



Bells Corners United Church - Spring Newsletter

Volume 18, Issue 3 – April 2020

Financial support

BCUC's activities are supported entirely by volunteers and financial contributions. Financial support is welcomed by any of the following means, and receipts will be provided to you.

Ways of giving

[NEW! E-transfer LEARN MORE](#)

[Donate online to BCUC through CanadaHelps.org](#)

Lenten Project: Veterans' House



The Andy Carswell Building, is a housing community for veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The facility will provide supportive housing for 40 veterans. This latest Multifaith Housing Initiative project is collaborating with a number of agencies to offer mental health and addiction services, gathering spaces (including a communal kitchen and outdoor barbecue facilities), an indoor gym, and a dog park for service dogs.

MHI is four-fifths of the way to completing the fundraising for Veterans' House, however there remains 2.3 million dollars to finish the project. SOSA has set a goal of \$8000 to support Veterans' House.

*Please support the work and mission of
Bells Corners United Church by making an Extra
Donation by E-transfer*



UPCOMING WORSHIP SERVICES AND MUSIC ([Special Music Report – click here](#))

In the comfort of your home! Worship services and reflections will be emailed to you and posted on our website at www.bcuc.org



BCUC Minister's Message

Experiencing Easter in the Midst of a Pandemic

by Rev. Kim Vidal

Dear friends at BCUC,

The celebration of Easter this year was not the same as before! Due to the spreading COVID-19 virus, all of us are forced us to stay home and are urged by our government officials and our UCC Moderator to take the practice of social and physical distancing seriously. All BCUC events and gatherings including our Sunday worship service and fellowship have been cancelled since March 15 and here we are a few weeks later in the same situation. This feels really weird! I haven't heard of church closures on Easter Sunday since the day I was born. Certainly, most of you have not heard of it either. But take heart, with the looming pandemic or not, Easter must be celebrated wherever we are! We are Easter people! The spirit of Jesus, his teachings about love and peace must live on through us. We can sing hallelujah once more!

The resurrection story in the Gospel of Mark is brief — only eight verses. Mark does not report on the appearance of the Risen Jesus, but rather leaves us with a stone rolled away, an empty tomb and women who fled in fear! Mark recalls that first Easter joy and celebrates with the three women who brought spices to anoint Jesus' body: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome. These women were amazed and perplexed as they saw the stone covering the tomb had been rolled away. Other Gospel writers, like John give us a dramatic narrative of the distraught Mary Magdalene seeing Jesus in the garden. Matthew put in some effects like a "great earthquake" and describes Jesus' appearance "like lightning and his clothing white as snow". Luke posed a crucial question for us to ponder: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" But down-to-earth Mark keeps us in suspense. In the second century, some writers added eleven more verses to pretty up Mark's ending. I don't think Mark's intent is to have a "happy, make-yourself comfy" ending. I think he is opening us to new and exciting possibilities of experiencing resurrection in so many ways.

I would like to share with you a powerful reflection about Easter in the Seasons of the Spirit that I'm sure will keep you grounded as you experience Easter wherever you are. It is called "Living Truth".

“After the first Easter morning, nothing for the followers of Jesus was ever the same again. Up until that point, Jesus might have said and done some perplexing things but nothing that couldn’t be understood in his role as a teacher and miracle working prophet. Others had come preaching peace and love. Others had come working miracles. Others had travelled as itinerant preachers. Others had died at the cruel hands of the Romans. But on Easter morning all of that changed. Now Jesus was present with his followers in a new and radical way. Each time he was present in those early days, his followers didn’t always recognize him at first. He was the same Jesus and yet he was somehow different and he promised to be present with them from then on in a different way than walking alongside them on the dusty roads of Palestine.

In the gospel of John, in Jesus’ great prayer, he prepares his followers for this new and radical presence which will transform their relationships with each other so much that they become like the relationship between Jesus and God; united in oneness. He also asks God to sanctify or purify or clean them out with truth so that they might be a community of truth-tellers and truth-livers.

And this is the community to which we are called by God in this Easter season, a community of oneness in our faith in Jesus in which truth is our highest aspiration. A community where for the sake of our life together we are willing to see things as they really are, not as we might like them to be, or might fervently wish they were, or as we think they should be, but actually as they are. In the loving care of community, we can have the courage to look, clear-eyed, at ourselves, knowing that we are loved by God – as we are, not as we wish we could project ourselves to be. We can speak and act truthfully when we see injustice and unfairness in our families, our communities, and beyond. The presence of Jesus for us this Easter is that experience within, which calls us to live truthfully, hopefully, and deeply in God’s abundant creation.”

