

COVID Chronicles

#1 - Jason Rochon, "Counting the Cost"

For many people, myself included, COVID has helped us to prune the bushes of our lives. We were able to (and sometimes forced to) withdraw from most social responsibilities. We were also given a lot of time filled with nothing.

As I looked forward to the reopening, I began to consider intentionally what I wanted to fill my time with. The answer was simple: things that are worth doing. The list included many things: building up my family and community, and allowing myself to be built up by God and my mentors. At this point in my reflection, I was confronted. Shouldn't I be doing 'things worth doing' always?



Prior to all this Pastor Lane had preached on the persecution of the Church. He had explained the hardship that many Christians withstand daily. These Christians have the same goal as me, to do 'things worth doing'. The difference was that these Christians knew what it was to sacrifice. They had counted the cost because they might have to pay it any day. The cost is **everything**. Throughout this season a quote from Christian rapper Andy Mineo had been stuck in my head: "If you wanna grow in God, it's not complicated it's just costly." My journey continued. I counted the cost and found it worth paying. Furthermore, I counted the cost of not giving my everything to follow God. This introspection occurred during the depths of COVID and continues to this day. I have not been threatened with my life, but I can tell you that because I have consciously counted the cost, I know I would be able to lay down my life for my faith.

This is the journey I have taken during COVID. In essence, a deliberate visualization of my possible end, and my attempting to understand what this means for me while I continue to live. Laying down my life does not mean specifically dying. It means bearing my cross every day. In other words, bearing the burden which I am suited and selected to carry.

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#2 - Jill Drader



As a child the only thing I knew about church was that it was on Sundays and I had to wear a dress and pantyhose from the 'Sundays only' section of my closet. The community I grew up in, old order and modern day Mennonites, had very strict rules for women.

I had a tough time at the beginning of the pandemic. I was laid off from work. My marriage ended and I moved to my own place, suddenly feeling more alone and isolated than ever before. And, I had to 'love my neighbor' and put the guidance of forgiveness and love to the forefront when I didn't want to, yet knew it was what I had to do.

At first, not having church to go to was a reprieve from the embarrassment of having to talk about what was really going on with my life. I was happy to somewhat suffer alone watching sermons on YouTube in loungewear, until it was all too much. A friend from my kids' school reminded me that Jesus met women where they were at, usually doing mundane activities that were their roles: gathering water, in their homes, and in my case while soaking my feet. I was invited to the 'Known Collective' women's group in only a way God could orchestrate, he sat Julie Kerr and I beside each other at a pedicure. While I'm not ready to come back to Sundays due to my personal situation, I am ready to come back with women in a small group and the best part – no pantyhose required to attend!

I was called to be where I need to be during this 'return'.
 During this very hard time, He came to me in many ways.
 Through calls from other women, He met me in the message.
 Through floods of tears alone, He embraced me on the floor.
 Through meals delivered when I had a surgery, He fed me.
 Through meditation and journaling, He wrote my next steps.
 Through a deep inner knowing of what to do next, He gave me reminders of His grace over and over.
 Through strangers saying something enlightening, He gave me faith and light.

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#3 - Dawn Matthews-Nichols

To say I have missed in-person church service is very true, just like most of you. One of my favourite bible verses is from Galatians 6:9 "Don't get tired of doing what is right for in due season you will reap if you faint not". We have all been trying to do what is right so we can help many people and we didn't give up. But what I'm so happy and grateful to get back to is the worship team. It was hard for me not to be able to sing out loud for the glory of God. When we were allowed to come to church but not able to sing, well that was perhaps one of the hardest things for me to do. Our pastoral team did an amazing job of doing what was right and keeping us all safe.

Our worship team and our amazing leader, Shelley, have done a spectacular job of keeping all of us connected through song and worship. This was not easy and we are truly blessed to have such caring leaders.

Worshipping through song is one of my greatest joys and I'm blessed beyond all measure to be able to connect again with our church family.

May we continue to worship together and to raise our voices for the Lord. Blessings to all!





