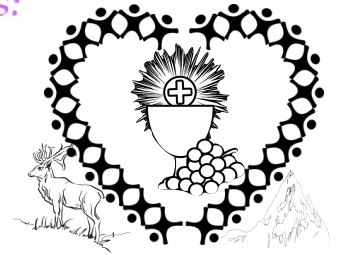


Our Current Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:

*Fernie on Saturday evening at 5pm,
Sparwood at 9am Sunday morning,
and Elkford at 4pm Sunday afternoon.*



The Sunday Mass is broadcast via Zoom from Fernie & Sparwood (see below).



An Advent Welcome!



4th/5th December

Dear All,

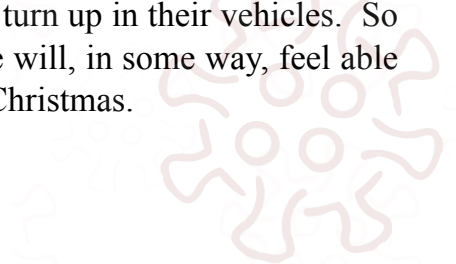
A bit of an odd weekly e-mail this time: next to nothing in the body of the e-mail but three appendices, all of which have a certain amount of weight to them. So a quick 'Covid Update', then an explanation of each of these 'add-ons'.

Covid & Christmas Update

During the week the rules for religious gatherings changed in British Columbia, so this will slightly change how we do things this Christmas. Hopefully this will be the last change before Christmas; but the one thing we can be sure about is that nothing is certain when it comes to this pandemic.

As I write (*later Thursday afternoon*) we haven't heard from the diocese, so I think it is better to wait until we get their instructions before changing anything. Our hope and expectation is that we will be able to stay with the times and places stated last week, but if we are going to be limited to fifty-percent of our capacity (which the new rules say), we will have to double check that we have enough room for the numbers that we expect, and people are doing that right now.

Our hope and the aim of what we are planning is that as many people as possible can be part of our Christmas services; obviously the first choice is if they can attend in person, but for those who can't do this, over the Christmas weekend there will be four Masses that will be broadcast via Zoom and also four Masses when Communion will be available after Mass to those who turn up in their vehicles. So while the situation is not ideal, we do hope that people will, in some way, feel able to be part of the parish celebration of Christ's birth at Christmas.





For a synodal Church
 communion | participation | mission

First Attachment – Synodal Journeying for Advent!

I do hope that you managed to engage with last week's Advent Reflection entitled 'Listen'. This week we move to 'Mission'. Just a reminder that there will be one reflection for each of the weeks of Advent, and they are based on material developed for the 'Synodal Journey' back in my home diocese of Plymouth.

It would be wonderful to get some feed back to how you answered the questions on the reflection. You can send these either via e-mail to the St. Michael's parish office: ElkValleyRC@gmail.com or you can write them down and give them to me at the church. Mark your return "Synod" so that they come to me and get included. All answers will be put together and sent on up the line until they get to the Pope! Or, at least, that is the hope and intention.

Second Attachment – "There is no need to create another Church" said Pope Francis – An Advent Resource

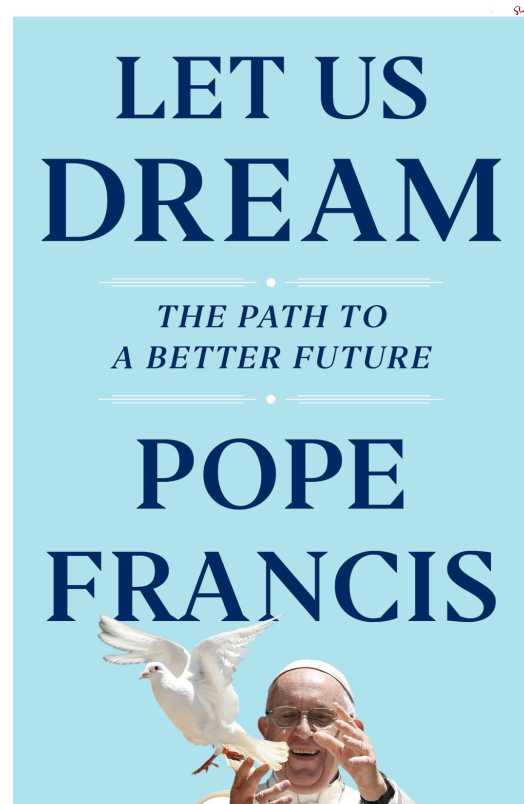
If you are still wondering what "synodality" is all about, the second attachment is part of an article by the author and journalist Austen Ivereigh. You might have seen the Pope's book, "Let Us Dream; The Path to a Better Future". The full title of this book is, "Let Us Dream; The Path to a Better Future - By Pope Francis in Conversation with Austen Ivereigh." So Austen knows what he is talking about!

