

Pioneer Pastoral Charge

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United Churches of Oyen, Cereal, Alsask & Acadia Valley

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Minister: Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

Our Mission: To nurture and grow faith.



March 16, 2020

Dear Friends,

In the last five days, the status of the COVID19 virus has evolved rapidly. The transmission of the virus has now moved from a travel related transmission to a community transmission. The elderly are specifically at risk for this although, as is the case with all illness, we are all susceptible. As Canadians and Albertans, we are each being asked to step up for our communities, to take a deep breath and consider how we can be a positive and calming presence as we face this together.

The role of the church is to Love our Neighbour.

This national health crisis will challenge us to live this in different ways.

Our Alberta Provincial Health Officer has been brilliant in offering us daily updates and keeping us informed as to the daily changes that have occurred. We must take seriously her advice and recommendations, as well as those of the Federal Health Officer, if we are to be a part of keeping our neighbours across the country as well as in our neighbourhood safe.

Last week, the Chairs of the Boards of our four churches and the Pastoral Charge all met electronically to consider our responsibility and response to the growing crisis. We cancelled our March 15th services and committed to meet again weekly to reassess our decisions for upcoming Sundays. However, with the increasing numbers of COVID19, it has become obvious that we must be more proactive in offering leadership to our communities.

Worship services and other activities are discontinued in our buildings until Easter Sunday. Worship bulletins and a recorded reflection will be available on our website each week, with a link provided on Facebook. Anyone who would like a paper copy of this service can contact Helen at the office and we will arrange for delivery to you. We also have suggestions of United Church live streaming worship services that you can attend online.

Church continues to live.

Being Church is so much more than attending worship services. It is caring for and connecting with our friends, family and neighbours. We are going to work on creating a 'phone tree' for each of our congregations so that we have contact with each other and know how we are doing.

We need to be aware of folk who may need support... those who may need grocery deliveries... those who may be isolated and simply need a human voice to speak to occasionally. Then we need to decide how we will support them.

We need to set aside our own personal frustrations with restrictions and, instead of focussing on what we can't do, focus on what we can do. I encourage you to consider how you will change your decisions to create social distancing, without creating social isolation.

This may be the most challenging community connection project that our churches will be involved in.

I will continue to work with our church leaders to create connecting options for us, to ensure that we don't miss the opportunity to care for those who need care. If you know of someone who needs assistance, please let me know so that we can find resources to help them. If you have something that you would like me to provide for you, including online group conversations, please let me know.

Remember that we are never alone. If we stop and listen for the Spirit, we will find that our decisions for our own well being and that of our neighbours will become easier to make.

God has promised to walk with us through any valley that we encounter.
Trust in God. God is with us. We are not alone.

Together with you in faith...

Helen Reed