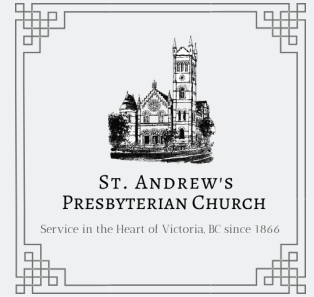


THIS WEEK AT SAINT ANDREW'S



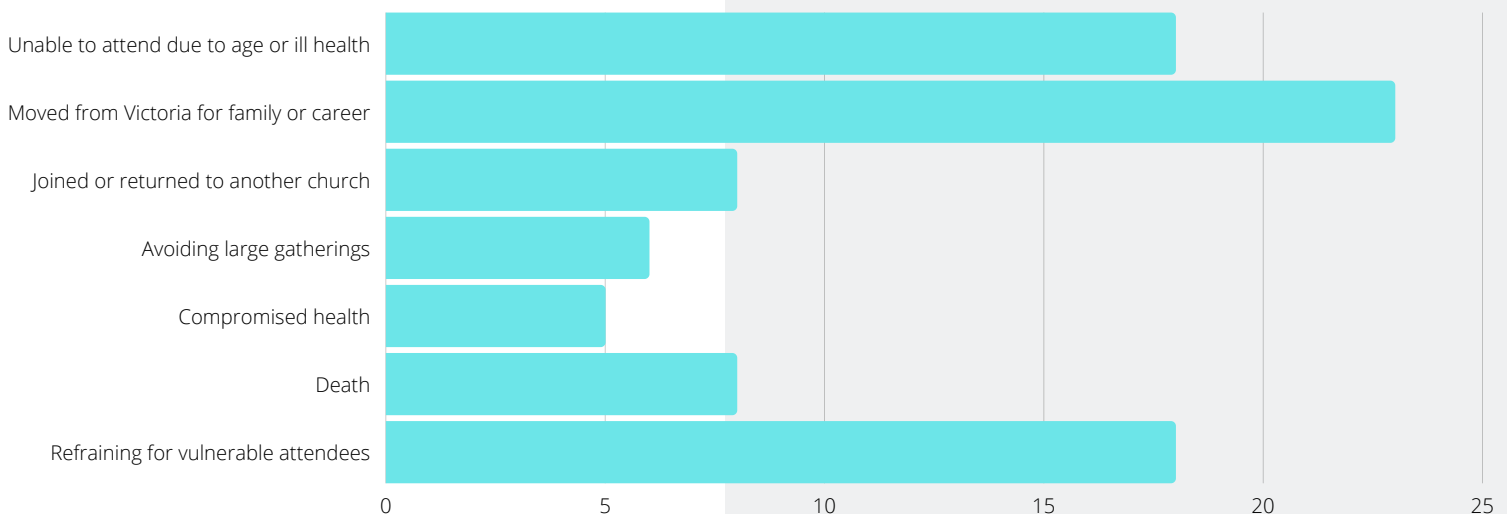
PARABLE OF THE PASTOR

by Pastor Mitch Coggin

Sunday at St. Andrew's looks radically different than 2019 and early 2020. Cruise season might generally have added 15-20 visitors each week to our normal attendance of 80-90. We remember an active Sunday School hour with 9-15 children racing out of the Sanctuary after Time for the Young and Young at Heart. Our choir numbered 12 or more. Easter and Christmas Eve would number over 200 attendees.

COVID has deeply challenged and changed St. Andrew's. A normal in-person worship attendance is now averaging between 40 and 60 not counting visitors. Our spirits are discouraged, and we wonder why persons we saw regularly prior to COVID have not returned. Some wonder if the livestream of our worship, so essential during the pandemic, might still be drawing persons to skip the opportunity of worshipping in-person. Actual statistics from the livestream indicates approximately only 15 persons regularly join us for 10:30 worship. The remainder of the 50-60 views the recorded worship receives happens during the remainder of Sunday and throughout the week. Some who have worshipped in the sanctuary even watch the livestream to listen to the music or sermon a second time!

So where have the people gone to cause our attendance to suffer so greatly each week? A recent view of the numbers indicates some of what has occurred in the lives of the St. Andrew's faithful over these two difficult years:



Of those who were regularly sitting in the pews on a Sunday morning early in 2020, a conservative estimate would suggest at least 86 of these folks are no longer able to join us in person. Some are joining us through Livestream, and others are receiving print copies of the service.

These numbers are staggering but reveal some of the mystery behind what has occurred in our congregation over the last 2+ year. There are some distressing reasons why many are no longer able to be with us, and some very positive reasons. We have been blessed to have them within our church family for the time they were here with us. Now we welcome new faces who will become friends and a blessing to all of us.

Generally, congregations see a gradual rise and fall of membership and attendance over time. Deaths, disability, and transition affect every congregation at one time or another. We have seen the above statistics in hyper speed and it we are in shock. From the statistics we see clearly that a certain percentage of those who once were regular St. Andrew's faithful, for a number of reasons, many if not most will not be re-joining us.

Still in are led to ask: What can we do? What should we do? Reach out to those who have been reluctant to re-enter in-person worship? Absolutely. Offer rides to those who may need it? Yes, please. Other ideas? I propose several conversations with anyone who has concerns or ideas to join me during coffee hour or for a chat sometime in the coming days. I will host a table at coffee hour with the sign Where Have the People Gone for the next two Sundays. Come and share your ideas. I would welcome conversations during the week at your convenience and will meet you for tea or coffee. Let me know when or where.

Prayerfully,
Mitch

REMINDERS AND EVENTS

Lane-way Social: Remember to drop in and join your St. Andrew's friends in the Lane-way on Thursday at 2:00 pm for refreshments and visiting!

The Link: the deadline for September contributors is August 28. Let us know what you have been doing over the summer! Contact: thelink@shaw.ca

Ballet Victoria Call for Volunteers: do you have time to help with the production of Tea for Tutu on Tues/Wed/Thu at 2pm, or with their wardrobe department? Contact Ballet Victoria for more information, or to volunteer your time.

Personnel Policies: If anyone is interested to read St. Andrew's personnel policies, copies are available in the church office.

New Office Hours!

We welcome Shannon Cummings as our temporary Church Administrator. Shannon's Office hours are now **9:30 – 2:30 on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday**. To speak with Shannon, or to leave a message please call **250 384 5734**. If you have an urgent pastoral concern outside of these office hours, please call your elder or Pastor Coggin at **250-883-4132** or email him at pastor@standrewsvictoria.ca