



Dear friends,

So, there's good news and bad news. First the bad news.

While it may not come as a surprise, it doesn't make the sharing of this news any easier: the leadership team has made the difficult decision to cancel in-person worship for Christmas Eve, and going forward for at least until early January, when we will reassess.

Canceling in-person worship - especially Christmas Eve - was not a decision lightly made. As you know, we have been working hard this fall to re-open to *more* in-person services, not *shutting down* the services we have! However, after taking a few days to pray, to consult with experts as well as listen to unfolding advice from the medical officer for health, we were unanimous that this was the right step for our community.

As Rev. Stephanie said during Sunday's announcement, there's a lot we don't know about Omicron, but here's what we do know:

- 1) COVID numbers we are seeing today reflect tests that were done a few days ago. Case numbers are rising, even with rapid antigen tests hard to find and PCR testing pushed days out from showing symptoms.
- 2) Large indoor gatherings are dangerous. The more people in the building, the higher the likelihood that someone present may have it, and because this variant is so transmissible, the higher the risk our church service could become a spreader event. While we all want to gather together in our church building, the fact is we have the technology and volunteers to enable us to worship online, without risking contributing to community spread.
- 3) Medical officers of health are telling us that being double-vaccinated is not adequate protection. Very few people in our community will have had access to the booster by Christmas Eve; of those who have been able to get it, the boost in immunity only kicks in 10-14 days after the shot.
- 4) Cloth masks do not protect against the Omicron variant; only N95 rated masks do and those are hard to find.

At the end of the day as much as we want to be together, we must also consider our neighbours and what love requires of us. Suspending in-person worship is a sacrifice we are offering for the sake of others, following Jesus and the way of the cross.

Here's the Good News: Christmas is Going Ahead!

Guess what? We are not canceling Christmas! We will be celebrating the birth of our Saviour with joy and creativity and courage. We have a special Christmas Eve service planned, no small thanks to Bill Bradbury, Bishop Yu, and Phil Jocz. Canon Stephanie, Doug Willoughby, Matthew Waterman and the rest of our ministry team are determined to make this a memorable parish Christmas.



Revised Pandemic Christmas Schedule:

Christmas Eve:

4 pm A Pandemic Pageant: a modest offering from our children and youth! Pre-recorded worship for families, available at 4 pm on the church website.

4-6 pm Parking Lot Communion: park in the Upper Lot, and Canon Stephanie will bring you a baggie of wafers consecrated by Bishop Yu for your Christmas communion. Receive an in-person Christmas blessing from the comfort of your car. Please leave your car windows rolled up until Canon Stephanie comes by, and allow spacing between vehicles where possible.

7 pm Christmas Eve Service: found on the parish website. It may be a Silent Night, but it will be a Holy Night!

8 pm-9 pm Christmas blessings: Zoom with Rev. Stephanie: for those wishing to come for Christmas blessings and prayers. Zoom link found on the parish website, under the zoom link.

Christmas Day:

10 am Christmas Day Morning Prayer: available on the church landing page

10:40-11:30 am

Christmas Day Blessings over Zoom: For those who missed their chance Christmas Eve.

December 26 and January 2

Services are available online.

We are very concerned about our members who may not have easy access to online worship. Judy Carpino is leading a team of callers to reach out to our members by phone. We thank the callers for this important ministry of care.

We also remind people that we have a prayer ministry team who are happy to receive confidential prayer requests. Please contact David Karram, at dksurfer7@gmail.com.

If you have ideas of ways to support vulnerable members of our community this Christmas tide, and are willing to volunteer to help, please contact Canon Stephanie or one of us, your wardens.

May the peace of Christ reign in all our hearts this season; may the comfort the Holy Spirit lift the burden of weariness, and renew our minds in steadfast hope.

Wardens: Pam Johnstone pamj@stpaulsonthehill.com, Bruce Hampson bruceh@stpaulsonthehill.com

Deputy Wardens: Ivan Hunte, Kehinde Ladipo, Sophia Levy-Presner

Priest: Stephanie Douglas-Bowman stephanied@stpaulsonthehill.com