

Happy Sunday!

You will have inevitably noticed by now worship took place from mine and Ellen's homes this week. We will continue to lead worship in this manner until the current State of Emergency is lifted.

To say I have wrestled with this decision is an understatement.

What clinched my decision to offer the services from home was receiving the State of Emergency Alert message on Thursday, reiterating Premier Ford's order that we all remain home unless essential. I do not believe this is an order we should take lightly, nor strictly by the letter, so much as by the spirit of it.

I strongly believe that our worship is necessary—it brings connection to, and is deeply meaningful for our congregation, especially at a time when so many restrictions are placed upon us, when anxieties are high, and exhaustion deep.

However, I do not believe worship led from within the building is "essential." We have the capacity to provide the exact same worship service as last Sunday, albeit from home. And as a community leader, I believe it is my responsibility to lead by example by respecting the emergency order as strictly as I can by remaining home.

The good news that I discovered is that in fact, we have greater freedom leading worship from home than we currently have from within the church. For example, in house we would be masked, but at home Ellen and I can be unmasked, making us more visible and relatable; in house we cannot sing, but from home Ellen can sing the psalm and gradual hymn, also unmasked.

I, too, prefer the live streaming as it can give us all the sense that we are "there" together. However, under the current restrictions, Ellen and I agreed that recording in advance reduces the potential for technical difficulties that may distract from the worship.

I suspect many of you will miss the look and feel of seeing the sanctuary. I am sensitive to the grief that surrounds every change, no matter how large or small at this time, and to how deeply some of you are missing your church building. But remember—no matter how much we love our building (and it is a beautiful space), it is **we** who are the church. That we worship together is important.

That's said, imagery and familiarity are important. I hope having the swans as a backdrop reminds you of the prayers offered in each of your names at the beginning of Covid isolation, that those prayers continue, and that the visible sign of those prayers bring you a little comfort in a discomfiting situation.

I remain grateful for each of you and your continued support of St James, for your willingness to remain connected with each other and to worship together even as how we do that shifts constantly.

Please remain home, keep safe and healthy (mentally, spiritually, and physically).

Kerri