

RICHMOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Deep with God, Wide with the World

February 2021 Session Notes

The regular meeting of RPC Session was held on Tuesday, Feb 23 via Zoom. Our opening devotional was based on St Andrew's Hall Lenten devotional booklet, which was circulated to you via email on Feb 12. A few contributions are from RPC folk. Not too late to start into it if you haven't already.



We reviewed the Annual Congregational Meeting, held last Sunday, Feb 21. There were a total of 54 Zoom connections, and with many connections being couples or family groups, we estimate around 70 people 'attended.' This was, we felt, a good turnout under the circumstances. Thanks to those who submitted reports, spoke, asked questions, and agreed to serve. Particular appreciation goes to treasurer Larry Eastwood who is involved in several ACMs this time of year and is able to keep on top of them all. This meeting focused on financial issues, with both 2020 actual results and 2021 budget reviewed and approved.

The plan is to conduct a second congregational meeting, probably in June, to look at our ministry programs. We don't want to simply sit out the pandemic on hold, we need to take this time to

- reflect on what we've learned about ourselves and our ministry in a time where 'church' has emphatically not meant the building but the people
- realistically and faithfully assess our gifts and resources as a congregation
- understand our community and what role God might be calling us to play in it going forward

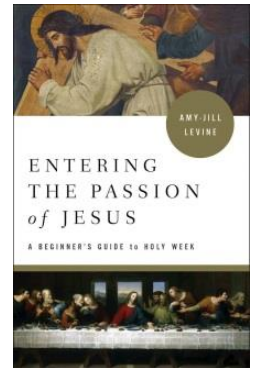
A virtual retreat for church leadership is still planned for later in the spring, when we can consider these issues as a group. Meanwhile, teams and committees are reviewing their structure and activities—what are we doing and what would we like to be doing?—prior to the retreat.



There are a number of resources we have been able to tap to help us through this time. Presbytery has brought the Rev. Dr. Dale Woods on board as Presbyter for Mission and Vision. His mandate is to enable congregational renewal and vitality. Dale has already been active in writing, arranging workshops, and making himself available to meet. RPC staff has already spent time with him and Session's current book study is his paper on congregational transformation. The next

workshop he is organising is Sat Mar 13 on 'Hybrid Church', that is, how can we come out of the pandemic using our new-found virtual ministry skills as well as in-person ministry. St Andrew's Hall is also supportive through its Centre for Missional Leadership; a group from RPC is in the middle of its 6-session Missional Certificate program.

We are not expecting to hold any in-person Holy Week services; they will continue to be pre-recorded. This year both the Lenten bible study and Victor's preaching schedule are based on Dr. A J Levine's book 'Entering the Passion of Jesus,' which walks through Holy Week with the perspective of risk. So, rather than our usual Communion celebration on the first Sunday in March, we have moved it to March 21 when the reading will be the Last Supper.



With the success of the virtual Christmas Pageant, Anne-Marie is planning an Easter Pageant. Look for an email with more information on what it is and how to participate. Also new this year: with no normal on-site programs possible, Camp Douglas is looking for congregations who are willing to be 'cabins.' The idea is for local churches to open their buildings for a week in the summer and kids in their area can attend a camp program under the leadership of a camp staff member. RPC is happy to be such a 'cabin,' and our summer student Program Planners will be able to pitch in. Activities will observe whatever pandemic protocols are in place, and we are excited to continue our long partnership with Camp Douglas in this innovative way. This would be separate from and in addition to our own VBS.

It's important how we use this time of pandemic 'exile.' It's not down time. Jeremiah told an exiled Israel to pray for the welfare of Babylon, their captors, and make a life there. But at the same time, he was promising a future for his people. Not a return, but a future!

Faithfully,

*Graeme Stager
Clerk of Session*