The attachment is a section of an article he wrote about the whole 'Synodal Journey' concept. The section I quote is actually a section that refers to a meeting that the Pope had with all the heads of the major religious orders around the world. He asked them all to describe the process by which, to quote Austen Ivereigh, "the different religious congregations make decisions, elect leaders, and hear the Holy Spirit nudging them to change."

"What the meeting showed was how each of the orders had developed different mechanisms of deliberating as a body and reaching consensus... The diversity of methods and traditions was tremendous, yet alongside the clear lines of authority and obedience in most religious orders were two elements they all seemed to have in common." And these "two elements" is what the attached extract describes.

If you want to know more I do encourage you to watch the forty-five minute webinar that the priests of the Plymouth Diocese had with Austen a couple of weeks ago – it is so informative. The link is:

<https://youtu.be/EFfYnJdn8rc>



Third Attachment – Half-price Sermon for Quick Sale

There is nothing quite as stale as last week's sermon! Having said that, I did get more than the average amount of feedback about what I shared last week. Many people said, "What you described is the case in my family!" So I thought, as my sermon was already written out, I would post it at the end of this e-mail.

I recognise that it is often difficult to talk to family about the Church and faith matters, particularly if there is some negative feelings in other's hearts. So my hope is that perhaps the attached might help, even if it is unsightly left on the table in front of one of your kids or grandkids!!!

I was buoyed up this week by a quote (by someone I had never heard of and have now forgotten) who said something like,

*It is **not** true that there are millions of people who hate the Catholic Church, rather there are many people who hate what they **think** the Catholic Church is. Thus our task is not to change their minds about the nature of goodness and badness, but rather to show them that Christ's loving face is at the centre of all the Church is called to do and say, and let them see and love this face.*

If a person could truly see what is at the heart of the Gospel, then of course they would want to accept it, and the Church is called to be a fulfilment of that Gospel.

Next Week

Next week, as well as the next Synodal Journey reflection entitled 'Celebrate', I hope to enclose some material that might help you enter into a meaningful dialogue about the Church with family members, particularly your kids or grandkids. This material will give them an opportunity to add their voice to this world-wide Synodal listening process. We are not looking for correct answers, we very much want to give as many people as possible the opportunity to share their thoughts.

Sacrament of Reconciliation – Confessions

As mentioned last week, I am not sure if we will be able to get any other priests out here this year to hear confessions, so I will continue what we have been doing during the year for anyone who wishes to go to confession. The times are:

Fernie	- Saturday 4th December	11am to 12noon
Sparwood	- Sunday 5th December	11am to 12noon
Elkford	- Sunday 5th December	5pm to 6pm
Sparwood	- Saturday 11th December	11am to 12noon
Fernie	- Saturday 11th December	6:15pm.



So please note that the first sessions are **this weekend!** So if you are in Fernie and want to go to confession before Christmas please don't miss it. Because of the schedule of Christmas Masses there won't be any chance for confession immediately before the Christmas services.

If you can't make any of these times let me know and we will arrange another time.



If you have not yet managed to be inspired by the joy of the season, then think about John the Baptist! On the surface he might appear to be a bit of a miserable character, preaching a message of ‘repentance’ and not exactly living in any luxury, but he could see what others couldn’t, that is Jesus as the Christ. That is the gift we have through our faith, and it surpasses storms, plagues and all politics, and even the lack of sunshine.

With prayers, *Fr. David & Thumper*

Above: Thumper out looking for a Christmas Tree.

Right: Thumper so proud of the tree he found and brought home.

Next week I will try to get a picture of Thumper smiling!

And Finally...