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Sermon Series Starts in September


Oak Park
CHURCH OF CHRIST

CALLING ALL SAINTS

AN AFTERNOON OF PRAYER



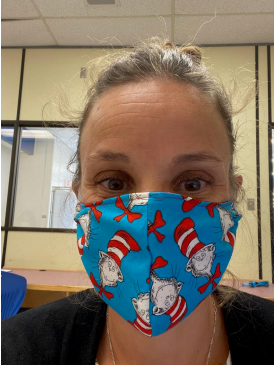
"THE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS PERSON IS
POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE" -JAMES 5:16

COME PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH, OUR
MINISTRIES AND OUR COMMUNITY

SATURDAY SEPT. 18TH
3PM-4:30PM

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#4 - Laura Rushton



I've been asked to share with you about what God taught me through COVID, and I'd love to say that He taught me to "slow down" or to "take more time for personal reflection", but that was not my experience. My husband Kenzie and I are both educators, and my job transitioned to teaching school online, in a format I was not accustomed to. I got very little sleep trying to keep on top of the demands of work, life and faith: providing peace and gentleness for my children as they met their own school-life-COVID challenges; juggling keeping the family active and engaged without our team sports while ensuring masks were washed; learning to live apart during quarantines; and cultivating Sunday school lessons for my children while still trying to nurture our own adult church life.

My reality was not one where I had time to start that new hobby, or catch up on all the TV series that I hadn't yet watched. I instead felt like I carried around a weight and a tiredness of trying to be more than I thought God made me capable for. Yet here is where I felt God deepest in COVID: every time I remembered to turn my worry into worship, God reminded me that I was not alone, but I couldn't be a complacent consumer of His goodness without effort on my part. He pushed me.

When I got complacent and let God slip out of my work day, He pushed me with notes from the OakPark staff reminding me that I was in schools to be a pastoral presence. When the day got long and I got lazy with my intended purpose, He sent a student who encouraged me to run during my lunch hours (to worship music, to boot), which revitalized and reoriented me. When I allowed myself to be overwhelmed and consumed with life's toil, God nudged an old friend to invite me into a magnificent year-long bible study that made me accountable to diving into the word nightly and being raw and open on a weekly basis with others. My life group nudged with its own bible studies and came alongside of me to commiserate, encourage and pray with me.

See, God showed me how easy it was to get wrapped up in all the busy, but He also showed me that with care, persistence and effort, I could have this deeper, stronger relationship with Him. When I drew closer to Him, when I pushed to make Him the priority with my energies, everything else got better. Not better in the sense that CoVid went away, or the laundry did itself, but it got better because I remembered who I belonged to and what my true purpose was on Earth, and that reprioritized everything.

Long Range Planning Committee Update

The development permit application for our planned ministry and facility expansion was submitted to the City of Calgary in early June. In mid-July, the City responded with some minor required changes which we're currently working on with our architect. The city's changes are primarily directed at easy to accommodate items outside, such as disabled parking stalls, fire truck access, landscaping and access to garbage and recycling. Our architect expects to submit our response to the City by late July and we anticipate an approved Development Permit from the City in mid to late August.

A reminder that drawings of the planned building expansion and upgrade are available to anyone that wants a copy from the church office. Also a reminder to folks that there is no financial impact on the church for this development approval process as several families stepped up and committed sufficient funds to cover the costs associated with this application.

The Development Permit approval will be good for three years and doesn't obligate Oak Park to do any work but clears the way for us to build when we're ready. Following Development Permit approval the next step will be to work on detailed construction drawings which in turn will enable us to develop more accurate construction costs.

