services, and also evaluating the protocols relayed to us by the Diocese of Toronto and public health authorities.

Some of the factors that have been taken into account:

- We need to ensure the health and safety of every member including those who are most vulnerable.
- Public health authorities have requested at Christmas to limit our contact with those in our household and avoid public gatherings.
- The likelihood is that the current Covid restrictions will continue past December 21st. We are confident that there will be more than 50 people (both members and visitors) who will want to attend St. James' on Christmas Eve. On the one hand we do not wish to turn people away (and I note that it causes a lot of anxiety for our greeters to have to do so), and at the same time it is not fair that we would limit our service to a small number. Even if restrictions are loosened, we have to remember that as our numbers start to reach 60 people it is difficult to ensure that there is proper social distancing.
- It is likely that some of you may have family members coming to be with you for the Christmas holiday or social bubbles will increase. If this applies to you, it is necessary to self-isolate for a 14-day period. It would not be appropriate to attend a church service over the Christmas period. For this reason and to limit coming into contact with volunteers, it has also been decided to have Morning Prayer services for the two Sundays following Christmas Day.

We understand how deeply disappointing it is that we cannot celebrate the Christmas traditions of our Church as we have done in the past. But this is our particular time and our new experience, which means we have to find new ways to experience God's 'otherness'. The worship team has already taken steps to videotape Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. As with the other video services St. James' has produced, you can watch these wonderful services (both Eucharistic), comprising music and the Word, from the comfort of your own home. Christmas Eve will be more contemporary in the liturgy and music, and Christmas Day will be a sung traditional service. I also remind you that the beautiful Lessons and Carols service is now on the website. We encourage you to share the opportunity to watch these services with your friends and family. I am also investigating the provision of DVD's of the services which can be provided to those people who do not know how or cannot gain access to the internet.

You will find our video services on both YouTube or our website at: **stjamesorillia.com**

These are difficult decisions and I ask your prayers for the Covid Safety Team which has put in a lot of time and hard work to ensure that St. James' is a safe place to visit and worship. **May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ child.**

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Canon John Anderson



Silent Night Oh Holy Night.