In the next few Sundays, we are invited again to proclaim the meaning of Easter for us. We celebrate with the disciples who witnessed the Risen Christ, stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” We delight with Peter and John in the healing story in Acts when Peter proclaims that he has no silver and gold but healed a lame man to walk again in the name of Jesus Christ. We reflect on the story of Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, when we celebrate Mother’s Day and yes, we will also ponder about keeping the faith alive in BCUC when we commemorate our 170th Church Anniversary! Each and every Sunday in this season we call Eastertide is a celebration of Jesus being alive in us!

Our own Easter stories challenge us to write the rest of the story, the next chapter for ourselves, for others and the world. Mark did not dilly-dally. He writes, “He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” So, where do we go from here? Where is our Galilee to see and experience the Risen Christ? Perhaps – your Galilee this time is your home and places where you reside. What’s next for you and for me here at BCUC? Tell me your story. I would love to hear from you. Let’s keep each other posted, please!

Easter blessings,
Rev. Kim



Church Board Chair's Report

BCUC has been very fortunate over the years to have such talented and generous staff and volunteers. We have learned over the past few weeks they are also resourceful as they keep us together in many ways, even when practicing physical distancing.

In particular Reverend Kim, Lorrie and Abe have revealed unexpected technical skills to communicate their inspirational messages. Ellen and Ruth have adapted with their usual energy and kindness to our most unusual situation. Supporting their efforts have been many, including our excellent committee members, but I would like to single out Lyn Hall and Connie Davidson for special mention. Thanks all.

Our board has been cooperating with the evolving recommendations of public health officials to join our community efforts to flatten the curve. Activities have been cancelled, but expenses remain, which makes our Finance Chair's hair turn grey. Thankfully, the governments are offering help and David Stafford has kindly agreed to help Bill Johnson navigate the many forms. Thanks to both and to the many who will assist them.

In the interim, should you wish to make a donation, you may drop off your envelope at the back door mail slot, on-line through Canada Donates, or take advantage of our new e-transfer capability (see - reference to elsewhere in the Bell Ringer).

Finally, a tentative note on timelines. We have, as of early April, cancelled gatherings up to 30 April. We expect to cancel more if, as public health officials are warning, such measures remain necessary into May and June. Please follow our web site, please be patient, and please know that lessening the strain on our health care system for as long as possible will help many in our community.

Stay safe,
John MacFarlane



BCUC Finances

The current crisis caused by the COVID– 19 pandemic has knocked our church finances for a loop. *Starting in March, we are losing \$6,000/month in rental revenue and another \$6,000/month in giving's.* Altogether, total revenues in March were only 2/3 the level of revenue in February. At the same time, staff costs have continued without a break, program expenses are squeezed, and our charitable activities are threatened with cuts.

Charitable organizations like BCUC are not-for-profit and funded by their members. In other words, it is you and I who must step forward with our givings to ensure the continuity of our pastoral charge and its mission in times of strife.

Fortunately, our givings to BCUC are tax deductible so there is incentive to support our church in its hour of need. We have established a number of ways to continue to send donations to BCUC including by Canada Post (still operating), or drop off in the church mailbox by the kitchen door (quite secure), by e-transfer from your bank (new and convenient), Canada Helps or sign up or increase your monthly PAR deductions (preferred by us for its security and regularity).

We won't suggest a level of givings – that is your decision. However, we hope you will recognize the scale of the need when you set your personal goal.

Financial Management Committee April 2020

Ministry Candidate

As I write this message, I am in my home office which has a window looking out on our street. The snow is gone, some tulips are pushing their way up in the garden and people are walking by with their dogs or pushing baby carriages. Robins are hopping around my yard and little redpolls are busily feasting on the berries in the bush. The lady across the road is washing her windows. It seems like a pretty normal spring scene. However, it is anything but. The pairs of folks walking are keeping their distance from each other – one on the sidewalk, one in the centre of the road. Nobody is stopping to chat with neighbours out working in their yards, except to call hello from a distance. No one is being invited in for tea. There are almost no vehicles driving up and down our street.

This will be a spring we remember for a long, long time. It will go down in history alongside the Spanish Flu epidemic and SARS. Covid19 has changed our “normal” drastically, and in ways we grieve rather than celebrate – no visits with family and friends, no shopping for Easter treats, no going out to restaurants or theatres, no school or classes of any kind, no sports events or even practices, no birthday parties or weddings or anniversaries, no gatherings at the church for meetings or worship. It is a difficult time.

In this Holy Week, I am reminded of how the disciples were in much the same situation after Jesus was arrested and crucified. They were frightened. They hid themselves away from the community. Everything they had looked forward to and had worked for now seemed lost. It must have been a really difficult time for them and for all the people who had followed Jesus, believing that he was the answer to their prayers for an end to Roman oppression. But we have the advantage of knowing how that story ends. We know that just around the corner it will be Easter and a time of resurrection and new hope, for them and for the world.

