

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

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To: My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Every afternoon about 5 o'clock Susan and I sit down in what we call our Rideau Room and look out over our front yard and the lake. We are not as punctual about eating dinner as we once were back in the days when we were both working and lived close to "the big smoke" – Toronto. It is not unusual for us to eat at 7 PM or after. What do we do? We may read, I may look at the news on my phone and Susan on her iPad. Often times we just sit and talk.

You may wonder what we have to talk about? After all, since the lockdown began, we rarely leave the property. Most days, neither of our cars moves an inch. Susan does the grocery shopping. I only go out to deliver something or to deal with maintenance that has to do with one of the cars. We are pretty much together 24/7. The interesting thing is that we usually find lots to talk about, and over the last several months it is not unusual for that to touch on the pandemic.

Lately, it seems that most of the news focuses on things opening up and getting back to normal. Personally, I find this disturbing because it seems that while COVID-19 infections fell for a period of time, they are now on the rise again. This probably relates to the easing of restrictions. On the long weekend in May, there was very little boat traffic on Big Rideau Lake, but this past weekend was like any normal summer weekend. Everybody was out on the water. I don't know what it was like in Perth, because I am rarely in town. But once you begin to ease restrictions, some people will discard the caution that has marked their lives for weeks and begin to act as if everything was normal again.

I get it. People are tired of being shut in and spring seemed to come late this year. Families with young people at home are finding it hard with online school and zero social activities. Young people are crawling the walls. Some people have been out of work and without a paycheck, and just want to get back to earning an income again. Not everyone is in as fortunate a position as Susan and I. Still, it goes back



“... a place to belong!”

to patience that we talked about a number of weeks ago. We are in a hurry for things to go back to normal and to get on with our lives.

Last night I read this analogy comparing things that we are facing with COVID-19 to three cold weather situations – a blizzard, winter, and a mini ice age. The premise on which the article was based is that the effects of COVID-19 will not be over any time soon. A blizzard can last for a few days and at worst for a week. For a blizzard we hole up. We live off what we have in the pantry and we don't go outside. Our response is appropriate for the event, but it is not sustainable for the long term.

Winter is a little different. It lasts for months and we prepare for it by putting away our bicycles and patio furniture and raking up the leaves. We put snow tires on the car, dust off and service the snow blower, get out our winter clothes and maybe pull out our cross country skis or the snowmobile. Winter is a “new normal” that we are going to have to live with for a long period of time. It's a marathon, not a sprint.

Let's say that an ice age lasts, not for months, but a few years. We need to develop new ways of living during these times, because the very context of life has changed. A mini ice age is like an extended journey. We have no idea where the finish line is. We just have to keep going until we get there. The authors of the article suggest that we are entering a mini ice age that will not last weeks, or months but up to several years. During this time, life will become very different from what we have known. Things may eventually return to “normal” but more likely it will be a “new normal”. I don't want to sound like the eternal pessimist, but I have a feeling that things will never be exactly the same again. However, don't expect that it will be a matter of a few weeks or months. I suspect that it could be longer than that.

I want to encourage you today to take the long view from God's Upper Story rather than the short term view based on our mere human perspective. Take the long view and you will not be disappointed if things do not turn around and go back to normal in the next few months. And keep in mind these words from Ephesians 5 which I have quoted before: **15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.**

Your servant in Christ,
Rev. Stephen Dunkin
Loch Mor
Big Rideau Lake

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