

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

1 Drummond St. W., Perth, ON K7H 3E3
613-267-2481

standrewsperth@bellnet.ca
www.pccweb.ca/standrewsperth/

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To: My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

What is your favourite time of the year? Maybe it is easier to ask, "What is your least favourite time of the year?" I can readily answer that one. My least favourite time of year is mid to late spring and early summer. The reason is because I hate bugs! I love late summer and the fall. I like winter. I enjoy early spring until the bugs arrive in May and then I tolerate things until August comes and the bugs are pretty well done with. That's why I always take my summer holidays in August!



Bugs!!! It starts with midges and shad flies. They don't bite but are a nuisance. Things really start to go downhill when the black flies and then mosquitoes show up. The black flies eventually subside but then the deer flies and the horse flies arrive. Worst of all there are ticks. They are always with us. All of the above bite and leave you with some very painful irritation. And we all know that ticks can carry Lyme disease and can be deadly. However, just because I hate bugs doesn't mean I stay inside all the time. No, I work outside here on the north shore of Big Rideau Lake, but I wear my "bug shirt". This is my new one for "good occasions", but I have an old one covered with paint that I wear for working in. I also wear my socks rolled up over the bottom of my pants to ward off ticks. It makes me look funny but I don't care.

I don't want to talk to you about bug shirts. I want to talk to you about seasons. This is what I call "bug season". It comes every year and it may make you thankful for the fact that you live in town or somewhere that bugs are not a factor. You may think that the Dunkins are crazy for living out in bug country. Maybe we are. Think about it. I won't be

"... a place to belong!"

able to cut the grass until August without wearing my bug shirt. But then bug season is just that. It is a season and I know that it won't last forever. Eventually, the bugs will depart and we will be able to enjoy the lake and our property again. I can't tell you the exact day bug season will end, but I know it will. Only the ticks are always present! Against them we must be ever vigilant.

I guess you could say that we are going through the "pandemic" or "COVID-19 season" right now. Eventually it will come to an end. The difference between it and bug season is that we haven't experienced a pandemic of this magnitude before, so we can't say how long it will last or when it will end. Past pandemics give us some idea (possibly up to 36 months!!) but right now it is anyone's guess. Another difference with bug season is that we rarely have a second wave, and even if we do, the bugs make their presence known. With COVID-19 we will most certainly experience a second wave. As things begin to open up, it will come back. People can walk around with COVID-19 and show no symptoms. Once we start moving about more freely, these a-symptomatic individuals will spread the disease and we will not even be aware of it. I have a pretty good idea about what life will be like when bug season ends, but I have no idea what life will look like when this pandemic ends. Despite all the uncertainties, I remind you that it will only last for a season. In this we have hope.

When that season comes to an end, churches will reopen their doors. We will be able to worship together once again, but church may look different. We may not be able to have a fellowship time after church. We will have to social or physical distance for a time. We may not be able to have a choir at the start. Some of our vulnerable members may not even be able to attend church for a longer period than those without significant health issues. These are things we will have to face, and we will face them with God's grace and guidance. After all, it will only be for a season.

I want to assure you that God will be faithful to you in this season of your life. I encourage you to be faithful to him and to see this season as an opportune time for you to serve him – maybe in a different way than ever before. I encourage you to be faithful in observing worship during this season. Set aside Sunday morning as a time which is sacred to "attend" church with the rest of your faithful brothers and sisters in Christ. Finally, I encourage you to be faithful in giving God your offering during this season. How very easy it is to allow these disciplines to slip. In the end, we will be the ones who will miss out.

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

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