

Do you remember what was going on for you a year ago this time?

Tempestuous politics in the US and news of the development of vaccines for the COVID virus dominated the news. This time a year ago, “the Great One” broke another record as Wayne Gretzky’s rookie trading card sold for over a million dollars.

I can imagine based on stories you’ve shared your lives were filled with hope and uncertainty all mixed together. A call committee was meeting to consider the future. Council and worship planners were getting ready for Advent and Christmas. It was already looking like the usual goodie trays would be replaced with cards...then as the cases of COVID increased it became necessary to cancel the in-person Christmas service.

Some are recovering from injury and illness. Some are dealing with new diagnoses. Some are mourning the deaths of loved ones. Some are celebrating happy family news and milestone birthdays. Most of us are learning Zoom! We’re adapting and trying out ways to be church when in person meetings aren’t possible. We’re coping and trying to care for one another. We’re trying to figure out how to reach beyond our walls and membership to bless our community.

A year later.....

As one of our members says, “Covid isn’t going anywhere”. So we adapt. We do our best.

*Yet we are meeting in person.

*We’re singing (through our masks) to Sheila’s beautiful playing and her singing to lead us.

*We’re sharing the Lord’s Supper each week thanks to the council and altar

guild.

*We're reaching out to those who are homebound and bringing the sacrament to them too.

We concluded interviews and called a pastor (and when he arrived invited him to contribute to this newsletter).

We celebrated the installation for a pastor (November 7) and welcomed him and his spouse Sharon for their first Sunday on October 3.

We celebrated Thanksgiving, Reformation, All Saints, and Christ the King.

We baptized a young child and celebrated with her family.

What next?

A transition team of folk from First and St. Matthews meets to help the pastor get acquainted and at the same time to talk about what shared ministry might look like for us.

We look forward to things we've "always" done on special days and holidays but missed last year.

We consider how to be the church knowing full well there are fewer of us and we're aging.

We remain hopeful that God has lots for us to do together.

We remain open to the Spirit's leading as we grow in loving God and our> neighbour.

We remain hopeful that even though we don't always know what's coming we have God and we have each other.

The Christmas greetings Sharon and I will write are sure to feature lots of news about a big move from one province to another as we've joined a new synod and new churches and are settling into a parsonage in Welland. We're still

learning names and settling in. There are many days as I think back I smile and comment “that was joyous and that was fun”. There are days I sigh and say, “that was tough” and offer prayers for those who need them. We are grateful for you and for God bringing us together. As the days shorten and Christmas approaches, many of us will be looking back to all the ways that God’s promise to be with us has been fulfilled. And we’ll be looking forward to what God has in mind for us in the coming year. Grace and peace to you this Advent and Christmas Season.

Pr Bart and Sharon