



February 16, 2021



Pastor's Parable

Several conversations have emerged across Canada regarding the role and responsibility of the church, especially during the Pandemic. Congregations in the Vancouver area have petitioned the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia to rule in their favor in issuing an injunction against the provincial health orders prohibiting in-person religious gatherings. Dr Bonnie Henry wisely cautions, "churches were open in summer and fall with safety measures in place, but as the pandemic worsened, so did transmission in faith settings. The nature of interactions in churches is "fundamentally different" than the transactional ones in stores and restaurants, and there are more older and vulnerable churchgoers than other demographics, Henry said. Churches will be reopened as a soon as it's safer to do so, she said.

The ongoing health challenge is too great to risk the lives of our communities most vulnerable. Congregations, however, have throughout the Pandemic wrestled with their purpose that has been challenged with the inability to meet in-person for the bulk of an entire year. We are called to re-examine what the saying "the church is not a building" means for us during this time and for the hurdles still to be crossed.

A Work Group recently commissioned by our Session to determine the benefits of our online, virtual worship have discovered that our worship videos are being viewed 87 times within 48 hours of being posted. Our total number of views on our YouTube Channel was 1.5 K in May, 3.1 K. by July and 5.6K. by December. We have now achieved 214 followers to our Facebook page from as far away as Toronto, Edmonton, Brazil, the UK and the US. The ministry of St. Andrew's Victoria is stretching far beyond Old Town and reaching many more people than ever before.

Still our building continues to be a place of respite for those who need support services such as our AA and OA groups and the Saturday breakfast. We received an emergency request last weekend by the Victoria City officials and social services agencies to open more shelter beds and warming tents in advance of an expected snowstorm due to the winter storm warning for Greater Victoria, the Malahat Highway and large swaths of Vancouver Island.

St Andrew's kicked into high gear to help with the demand. We were overjoyed that Kirk Hall could be used to provide warm shelter for up to 20 people from Friday to Sunday night, as well as drop-in times available during the day for people to warm up and have a snack and hot drink.

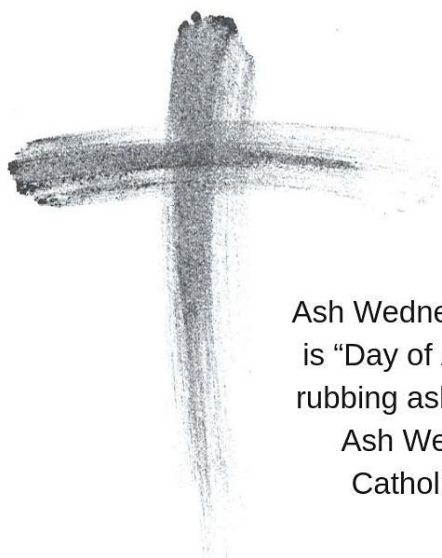
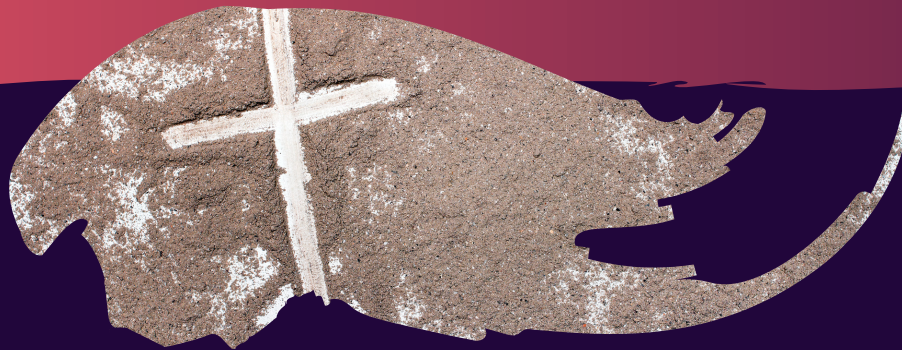
Thanks be to God that our church is not closed and remains a place of worship and service even when we cannot be present together. Pray for one another and for our dear House of Worship at 680 Courtney Street that we may continue to be a house of faith for all people!





Ash Wednesday- February 17, 2021

[Click here](#) for our video service



What is *Ash Wednesday?*

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. Its official name is "Day of Ashes," so called because of the practice of rubbing ashes on one's forehead in the sign of a cross.

Ash Wednesday and Lent are observed by most Catholics and some Protestant denominations.

Read From Your Bible This Week

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Psalms 51:1-17

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