I know that by the time you read this, our celebration of Easter will have passed, but I also know that we are an Easter people and that this message of hope and renewal is something we should celebrate every day as Christians. It is not something that we consider consciously every day but I think, in this strange time in history, it is a story and a message that we need to keep in the forefront. In spite of the fear and the illness, and the disruption of our daily routines, there are so many signs of hope for the future. People are reaching out to be kind to one another. People are finding new ways to connect with friends and family – and they are being intentional about doing so. Families are finding time to play together and to share meals together without needing to rush off to a meeting or a practice. We are showing our appreciation for the folks who are working on the front lines – often people we didn't consider before. Health care workers, truck drivers, and even grocery clerks are being seen as heroes. All levels of government are trying to work together for the benefit of all of us. Political agendas are taking a back seat to the welfare of the people and the businesses in our country. Even the planet is showing signs of healing and renewal, with blue skies shining above areas that have seen massive amounts of toxic pollution for decades. Waterways are clearing and wildlife is making a comeback.

The difficult things are still there. The virus is still a very frightening reality. It was the same for those early Jesus followers. The world didn't magically change on that Sunday morning when the Son rose. The people still faced oppression and poverty. Christians faced a long and difficult road ahead of them. But there was a new sense of hope, a new sense of renewal, and a chance to reset priorities and to begin life on new paths.

Sometimes it seems – maybe even most times – that something catastrophic has to happen before we humans stop and reassess what is important in this life. Prophets can warn us. Nature can strike out, but until it hits each of us and all of us personally, we find it hard to change. This is a very difficult time in history. We are suffering; we are grieving; we are worrying; we are afraid. It is my hope that each and every one of us can keep our focus on the message of Easter morning. When all seems lost, there is a new dawn of hope and resurrection. Let's face this world with our eyes on the empty tomb and its message of new possibilities.

Blessings,

Lorrie

Easter Bell Ringer Music Report:

“Bells Corners United Church Music” started a YouTube channel on April 1st, not a joke! You may have dropped by over the last couple of weeks via a link on our church webpage to view our Palm and Easter service videos.

Due to popular demand we will keep doing this for the next couple of months at least. The videos are produced for availability on Saturday, for you and the world to see.



Our Easter Sunday video was visited 270 times Saturday through Monday, including repeats.

Our Palm Sunday service had 184 visits in the first weekend and by the end of Easter weekend it had over 240. The unique visitor count was 165, meaning folks come back to watch parts again.

Interestingly, about 25% of our visitors on both Saturdays were from the Philippines, primarily because of Facebook notifications! (YouTube provides a lot of statistics, I could give you more 😊)

The weekly improvements to our at home worship options lined up very nicely with Lent into Easter:

- Our first closure on Sunday March 15th was last minute to provide any alternatives
- March 22nd, Kim provided online worship text and Erin provided Sunday school activities.
- March 29th, added audio recordings of the service, young time and music on the website
- Our first video helped nicely to celebrate Palm Sunday with the usual audio & text files
- Maundy Thursday & Good Friday were audio & text in keeping with their sombre nature
- Easter was our most challenging video to date with lots of participation, A celebration!

Why YouTube recordings instead of livestream or video-conferencing such as “Zoom”?

My sense was that providing a real time, “live” service would be nice but far too open to going poorly. It was already a challenge (even stressful right Kim?) to record the videos but we wanted to provide the most uplifting/personal experience needed at this time and there are major benefits to pre-recording:

- If a video isn't going well, we can try again
- We can make quality, well lit recordings and have a chance to touch up and edit
- We can provide a timely, smooth uninterrupted flow (and viewers can pause if needed)
- For music, I can spend all week mixing recordings from multiple participants
- We can make certain that personal information is not part of the public presentation
- Viewers can take in the service at a time or place (in bed?) that's convenient for them (ie. Kim's relatives in the Philippines can view the service Saturday our time)

Livestream challenges:

- A livestream requires everything to be coordinated to happen at a specific time under new conditions (stress!) or needs to be really plain and could result in a poor experience
- All participants need to be at the same location or video linking needs to be coordinated
- Music options and quality are limited in a livestream especially because of social distancing
- There will likely be computer glitches, bad mixing and jarring camera angles/movements

