

6 September 2020

Dear Friends of Elmwood,

I've returned from my 'month of Sundays'. I feel fitter and more serene than when I left. Fresh air, exercise, good food, long sleep, and companionable company are healing for body and soul, aren't they?

I hiked, canoed, and read lots of books. Sometimes I napped between chapters, the book splayed on my lap, my hat brim hiding my face. Only one of the books was in shouting distance of being 'religious', and even then 'not very'. The others were novels, a biography, a travelogue, and a short work of philosophy. It was about death. I know. I'm weird.

In a drawer of the cabin I found the *Book of Common Prayer* I'd left behind by mistake last year. "Hurray! It's still here," I thought. "At least others had the chance to use it all this time." But the bookmark was right where I'd left it. I know. I'm naïve too.

I didn't forget about Elmwood while I was away. And it pleased me upon my return to learn that the life of our little community has been peaceful and, for the most part, happy and good. Long may it continue!

The news seems much the same as when I left. Apparently, an election still looms south of the border (had you heard?), the pandemic persists, and Churches face the choice and challenge of 're-opening'. When? How? Those are the questions.

As you know, a committee has been at work researching the possibilities for us. They've made provisional plans. Many other Churches have been ruminating and planning too. The Session will review all this on Wednesday and decide 'if, when, and how' we, too, will "stick our toe in the water" and re-open the sanctuary for Public Worship.

Not everyone will feel ready to return. For many, it's neither safe nor advisable to do so yet. We all have our own decisions to make in this regard. We all understand and respect this.

But if the Session decides it's time to try a 'cautious re-opening', it will be a 'new normal', not the old one. We'll have to keep 'socially distant' from each other, even as we come and go from the sanctuary. There won't be a coffee hour. We'll have to wear masks. And we won't be allowed to sing. There will be other little rules and protocols too.

All of that is a 'downer', of course. But throughout history, Christians have sometimes had to meet and worship in conditions much harsher and more dangerous than that. And we're made of the same stuff, aren't we?

So, watch this space.

I learned that Bill Booth had to be readmitted to the hospital a few weeks ago. He's doing better now, and he hopes he may be allowed home this week.

As always, we keep each other in our prayers.

Yours in the faith,

Andrew