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## **A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION**

January 8, 2021

As I thought about this week's letter I couldn't figure out how to work in New Brunswick returning to the orange phase of recovery as cases of COVID-19 continue to increase; the shooting of a teacher in Riverview that led to a manhunt which closed schools in Moncton; or the failed insurrection at the United States Capital Building in Washington, DC.

A mother phoned me to say that after her child's daycare shutting down for two weeks after two positive cases were found, with ten staff members now isolating, and with the shooting of a teacher just a few blocks from her home came the request, "Just pray for me, will you?"

Taking care of our mental health as well as our spiritual health is important now. We are having to find new ways of doing those things. As people's anxieties increase, their behaviour changes. As we socially isolate into the winter, our contact with friends and family becomes limited to the phone or Facetime. It's not hard to find reasons to be depressed or anxious in today's world. Sometimes we even have to distance ourselves from people who find everything to complain about and nothing to be happy about.

Which brings me to Norman Monroe.

I spoke with Larry Munroe this week about his father, Norm, who died early in the morning on Christmas Day. Norm was a gentle soul and a faithful man who made the most out of bad situations for as long as I knew him. With the death of his wife, then with the loss of his leg, he had to move into a special care home. He had a number of close calls over the years. Yet, what was remarkable about Norm was his ability to lift your spirits as you visited with him or spoke to him on the phone. Just an amazing man. He was a watchmaker for most of his life. He came to church and sang in the choir, giving thanks for his blessings. I remember visiting him once and getting after him for being up on the roof shoveling. He just laughed. Turns out his kids were after him about that too, threatening to tie a rope to him so that they could find him in a snow bank if he fell!

It's important in these times to find your 'Norms'. Find the people who lift your spirits. Even better, try to be like Norm. A good friend of mine was a Roman Catholic priest who always talked about "emulating the Saints"; trying to be more like them. We are surrounded by saints, both here and gone. We can try to be more like them. Their witness to the love of God at work in their lives is evident all around us. There are people in my life who inspire me to pray more, to serve others more, and to do things such as write and play music. Who are people whom you would like to emulate?

In the coming time, we will be starting a church Zoom account and we will be using this in different ways, such as meetings and Bible Study. It doesn't take too long to figure it out if you haven't already.

Also, we will be continuing to worship online during the orange phase in order to keep each other safe. Online services will be modified slightly with the change to orange. We are limited by music because singing is not permitted during the orange phase so I'll be finding ways to include music in our services.

2021 is off to a bumpy start. But, as the people of Jesus we are not surprised at all to see the crosses in our world. We need to be present to them and to pray for the people who bear them, even as we carry our own.

Sincerely,

*The Rev. Aaron Billard*  
Minister



**No in-person Worship** during Zone 1 Orange Phase

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Have you watched our **online services**? If not, join us every week online using one of the links below:  
via our Church website - <http://www.stjohnsmoncton.ca>  
via our Church Facebook page – <https://www.facebook.com/groups/16465565858>  
via YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNHB60ajQtwsf7-vCfXGHBw>

### **MEMORIALS**

*A donation has been made to St. John's United Church in memory of:*  
**Angus Birse** (husband of Eugenie Birse)  
by Eugenie Birse

### **CHURCH MINISTRY PERSONNEL AND STAFF**



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