With dreadful storms that we are told will become more common in the future through global warming, with another wave of Covid apparently just appearing over the horizon, and with no particularly good news coming from global politics (not to mention a run of wet, windy and sunless days), is it any wonder that a number of people are feeling a bit down.





Advent – 4th/5th December

Advent Week 2

Mission

*A time for prayer and silent meditation –
you may wish to light a candle.*



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

*“There is so much richness in our diocese
which we need to be open to encountering and receiving
such diversity but all united together
in the power of the Spirit of the Risen Jesus.”*
Bishop Mark O’Toole

Opening Prayer – Prayer by Rachel McCarthy from CAFOD

God of hope, we cling to you,
for you renew the face of the earth.
Through the gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus,
we follow you on the path of dawn.
Enlightened by your love and wisdom,
help us to lead each other and all creatures
back to your open arms.

Amen.

Readings – Luke 3: 1-6 – just before the start of Christ’s public ministry:

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar’s reign,
when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea,
Herod, tetrarch of Galilee,
his brother Philip, tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis,
Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,
during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas,
the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.
He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance
for the forgiveness of sins,
as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:
‘A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.’

Matthew 28:18-20 – right at the end of Christ’s earthly ministry:

Jesus came and said to his disciples,
“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.
And remember, I am with you always,
to the end of the age.”

Reflection – Gerard W. Hughes SJ in “Cry of Wonder”

In his letter, ‘The Joy of the Gospel’, Pope Francis wrote:

“I dream of a ‘missionary option’,
that is a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything,
so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things,
times and schedules, language and structures
can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world
rather than for her self-preservation.

We need to regain our missionary spirit
so that the call to holiness we heard in our baptism
is expressed by a change of direction.”

Themes for Reflection

Like last week, if you are doing this reflection with others, try to listen actively and without judgment. Do not enter into debate but rather search for what the Holy Spirit might be saying through the other person; pay attention not only to the words but also to the tone and feelings of the speaker; and listen actively to yourself, mindful of your own thoughts and feelings as you speak. Whether alone or with others, always pause before saying anything, asking that the Holy Spirit might guide you.

Mission Questions –

1. What do I understand by ‘mission’ in my own life?
2. How am I called to be an active participant in the mission of the Church?
What is my role as a missionary disciple?
3. What spiritual sustenance and formation do I need to be more committed:
to the mission of the Parish?
to the mission of the Church?
4. What is the mission of our Parish community?
5. How does what our parish is doing relate to the Great Commission of Jesus:
“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of
the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:18-20)?
6. How does our Parish listen to the Spirit to identify
the missionary goals to be pursued?
7. What impact is our Parish making in the local area?
Do we make a difference?
8. What is the mission of the Diocese?
9. What is the mission of the whole Church?
10. How are we the universal Church adapting to the changing world
and the Missionary needs in our modern society?

You are very welcome, indeed encouraged to share your answers with the parish.

All responses will be anonymised, and they will not be judged, but taken and shared with the diocese. E-mail to ElkValleyRC@gmail.com with the heading “Synod”.

“There is no need to create another Church” said Pope Francis

In my weekly e-mails you will have heard me talking about the ‘Synodal Journey’ that Pope Francis is asking us to embark upon, and hopefully you will have heard about this also from which ever diocese you are in. The British writer Austen Ivereigh says that this is the most significant event in the Church within his lifetime; or to be clear, he was born just after the Second Vatican Council, so it is the most significant event in the Church since that Council. To be honest, I wonder if many people will be struggling to see this! So to help us get an insight into it, here is a long extract from an even longer article he wrote recently. I should add that this was a very technical article in places, so hopefully I have chosen a section that is relatively easy to read.

My point in choosing this section is that it links the transformation that is being asked of us as a Church with the criticisms, disfunction and absolutely dreadful events that have occurred in the church during our recent history. And if the Synodal Journey is one that truly addresses the disorder that allowed abuse to occur unchallenged in the Church, then it is something we should all want to embrace with enthusiasm. Austen writes:

The first is that discernment and decision-making are the business of the whole body, not just of the few entrusted with governance. In his landmark October 2015 synod speech, Pope Francis quoted an ancient maxim: *Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet* [*What touches everyone must be treated and approved by all*]. And because, as St. Benedict notes in his seventh-century rule, God sometimes speaks through the youngest in the community, enabling participation means paying special attention to the timid edges, to the unlikely places, to those outside.

