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This Week at St. Andrew's

August 19, 2020



Parable from the Pastor

The article in the Religion section of the Times Columnist on Saturday, August 15 was timely. Britain's faithful adapt quickly to pandemic era reminds us that religions have endured trauma countless times before. When the pandemic closed the St. Mary's Church, an Anglican parish in Hertfordshire county on March 24, the 1000-year-old church was forced to rethink how they did everything.

Their experience sounds much like our own story when March became a turning point that forced to avoid being in large groups – even those dedicated to public worship. During these months we can claim that we are utterly exhausted with quarantine, isolated from friends and family and cut-off from those familiar habits that feed our soul.

When can we go back into the sanctuary for in-person worship? After all, "COVID-19 has been no-where near as devastating in BC as it has in many other places!" What is taking so long? It is not enough to say, "We are working on it." A group of elders have diligently worked these last several months researching safety protocols, designing plans by which we register for worship, enter and exit the building, and mitigate the risk of exposure through safe distancing plans, a mandate for wearing masks and avoiding the aspects of worship that put us in greater danger, ie., singing, passing offering or communion plates from one person to another and not using pew Bibles or hymnals that have been handled by others before they can be sanitized.

If we have mitigated these above risks, what keeps us from entering the sanctuary for worship? We have heard St. Andrew's must be among the last to begin worship again. Certainly, Christ Church Cathedral and Church of Our Lord have both resumed in-person worship. Haven't most our Presbyterian colleagues started back? The answer is "no, they have not." In fact, of the 11 Presbyterian churches on the Island, only 2 have resumed in-person worship. These two are Saanich Peninsula and St. Andrew's, Nanaimo. The rest, like our congregation will not resume worship until mid-September at least. Also at least 4 of 6 other churches in Victoria are providing a live stream of the pastor and worship team recording within an empty sanctuary (including Central Baptist and Glad Tidings. This is to reassure us that we are working toward a new starting date ASAP which will be based on what is right for our congregation rather than what any other congregation may or may not be doing. We are all tired, frustrated and feeling antsy to end this dreaded quarantine.

Each of us are missing being together physically. We have and will continue to provide meaningful worship services each week available on Facebook and our website. Hopefully, these online services will be live when we resume in-person worship, but as Dr. Henry recommends, in the meantime, "Be safe, Be calm and Be kind."



[Click here for a video message from Pastor Mitch](#)

This week we share a special hymn that was recently written for the Covid-19 pandemic by PCUSA minister Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. [Click here for this very timely hymn](#) from Christine, Susie, Kilmeny and Brian.

1945 Theresienstadt Autograph Book

Mænni Ruben was one of 476 Danish Jews who were deported to a ghetto/transit camp in the Nazi held Czech city of Terezin. Congregation Emanu-El synagogue, Victoria invites the community to explore the intimate messages and thoughts of this holocaust survivor and the people he knew in 1945. "An autograph book that reflects an artist's life in the Theresienstadt ghetto and transit camp, once belonging to Holocaust survivor and Danish violinist Mænni Ruben, has reemerged in Victoria, BC.

Ruben's unique perspective on the Holocaust is chronicled in his autograph book as the war is ending and survivors are being liberated. His is a story not only of survival, but about enduring friendships, and the music and art that held them together under grim circumstances. With ethereal drawings from artist Hilda Zadikow, life in Theresienstadt is brought alive and forms a significant part of Ruben's keepsake." There will be a **virtual launch** of this artifact held on Thursday featuring the project curator. You can learn more about this **special book here**.

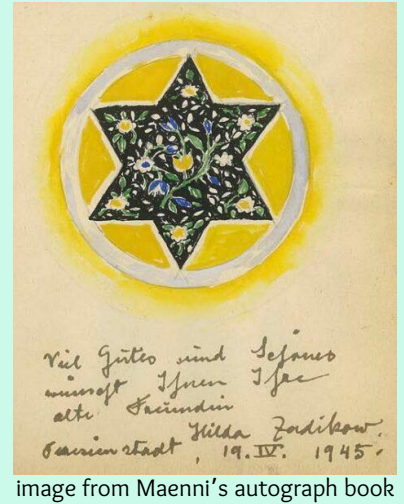


image from Maenni's autograph book

Making a new home after fleeing Syria

When the war in Syria intensified in 2012, many families were driven from their homes. The bombing of Garib's family apartment left him clutching his two-day old son as they ran "a race for their lives." In his family's new home in Lebanon, employers are hesitant to hire refugees, so every day is a struggle. Garib's family misses the things that made Syria home: "My four-year-old remembers that he used to have a bicycle back in Syria. That's not an option for him here." Through a PWS&D-supported program, Garib, his wife and children, and his extended family are able to access food vouchers, milk and diapers, as well as psychosocial care. Grateful for the support they receive, Garib said, "I think the church does this because Christianity is love." - From the Presbyterian Church in Canada Mission Moments



Our help is in
the name of the Lord,
the Maker of
heaven and earth.
-Psalm 124

Read From Your Bible This Week

Exodus 1:8-2:10
Psalm 124
Romans 12:1-8
Matthew 16:13-20

