

## Morar's Musings!



**Rev. Dr. Morar Murray-Hayes**

Thank you so much for the positive feedback and prayers that we have been receiving daily from so many of you. The 'office' is functioning extremely efficiently and your staff are committed to providing the best resources in the most timely manner possible while remaining safe and protecting you. Read about just some of the things that our staff are doing.

Christine comes up with a creative idea and learns a new skill everyday and the next day is teaching the rest of us. Christine and Janis are keeping the work of the church going in new and often trying ways, including communicating with our tenants and keeping them up-to-date on building closures.

Scott Beckett is available for phone visits. Greg, Leanne, Jane and Sandy are all working harder than usual to provide music choices and to record, and to plan for future services in creative ways. Victoria's Facebook group, Children's Breakfast Club on Saturday mornings, weekday Zoom calls with the GO Project, and weekly "at-home" Sunday School lessons, are meeting the needs of our young families. Janis, John, Jessie and Sue have been taking care of our building -- cleaning less frequently now, but were disinfecting twice a day earlier and now inspecting and ensuring our facility remains safe. Janis and Christine Whiting, our treasurer, are working hard on making sure our bills are paid, and on first quarter and tax issues.

And when the staff are working harder than ever, that also means that our leaders are working harder than ever. Emergency planning, communicating effectively to all our members in so many ways, developing congregational profiles, tending to our finances, providing congregational support to our members, ensuring that our Outreach commitments are being met, particularly responding to the needs of The Compass, supporting and guiding our staff, finding ways to do old things differently and new things effectively, all these are taking countless hours of volunteer time.

We are blessed to have Steve who has had new roles to assume. I now call him The Terminator as he has been most adamant about protecting the safety of our staff and members. Scott performed a funeral several weeks ago under the strictest of guidelines from Steve -- outdoors, not more than 7 people, physical distance maintained. All this when others were having indoor services with 50 or even more. I suspected he might drive by to see that his rules were being enforced.

## **Pastoral Care and Funerals**

While the stringency of our own protocols has anticipated the standards of nation, province and wider church, they have now caught up to us. At our regional Zoom meetings (3 in the last week) we have been told that we are not allowed to preside at funerals -- not outdoors, not at graveside and certainly not in homes.

We are (and this goes against everything that every minister feels called to do) not allowed to visit in person -- in the hospital, in long term care facilities, seniors' residences, homes. All pastoral care must be carried out by phone, email or zoom. This extends to our Visitors and Congregation Support team. As Steve has said from the beginning, our people are our greatest resource, and their safety should be our greatest focus and concern.

## **United Church Online Worship**

The Moderator is producing a worship service each week and there are churches who are sharing their live streamed services with the public. We haven't shared our services with the public, in part because of a concern about copyrights and musicians union rules. However, you are free to share the link you receive on your email with friends. Just don't publish it on a public forum.

We may take advantage of the Moderator's worship service after Easter to give our worship team a breather. I may also share live streamed services with you in addition to our own so that you have an opportunity to see how other churches worship. When you see an idea that you particularly like and seems adaptable to our congregation, I hope you will let us know.

Thanks to so many of you who have responded so positively to our attempts to bring worship into your home. It is so heartening to all of us to receive your encouraging emails and to know how much your church means to you.

We are grateful too for offers of help reading scriptures; help with technology; for Dirk Vandermale's prayers which uplift staff as well as all of you.

Many of you are sharing our worship links with friends, which is so important work on our behalf. We even received an email from one such person who has been touched by our church's care for one another and the wider community.

You are calling one another and others in the community.

Folk are getting to know one another by phone -- when we get together again, it will be really important to wear those name tags so you can recognize your new best friend!

If you are finding your voice isn't getting enough use -- you might go days without using your voice. Then call or email the office and get a list of phone numbers to call. You will feel better and you will lift the spirits of others. One call a day can turn a down day into a pleasant one for caller and receiver.