



## PASTOR'S DEVOTIONAL

*"Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" – Isaiah 43:18-19*



As I grow older, I find myself becoming more nostalgic for "the good old days," for times that I fondly remember from the past. I have often told stories in my sermons about life in my hometown, of my friends and neighbours with whom I grew up in New Jersey. I find my mind drifting back to moments in high school, university, and seminary, and of the communities in which Susan and I have lived over the course of our life together. But as fond as these memories are for me, I must remind myself that the "good old days" were not necessarily as good as I remember them to be; nostalgia can often serve as a filter to block out the more uncomfortable or disturbing elements of those former times. While there are many memories that remind me of the blessings I have received throughout my life, I also need to remind myself that these "days of yore" were often filled with challenges, disappointments, and difficulties that made them far less the "good old days" or my

memories than times that were filled with "joys and sorrows and all that the years bring."

As we begin to enter the phases of reopening in Ontario, many people are wondering when we will be able to return to "normal," or what the "new normal" will look like when the COVID-19 pandemic finally runs its course. We can imagine many everyday aspects of our former life returning to the way that they were: going out to dinner or to a play; eating in a diner or restaurant; getting together with family and friends for dinner or a barbeque. We look forward to returning to a time when the phrase "social distancing" was not in our vocabulary, or when we did not dare leave the house without a mask and a bottle of hand sanitizer. We are anxious to return to a time when life seemed to be more carefree, when we did not live in fear of this insidious virus, when the world seemed to be more open and less fear-filled than it is during this most difficult time in our history.

But there may be some things about life in the time after the pandemic that will not return to the ways things used to be. There may be remnants of the mistrust and suspicion that gripped the world during the darkest hours of the pandemic. Relationships that fractured due to physical or psychological separation may never be healed; returning to large gatherings may be difficult for people who have become accustomed to distance and isolation. One of the challenges that the church will face in the post-pandemic era is discerning our mission at a time when many people may choose not to return to our fellowship, when many will be quite content with worshiping at home or with no longer finding a need for the church in their lives. What "normal" will look like for the church of Jesus Christ in the future is unknown and a source of great anxiety for many church leaders.

While we come to terms with the uncertainty that will accompany our journey into the new normal of the post-pandemic world, as people of faith we are blessed with the certainty that is ours in God's holy Word, the same certainty that has sustained and empowered us in the darkest days of this current era that *"the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness"* (Lamentations 3:22-23), and that nothing *"will separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:38-39). As God has been our "help in ages past," God will also be our "hope for years to come." God's Word that was spoken by the prophet Isaiah reminds us that we can look to the future with hope because our future is God's future, and that God will indeed do a

“new thing” in which God will “*make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert ... to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise*” (Isaiah 43:19-21). God encourages God’s people to not “*remember the former things or consider the things of old*” because the past was not the only “good old days” for God’s people, but because God is leading us into the future, we can have confidence that as good as those old times may have been, better days are in our future into which our God of steadfast love is guiding us.

In his book *Virus as a Summons to Faith*, Walter Brueggemann speaks of the future as a time when we may not return to “normal” times but to a “new normal” into which God will lead God’s faithful people:

1. “Prophetic tradition knows that the future does not reside in old, treasured realities. It belongs, rather, to bold faithful thought that evokes bold faithful action ... The new thing God is making possible is a world of generous, neighborly compassion. It is before our very eyes! The God who does this new thing has also said, ‘Do not remember former things’ We can embrace a new normal that is God’s gift to us!”

The post-pandemic world that is unfolding may not return to the ways things were in the “good old days” of our nostalgic memory; but our faith gives us the assurance that the days into which God is leading us will be “better days” because of the new things God will be doing in our midst as we live every day in the steadfast, loving presence of our Good Shepherd who will always lead us “*in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake*” (Psalm 23).

These are better days – the days that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in them!

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Jeff Laustsen

## HIGHLIGHTS From Council



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JUNE 2021 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Due to the provincial lockdown the June 16, 2021 Congregational Council Meeting was held via Zoom conference.