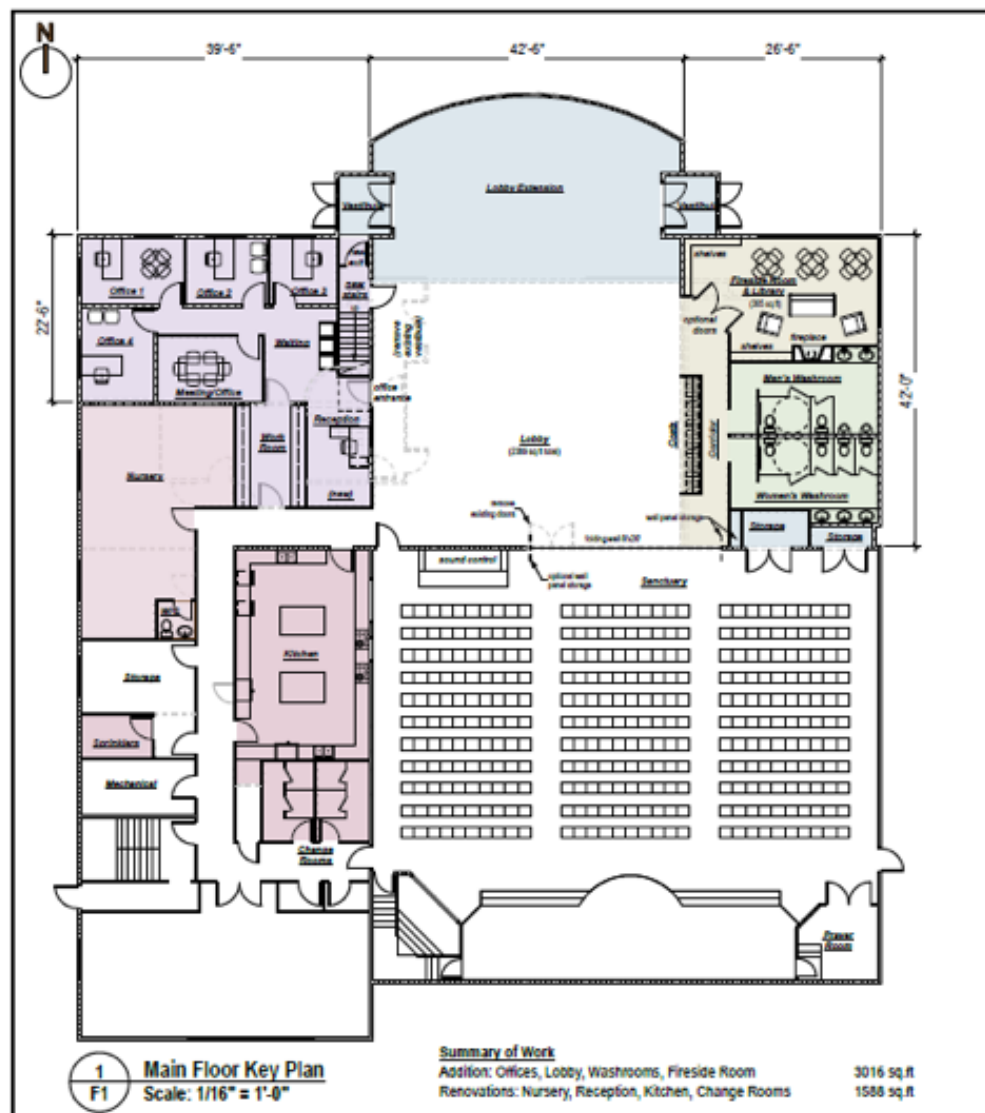
Folks will recall that Long Range Planning worked with the Verger Group, specialists in church facility expansion projects, last winter to conduct a feasibility study (financial and church support) for this project. The response from the congregation was overwhelmingly positive, with details reported at the AGM and in the previous issue of the Park Bench.

That response gave us the confidence to proceed with the Development Permit application and to begin planning for a fundraising program, most likely to occur this fall. Verger will also coach us in the fundraising program and we're currently working with Verger to develop the fundraising plan and schedule. Members of Oak Park will do the actual work of coordinating the fundraising, but Verger will provide coaching to the team to ensure we conduct the fundraising properly and successfully.

Any questions or suggestions can also be directed to Lane, Martin or myself at any time.

Doug Walker, Chairman
Long Range Planning Committee

Planned Upgrades and Expansion - Main Floor Plan



Trunk Sale - August 7th

The list of things we couldn't do because of the pandemic over the past year and a half is probably at least a mile and three quarters long! Important things had to be put on hold while smaller things, for the most part, just didn't happen. One of those small things that didn't happen last summer were Garage Sales.

Now I must confess, historically speaking I've never really been much of a Garage Sale devotee. But driving through my neighbourhood last summer, and not seeing those handmade cardboard signs hanging crookedly from signposts, left me feeling a bit sad. As if something small yet significant was missing from the community landscape. After all, who doesn't crane their neck when driving past a driveway filled with miscellaneous items hoping something will catch their eye?

This year has already seen a bit of a resurgence of Garage Sales, but they still aren't as prevalent as they once were. Don't worry though, we've got that covered. On Saturday August 7th, the Garage Sale drought will come to an end as the church parking lots fill up with cars and trucks bursting at the welds with all kinds of goodies. And you won't have to drive all over the neighbourhood or crane your neck to see anything because it will all be in one place!