The second is that this business of consultation and deliberation is not separate from the life of prayer but intrinsic to it. The *habitus* [*attitude*] of community decision-making is attentive listening to others, straining for the whispers of the Spirit even in the mouths of people we resent or disagree with. It calls, therefore, for giving time to all, in equal measure, for speaking honestly and boldly but not hammering others with our views, for sitting in peaceful, open silence so that we can hear what words do not always say and can often conceal. Synodality requires us to understand that we do not possess the truth, but that sometimes, when we put aside our emotions and agendas, it possesses us, overflowing the narrow channels of our thinking.

In short, participation and prayerful listening are the hallmarks of these religious orders’ *modus vivendi, operandi, et cogitandi* [*way of living, working, and thinking*]. This is synodality. It has been used for Church elections ever since the apostles asked God to reveal to their hearts who should take the place of Judas. It has been used to transcend problems and conflicts ever since the “Jewish question” threatened to blow apart the early Church. Chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles relates how, at the Council of Jerusalem, the people, the elders, and the Spirit were all engaged in discerning the new path for the Church, announced by St. Peter in those famous words: “It has seemed to the Holy Spirit and to us.”

Yet for reasons of history — the corruption of worldliness, the lure of power, the entanglement with empires — synodality was squeezed out of the Church, leaving its authority structures looking less like what we find in Acts and more like the absolute monarchies and corporate command-and-control structures of the modern world.

No one now needs to be told where that has gotten us. The morning of my meeting with the synod sub-secretary, Sister Nathalie, the newspapers were full of stories about the 2,500-page Jean-Marc Sauvé report commissioned by French bishops looking into clerical sexual abuse since 1950. The figures were astonishing, and the headlines and quotes carried the usual shock-and-shame adjectives, worn from repetition. But I was struck by the timing of the report, just days before the opening of the synod, and the way it homed in on what it called the “excessive secularisation of the person of the priest,” as if the secularisation of any person could ever be other than excessive. Clericalism — the idolatry of clergy, the worship of the institution, the abuse of power — had again been laid bare, and it was not just a *trahison des clercs* [betrayal of clerics] this time but of laypeople too: endemic, cultural, systemic “deviations of authority,” as Sauvé put it, that seemed to be built into the very structures of the Catholic Church.

Over *caffè lungo* Sr. Nathalie also seized on Sauvé’s report. A “synodal conversion” meant, she said, we can no longer have a Church that permits the kind of culture of domination shamed in the report. A Church in which ordinary people are heard, and recognise themselves as having agency — as missionary disciples, distinct from clergy by function but equal in dignity — is no longer a Church that allows for, or is blind to, the abuse of power and conscience on which the sexual exploitation of vulnerable people depends.

“There is no need to create another Church,” said Pope Francis in the synod hall on 9th October, quoting Yves Congar’s *True and False Reform in the Church*. The task was instead “to create a different Church,” the one reimagined by the Second Vatican Council’s *Lumen gentium*. A synodal Catholic Church is still a *communio hierarchica* [hierarchical communion], but authority is no longer exercised in a remote and authoritarian way. Leadership becomes “co”: a matter of collaboration, cooperation, and co-responsibility. (This comes easily to young people, says Sr. Nathalie, who has worked with them for years. She calls them “*Generation Co*”.) In a co-responsible Church the Spirit leads us all; the priest and the bishop are in the midst of the people of God, not hovering over them. It is the Church founded by Jesus Christ, but also reflecting him: no longer abusive, no longer clericalist, but *synodal*.

What went so wrong in our Church that meant that sexual abuse could occur? What went so wrong in the Residential Schools? To quote Lord Acton, writing to an Anglican bishop in 1887, “I cannot accept your canon that we are to judge Pope and King *unlike* other men, with a favourable presumption that they did no wrong... Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” The Synodal Journey is a giving back of power to the Holy Spirit, and an enabling of all of us to be the instruments of the Holy Spirit.

Fr. David,
25th November 2021

Talking to Family About The Church

Gathering with the Extended Family this Christmas

This Christmas most of us will at some point be with our extended family,
and many of those family members won't go to church.
Worse, some might be significantly turned off by the Church.
And this year particularly,
after the Residential Schools revelations, some might even be quite anti-Church.
So I thought I would share a few ideas about talking to our families about the Church!

