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The Peace of Christ be with you. I hope and pray this letter finds you well. I am guessing that no one was surprised to learn that Nova Scotia has had its first presumptive cases of COVID-19 last Sunday. We will hold them in prayer that they emerge safe and healthy again.

A group of our church leaders gathered together Sunday morning in contemplation and prayer, and decision making on how to be the church in this time of crisis in our world. I have unofficially dubbed us the “Hope Committee”.

First and foremost, we will always be the church, whether we can gather in person, or join together in spirit, we the people are the church. To be the church, we need to continue in the work of the church. For me that means prayer, worship, music, pastoral care, education, and outreach, just to name a few. Our challenge is to find new and unique ways to live out our calling to be Orchard Valley United Church as we declare by our statements:

Our Mission

Inspired by the grace of God,
we are a welcoming faith family
called to love ourselves, others and the world.
We seek to deepen our spiritual understanding
and reach out to others
through worship and socially just action.

Our Vision

Living and Acting through Faith

We have made the difficult decision to suspend all face-to-face worship services for the next three weeks including the April 5 service. There are strong indications that it will be a while before things will return to any form of normal. I know how committed our congregation is in doing the work of the church, however we have also canceled all committee meetings from being held in the church, although the chairs may choose to meet in other ways such as telephone.

All the groups who gather here each week, and we are a busy church, will decide how they want to meet, so for all groups you are involved in, look for direction from your group leaders or contact the church for any specific questions.

Some of you may have seen the short video from Sunday morning as I stood seemingly alone in our sanctuary, there was the unmistakable presence of Spirit with me. We are never alone. God is with us. We will continue to explore ways we can gather and also remain safe. We plan to either record or live-stream our worship services on Sunday mornings. Perhaps we can have a weekly bible study, a weekly Prayer Circle and special services as other considerations.



Today I posted the first Lenten reflection, Day 18 of Lent, on our web site. There is often technology involved in these, so we understand that it might not be possible for everyone. We are looking at the possibility of delivering worship in other ways as well. I would love to hear your thoughts.

The work of the church will continue, and your acts of generosity toward others are a witness to you the people who are Orchard Valley. The immediate future is uncertain, but I do know that we have a unique generosity, and that is a gift. Generous people make a difference in this world. They have a sense of mission and purpose, a resolve much bigger than themselves. They send light into the world, bringing hope, care, and love where it is needed.

To continue to care and love, to share our faith stories and live out that faith, we will need to find new ways - God filled and loving ways. As God spoke to Isaiah years ago:

*I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.*

- *Isaiah 43:19*

We are committed to be a generous church, year in and year out. In doing so, we know that stewardship is much more than a decision about your Sunday offering. It is a way of life. No matter what your personal circumstance, we are all invited equally to experience God's peace that "surpasses all understanding". God has blessed you with many gifts. Sharing those gifts is a way to fulfill God's call to be Christ's disciple and how you will find true peace and lasting happiness.

Your Pastoral Care team is busy reaching out to many of you right now with their gifts of time. Many of you are sharing your financial gifts to be the church through PAR (pre-authorized remittance), and even today some have stopped by the church to offer these gifts in person. Uncertain times can also make income security unreliable for some, and we understand this. We are looking at ways to make your continued support of Orchard Valley easier during this time away from being physically together in worship. We will be sending out more communications in the near future on ways you can continue to contribute if you are able. Again, thank you in advance for your continued support of our church, reaching out beyond ourselves, being the hands and feet of Jesus.

I am proud to be your servant leader, and am blessed to be part of our loving, caring, and joy filled community, living out our faith and being one of God's blessed own.

Shalom and blessings,
Rev. Don Sellsted