Now if you're thinking, 'The last thing I need is more stuff!' then this is the place for you to come and sell some of the things you already have. Not to make room for more stuff (although that might be subliminally encouraged) but to scratch that itch you've been feeling to 'minimalize' your home. Just the mere thought feels good, doesn't it?

On the other hand, if you love to browse and search for deals on things you needed anyway (or something you didn't know you needed until you saw it) then this will be the place for you to load up on bargains! Who knows what treasures you might find? Incidentally, did you know that the minimalist trend is rapidly being replaced by the 'Cluttercore' movement? Yep, if you want to keep current, it turns out you now need more clutter, not less of it!

Most of all though, this event is about community, an excuse to spend an hour or two bartering, laughing, and visiting with others from the church

and the neighbouring communities. It is also a wonderful way to support our friends, the Leon family, as they return to Haiti later this summer. All proceeds gathered from the booking of parking stalls, along with other donations given that day, will go 100% toward the moving and settling expenses incurred by the Leon's as they follow the Lord's leading back to Haiti.

Most of what you need to know about this event is on the poster below. But if you still have questions, or you want to book your stall, call Martin at the church or email martin@oakpark.ca.

All types of sellers are welcome including – crafters, artists, home businesses, and those trying to reclaim their basement or garage. After all, one person's minimalist cast off is another person's cluttercore treasure. Isn't that what Garage Sale-ing is all about!

-An invitation from Martin Hosier and Lifeline Christian Mission



TRUNK SALE SATURDAY AUGUST 7TH 10AM TO 2PM

IN THE CHURCH PARKING LOTS

COME AND BUY - WITH UP TO 40 TRUNKS FILLED WITH GOODIES YOU ARE SURE TO FIND SOMETHING WONDERFUL JUST FOR YOU

COME AND SELL - \$50 PER STALL - PLEASE CALL 403-251-5150 OR TALK TO MARTIN TO BOOK (PROCEEDS TO SUPPORT THE LEON'S RETURN TO HAITI)

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE



Eat Well. Spend Less.



2021

Any one can order one or more Good Food Boxes.

Boxes must be pre-ordered and paid for in cash (exact change) on or before the order by date. You can pre-purchase your next box when you pick up your order. Boxes must be picked up, before 6pm. (Note: Boxes not picked up will be donated - no refunds will be given.)

Good Food Boxes come in the following sizes:

LARGE	40 lbs	\$35.00
MEDIUM	30 lbs	\$30.00
SMALL	20 lbs	\$25.00

ORDER BY	DELIVERY DATE
January 18	January 27
February 15	February 24
March 8	March 17
April 12	April 21
May 3	May 12
May 31	June 9
September 6	September 15
September 27	October 6
October 25	November 3
November 29	December 8

For information call Oak Park Church office at (403) 251-5150 or email office@oakpark.ca

"At His Feet" - A Poem

God of wonder,
God of all,
Today I feel so weak and small.
Bent and broken,
Snapped in two
With anxious heart I come to You.
You look upon me
With a gentle smile,
And lift me up from where I fall.
You dust me off,
With loving hands
Whisper Your purpose
Help me stand.
God my counselor,
See me through
Help me focus solely on You.
Numb the chaos,
Pierce the strife.
Remain the compass for my life.
Into my darkness
Shine Your light
Remain in me
Lend me Your light.

-by Kristie Buckingham



Your Giving Matters! - July Financial Update

In one of the largest studies ever conducted on North American giving habits, social scientists Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson conclude: "Not often do social science results come out so clear and consistent in their patterning... Greater generosity is clearly, positively associated with many of the characteristics that most people consider essential to a good life: happiness, health, purpose, and growth" (The Giving Paradox). And while we certainly don't give in order to receive, we can hear the deep-seated truth of this reality that God has stitched into the fabric of his creation. If there is one word we strive to form our congregational culture around here at Oak Park it is this idea of generosity. We want to be a people that are known for joyful and radical giving - an other-oriented perspective and practice that is so sold-out that we are even willing to expire for the sake of inspiring others by God's Spirit at work among us. What has God placed on your heart this summer to give? Don't be surprised when happiness, health, purpose, and growth return from your generous giving!

-Pastor Lane





Get Connected

If you would like to be included in any of these, please contact the church office:

- phone directory
- prayer chain
- eNews



Did you know Oak Park has an app? Download to your smartphone to access online sermons & event information. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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oak park
CHURCH OF CHRIST