Rational Argument – discussion, debate, talking through...

When it come to talking through Church issues
we might wish that we were more articulate,
– or in my case, I wish I could think more quickly –
or we might wish we knew more facts in order to be better able to argue our case.
But we have to remember:
rational argument rarely convinces people on questions of faith.
(Ask yourself, when a 'religious caller' knocks on your door, are you convinced by them?
Do you even hear anything that they say?)

But there is another truth:
That the **lack** of a rational argument destroys belief.

By is I mean, if someone puts up a strong argument condemning the Church,
and if believers don't put up a rigorous explanation or counter argument,
then even those with faith will start to wonder and loose heart.

So we need to see the place of rational argument,
not first and foremost as an evangelising tool,
but as a significant part of what we need to be prepared to engage in.

So we do have to know something about the issues that might come up in conversation,
and some of the facts about the past.

The Questions We Might be Asked

A likely scenario – either at home at Christmas or indeed at anytime –
is that we will be asked a question about our faith or our Church.

A very important thing to remember is to hear **both** the question as presented,
and also, what is behind the question, the real enquiry the person is making.

Often people will come to us with a really negative image of the Church,
so we have to be prepared that behind each question will be
and attempt to confirm some of these negative impressions.

So, for example, someone might ask,
“Do Catholics really have to go to church every Sunday?”

The question as presented is quite straightforward,
but behind the question might be,

- Does the Church tell you what you can do and can't do?" ,
- Does the Church take away all your freedom to decide things?
- Does the Church try to control your life?"

Answer with Charity and Clarity

So we have to answer with love – answer with *charity*;
but we also need to clearly address the questions – answer with *clarity*.

So generally to any question

we want to explain that all the Church's teaching comes out of love,
but it is also important to make it clear that

the Church does have clearly articulated views, particularly on moral issues.

So specifically for this question - what are the points we might want to bring out?

An answer from me personally might be:

God wants us to reach our fullness

and the Church believes that going to church is one of the ways we do this.

This is not strange, authoritarian or controlling, rather it is a reality of love!

I love my mother and father,

and as well as thinking about them or even calling them on the phone,

I also feel the need to visit them and be part of our family.

My parents love it when I visit them,

and they love it even more when the whole family is together

because it is a precious time that bonds us together in a unique way.

The same is true of the family of God;

coming together is a special time that bonds us together in a unique way –

both to God and to our neighbour – *we don't want to neglect either of these.*

So yes, I could sit in the garden on my own and think about God,

and yes, in a similar way I could just think nice thoughts about Mum and Dad,

but if I love them then going to see them is so important,

particularly when the family are gathered because family is part of the whole dynamic,

and that is what the Church tells us when it talks about attending Church on Sunday.

And just as sometimes I go to a family event when perhaps

I would prefer to be doing something else, so too with church.

I don't just go to church because of what I can get out of it,

I also go to church to **give** -

to give my love to God

but also to give my support and love to others attending church.

If people only went to church to receive, that would be an impoverished church.

Thus the church states that both individually and collectively,

attending church is a good even if we don't feel it at the time.

How We Answer any Questions

We must also be on our guard, we must be careful to be in touch with our feelings:

- Am I answering the question out of frustration?
- Am I answering the question defensively because I feel that I am under attack?

We are called to speak the truth in love,

so perhaps we need to stop for a moment, a few seconds,

and say a prayer for grace and charity, as well as for clarity!

But this Christmas the Questions Might be More Explicit!

This year after the Residential Schools revelations the questions might be more ‘head on’. Family might ask,

*“How can you still go to a Catholic Church
after all the dreadful things the Church has done?”*

Then again, we have to remember that

this question is built upon many negative presumptions.

Don’t get me wrong, I am not saying that members of the Church haven’t done wrong, and that the Church authorities have responded in a totally inappropriate way, but let’s step back and look at what it means to be associated with any group of people.

An answer from me personally might be:

I am reading the Truth and Reconciliation Report on the Residential Schools.

