



CHRIST CHURCH, DARTMOUTH

An inclusive church welcoming everyone

61 Dundas Street, Dartmouth, NS
www.christchurchdartmouth.com

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."
-Desmond Tutu

May 31st

Dear Friends,

This past week has been another difficult one for our world. Yesterday as I watched the launch of the Space-X Nasa capsule, which sent two American astronauts to the International Space Station, I found myself thinking, "Hmm, perhaps an escape from this world for a couple of days wouldn't be so bad."

As we know, the virus of COVID-19 continues. And now, we are once again reminded of the virus, which is racism. This virus is also sadly alive and spreading in society. As I comment on this past week's events, I acknowledge that I do so from a privileged position. Having grown up as white and coming from a middle-class family in rural Prince Edward Island, I cannot relate to people who have experienced oppression because of their race or circumstance. I can only speak from a place of having relationships with people who have experienced racism. In the past, I have been an active listener. I continue to listen so that I can be educated.

I pray that we, the world, those in power, and people of privilege recognize what has happened to George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and the never-ending list of men and women who have faced hatred, abuse, and death. We are not just called to pray and take witness. Prayers don't work unless we are willing to act on our prayers. Society needs to engage itself to make the change, and it cannot be led by those in authority, or by persons in an elevated position. As a community, we at Christ Church must recognize that such events do not just take place in the United States but also in Canada, Nova Scotia, and in our very own communities.

As I reflect on the violence in Minneapolis and around America, I have been reading several online articles relating to our Anglican community, and our discussion about Holy Communion. Some are grieved that we are not celebrating it virtually or in any way. This desire for the sacrament is genuine, and dare I even say serious. I include myself as someone who wishes to partake again, and as soon as possible. This being said, perhaps we could recognize that such comments of lament may come from a place of privilege? I hope Anglicans are quick to remember that for many years, weekly Holy Eucharist was not the

norm and that services of Morning and Evening Prayer served the spiritual needs of God's people. Still today, many in our northern Canadian dioceses rarely receive Eucharist, and certainly less frequently than an urban parish. But of course, we yearn for the time we can gather in person. But at this time, I take great delight in knowing that I am spiritually connected to my friends and neighbours in Christ.

The talk of communion has seen me reflecting on the past. As I close my weekly letter to you, I include a note from my diary that was written almost 12 years to this day. It is just one entry of many that highlighted a ministry I was blessed to experience in South Africa, during my second year of my Masters of Divinity. It has to do with a particular day in which I assisted a priest administering Holy Communion. We went throughout the townships of Johannesburg, bringing communion to whole communities. It was beautiful to see this bread and wine, consecrated, and shared with God's people. This meal was celebrated infrequently due to the effects of Apartheid. Sickness, socioeconomic backgrounds, and other circumstances prohibited South African Anglicans from attending church weekly. Often the journey to church on Sunday includes a three-hour walk, both ways. I also remember that the joy experienced on this day was not because people "got their holy communion." Instead, it was the genuine fellowship and sense of community that the very act brought. It wasn't just personal; it was communal.

My entry read as follows:

May 17th, 2008

"Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'" Luke 22:15-20.

"Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Matthew 25: 34-36.

Today my ministry has grown to a level I had never thought it would. I got up about 6 am and travelled to the community of Orange Farm, where I met with Father Huddleston. He is responsible for four parishes, and our goal for the day was to travel throughout the community, offering Holy Communion.

At the outset, I thought that we would conduct about four or five visits. What transpired was undoubtedly a day filled with the Holy Spirit. We travelled to an isolated community, away from the more central South African townships. The people I met lived in poor, poor, poor conditions—some without electricity, sewage, and homes without doors or windows. Most of the roofs were held down by rocks. The day was hot, and at times long and my heartfelt heavy for the people I met. Many of the parishioners were sick, in bed, paralyzed or without limbs. By the end of the day, we had completed thirty-two communions! Unreal, yes, but we did it.

I could tell on the faces of the people that they truly appreciated the fact that we had travelled so far to give them communion. They saw God in the bread and wine, and they felt refreshed. Lots of tea and cake was eaten, and conversations about hard times were exchanged. The most moving experience happened in the afternoon. The lay minister who travelled with us said that he had heard that a woman was very ill and that we should visit her. We went to a house and offered prayers. The lady in her mid-thirties was lying on a sofa as her daughter and parents looked on. She was visible ill, tired, and cold. I did not know what was wrong, and as the conversation took place in isiZulu, I finally heard the English words "HIV positive." I could not get over it; the woman in front of me was dying from AIDS. I sat and watched as the priest prayed over her and blessed her. The family was so thankful that we had taken the time out of our day to visit with them. As I left, I felt my heart and stomach tremble, as I could not imagine how this illness has affected South Africa. I felt so sorry for the family and the woman who was dying. I felt hopeless as I watched and listened as Father Huttleson prayed. This experience will forever be in my mind and heart, and I continue to pray for the families of Orange Farm.

In Christ,



The Rev. Dr. Kyle Wagner
Rector, Christ Church, Dartmouth
Diocese of Nova Scotia and PEI
Anglican Church of Canada

Pentecost Sunday



The Christ Candle lit each Sunday in South African Anglican Churches in recognition of the AIDS virus.



Fr. Huttleson and I before we head out with Holy Communion.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu and myself, during a chat over coffee in Cape Town.



Two children I befriended at an orphanage in Johannesburg. The gentlemen on the right is Gifts.



A regular meeting of the Mother's Union in the Diocese of Christ the King, South Africa.