- It is true that video conferencing, such as “Zoom”, allows folks to see each other and have interaction, but there are limits to how this works:
- For the most part one person is controlling the presentation much like a livestream anyway because two people can’t talk at the same time. Usually everyone is muted.
- There is NO singing together out loud because of network time delays
- People like me with slower internet connections can hardly participate at all
- You can’t “see” 100 people on the screen at once (and when do we look each other in the face during service anyway?)
- The unfortunate reality of intentional hacking and “zoom bombing” is a thing
- The reality of unfortunate happenings in people’s cameras. All folks in the home need to be aware that their private space is being listened to and on display
- Even if there are simply “funny” things that happen, although fine they could be a real disturbance to the sacred moment of the gathering
- “Cute” things that happen in a close/private community can be taken or used the wrong way by an outside audience especially if recorded for future viewing

The fact that SO many organizations are using real time technologies at the same time (ie. 10 am Sunday) means there’s a good chance of hiccups, delays or outright failures. It’s also way more straightforward for the technically challenged to click a video link than to brave getting into a zoom-conference. As I and others felt over the past couple weeks, there’s actually a **real** experience of community even just knowing others are watching the pre-recorded video at roughly the same time. If things aren’t working at 10am, or you’re not awake, you can always try again at 11am ☺ As a church we will continue to reach out by phone or computer to each other outside of the service time itself.

Technology/Software used

Maybe another time I could go into detail on how these videos are produced, but suffice to say that most of it is being recorded on personal phones. Kim & Lorrie provide PowerPoint slides and I put it all together on an iPad with free Garageband and iMovie software. I also use free Audacity audio converting/mixing software on my Windows laptop. I even have virtual organ software on the laptop! Yes, these are all technologies available to you and with a little experimenting, you could do it too ☺

Future intentions for the channel:

Now that the channel is up and running, we will use it to share musical performances and singalong tracks for you to enjoy at any time.

Our first major event will be **Saturday April 25th at 6:30pm** when we will have a private anniversary showing of the **Story Tellin’ Man** performance done last year at this time! Please let the office or myself know if you would like to receive the details to connect to this. While we are watching it together online, there will be a chat box open to converse and share memories with each other.

I am also planning an online Spring “concert” for Sunday May 10th!! All those interested in submitting a performance to be included please let me know. How can we keep from singing! Abe -

music@bcuc.org



UP Group

As with everything else, the UP group events have been cancelled for now. We are looking forward to getting back together when this is all over.

The Rendezvous 2020 conference registration has been delayed until May; the organizers are also considering all options for the conference.

INTERAC E-TRANSFER: It is now possible to transfer funds directly to BCUC through your online banking service.

First: Set up BCUC as an Interac E-Transfer payee using 'treasurer@bcuc.org' as the email address. Then, for each transaction to send money, please enter the dollar amount, select your bank account for withdrawal of funds and select BCUC as the payee.

Second: In the Message line, add your Name and the Purpose of the Funds and, for a charitable receipt add your envelope number or home address.

Final Step: Review your transaction details to ensure they are complete & correct before pressing SEND.

Note: a security question & answer is not required as BCUC has enabled Auto deposit of your funds into the BCUC Operating Account.

Thank you for your donation!

FAMSAC: has been very busy over these uncertain days. The items most needed are, canned corn, canned chicken, juice boxes, canned fruit, pasta sauce, granola bars (nut free). These items could be donated at the FAMSAC bins in the stores. Thank you!

Book of Memories Volume 2: We don't have enough submissions yet. The deadline is **extended to May 3rd** to give you a final opportunity to send in a memory or story or photo. Please think about the events in our church which have had meaning for you and your family, and write/email about them. Send your memories to bferguson@sympatico.ca or to BCUC office, office@bcuc.org. If you have questions, call Bob Ferguson at 613-828-9610. Thanks.

The Seekers: We meet via WebEx every Wednesday at 2 pm beginning April 15 to discuss John Dominic Crossan's book, *How To Read the Bible and Still Be A Christian*. Purchase your own copy of the book. For the April 15 discussion, please read pages 3-38. Email Rev. Kim for more information. All are welcome.

PLC Conference 2020 Cancelled

The PLC Conference 2020 planned for the weekend of May 30 – 31, with the Rev. Gretta Vosper, has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the uncertainty about how long Government restrictions to gather will last. At this time, the planning committee has not determined if the Rev. Vosper will be available for the 2021 conference or even if there will be such a conference.

The PLC (Progressive Learning Circle) is an extension of the BCUC Worship and Christian Education Committee and is committed to holding learning events and conferences that engage noted theologians, scholars, authors or motivational speakers who will address relevant topics of faith, history, theology, praxis and spirituality from a progressive perspective.

The PLC Committee, which is formed by members and staff of BCUC, has successfully organized two previous conferences – the Conference with the Rev. Vosper was to have been the third. Information on the Rev. Vosper and her activities are available at www.grettavosper.ca



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