This report indeed highlighted very clearly the wrong the Churches did,

but it put a much greater blame on the government of Canada, and worse, it says the Government, still to this day, have continued with policies and procedures that have not changed, so still discriminate against indigenous peoples.

So the question back to you is, how can you still be a Canadian?

Or how can you be part of a **North American Capitalist** society that was built on the ‘Robber Barons’,

the powerful 19th-century American industrialists and financiers

who made fortunes by monopolising huge industries through:

- the formation of trusts (monopolies);
- engaging in unethical business practices, including bribes and blackmail;
- exploiting and abusing workers which resulted in many of them dying;
- and paying little heed to morality or basic human rights.

To name just two from that era whose names are still well known:

- Andrew Carnegie -
- John D. Rockefeller -

Or we can open it up even more widely and ask how we can be part of

the **modern international world order** that has its roots in the slave trade,

one of the most dreadful chapters in human history?

(And in other parts of the world, other torrid episodes of inhumanity.)

Another Option – To Opt Out of Being Involved

All human institutions go astray, so another option is to opt out of all institutions!
 This might feel good in terms of self righteousness and moral superiority,
 but it is only by being involved with others that we can help society move forward.
 I can do so little on my own, so I have to choose who I am going to work with:

- The Church;
- The Scouts or Girl Guides;
- The Lions Club;
- A particular political party;
- Green Peace;
- Black Lives Matter... or whoever.

Being a lone voice is abandonment of our responsibility to collectively help others.
 So who are you going to choose? Or are you just going to jeer from the sidelines?

If one believe in God, then the Church has to be our chosen instrument.

So to Answer Why I Still Go to the Catholic Church

I am sure that for many admirable reason you think Canada is basically a good country.
 And you might believe that Western Capitalism isn't perfect,
 but unlike Communism, Totalitarianism or Fascism, you would also say that
 it can be a positive force with positive values.

(But I am sure that there is a lot of room for debate around this.)

In a similar way, I would say that I believe that despite the Church's mistakes,
 it is a real force for good, and indeed,
 the heart of Church teaching does not take us to abuse, but to the meaning of love.
 The Church gives us the revelation of God's personal love for me and for you.

Conclusion

As Catholics we have to acknowledge that there are big issues out there which we have to face, and many of these issues will be in the minds of people who we will sit with at table.

Accordingly:

- It is always good to know something about current issues.
- Don't run away if challenged.
- But always pray - before meeting family,
 again if you should sense any negativity from your loved ones,
 and certainly as you go to answer their questions.
- Then remember you are witnessing to God's love, so answer in love.
- And answer both the spoken questions and the unspoken questions.
- Challenge the negative presumptions – *they need to be challenged*
- And speak from your heart, that is where the Spirit will be with you.

Speaking up might be difficult, but sharing our faith is a way that we can love:
 love both God *and* the person we are speaking to.

***Let us trust that the Holy Spirit will give us the words we need,
 and also give us the courage to answer from our hearts.***

Our churches are open to those ***without*** any Covid symptoms.
But Covid is still a real threat – thus caution is needed!



Zoom Links

Link to Weekend Masses

To get the link to our two weekend Masses please send an e-mail to one of our parish offices with your name and you will then receive the link each week.

info@holyfamilyfernie.ca

ElkValleyRC@gmail.com

Audio Only

Don't forget, even if you are driving off for a soccer tournament or a hockey match, if you have cell service then 'church' is there and available. So if you don't have access to the internet you can still listen to Mass wherever you are via a phone call to our Zoom link.

Again, e-mail the office for the link for this.

Chat:

Feel free to greet people via the chat when you join our broadcast, and if you are praying for anything particular, do share this with others on the Chat.

Normally there is "1A - Chat (Co-Host)" who watches the chat for any problems or prayer intentions. If you don't want everyone to see your message you can send your message directly and it will remain private.

Waiting Room:

Please note when you log on you will be put in a "waiting room". Hopefully as soon as we see you waiting we will let you in. If there is a bit of a delay, please just wait; we will be with you as quickly as we can.

And for those who are attending church in person, be careful:

Please continue to be careful when you are in church. Please sanitise your hands, wear a mask at all times, always think of the good of others. As you move about in church you might come within a 'breath distance' of others, and be conscious that others might have health vulnerabilities that you don't know about. ***Everyone still needs to be careful.***