Following discussion, a Motion was made, seconded and carried to plan for reopening of Sunday services on Sunday, July 4, 2021, following all COVID guidelines.

Investigations are continuing to find out what would be required in order to provide live streaming of Sunday services.

On recommendation of the Finance Committee, Revised Rental Agreements and a Revised Rental Policy were approved.

With regard to rentals, following contact with the City of Stratford Planning Department we have determined what uses are permitted for the Church and for the parking lot across the street.

The air conditioning units in the sanctuary are installed and working very well.

Repairing the eavestroughs and adding covers has been completed.

Donations/offerings, can continue to be completed via our Church website, including an option for E-Transfer, in addition to the PAR program, mailing cheques or dropping off donations at the Church in the locked mailbox at your convenience.



**"LIMITED"**  
**Worship**  
**Returns**

**SUNDAY, JULY 4, 2021**

**AT 10:00 A.M.**

**BOOKING IN ADVANCE IS REQUIRED !**

**TO BOOK PLEASE CALL OUR OFFICE AT**

**519-271-8527**



**CONGRATULATIONS !**

***AIDEN ROBERT BARNBY CADE***

***Son of***

***Jeffrey & Krista Cade***

***will be Baptized on***

***Saturday, July 17, 2021***

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***In***

***Memory***

***of.....***

***Paul Huras***

***+ May 29, 2021+***

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***Hans Beck***

***+June 4, 2021+***

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***Elsie Dahm***

***+ June 19, 2021+***

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## YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

We are looking for volunteers for Readers, Greeters and Ushers for when we are able to re-open our doors for “Unlimited” Worship at full capacity.

If you are able to help by volunteering to be a Reader, Greeter and/or Usher, please call and speak with Jane in the office at 519-271-8527  
Monday to Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

We deeply appreciate ALL of our current volunteers and are excited to add you to our list of “**special**” people.



## JULY VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers assist with our Sunday morning worship services. Listed below are those who serve in July as a reminder and as a thank you for serving.

Date	Greeters	Readers	Usher Captains	Counting Captains
July 4	To be arranged from Attendance	Sister Jean Widmeyer	Steve Lamont	Lois Lemon
July 11	To be arranged from Attendance	Liz Bomasuit	Jerry Terhaerd	Lois Lemon
July 18	To be arranged from Attendance	Marilyn Wells	Tom Cosstick	Dianne Yundt
July 25	To be arranged from Attendance	Brian Wilker	Darrell Renecker	Dianne Yundt

## AUGUST VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers assist with our Sunday morning worship services. Listed below are those who serve in August as a reminder and as a thank you for serving.

Date	Greeters	Readers	Usher Captains	Counting Captains
Aug. 1	To be arranged from Attendance	Stephen Fischer	Brian Coe	Judy Stanley
Aug. 8	To be arranged from Attendance	Isabel Cook	David Doherty	Judy Stanley
Aug. 15	To be arranged from Attendance	Marg Lamont	Steve Lamont	Tom Cosstick
Aug. 22	To be arranged from Attendance	Mary-Lou Drown	Jerry Terhaerd	Tom Cosstick
Aug. 29	To be arranged from Attendance	Brian Wilker	Tom Cosstick	Liz Bomasuit

## ***A Summer Blessing***

May our loving God  
watch over you  
and keep alive in your heart  
all that you have learned this year.

Keep your mind on God.  
Remember to pray often  
and to celebrate your faith,  
at home with your family,  
and at Worship with your faith family.

Keep your faith in God.  
Let all the joys of summer  
remind you of God's goodness.  
Never forget that God  
is always with you, no matter what.

May the God of all creation,  
who comes to us in Jesus,  
and lives among us in the Holy Spirit,  
keep you safe, happy, and holy  
this summer and always.  
Amen.



***FROM ALL OF US***  
  
***TO***  
  
***ALL OF YOU***  
  
***HAVE A SAFE AND***  
***HEALTHY SUMMER !!***