

2020 Easter Newsletter

Central United Church

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When we think of Easter, we associate it with spring. Birds are singing, bulbs are poking up. As the days lengthen, we celebrate a Light that shines to dispel darkness. As the earth begins to warm, we are reassured again of Life that comes from the tomb.

The connection between Easter and spring works for us in the northern hemisphere, where Jerusalem is situated. But what if we lived in the southern hemisphere? Easter would need different images. The globe would be turning to fall, daylight hours would be shortening, and nature would be entering its time of rest.

Easter will be different for us this year. We'll miss being in a fuller-than-usual sanctuary singing "Jesus Christ is Risen Today". We'll miss listening to the choirs' special music, greeting friends, a special meal with loved ones.

Perhaps this different Easter is an opportunity to contemplate Easter differently. In our current context, I don't find reassurance in our favorite hymns with their language of triumph, victory, and conquering. We're going to be living with this pandemic beyond Easter. We're not going to conquer it, triumph over it, or be victorious in these next few weeks. Whatever "back to normal" will even mean when we get there, it's going to take a while. We need a path for our spirits in the meantime.

So, what if we were to look at Easter as those in the southern hemisphere might? What if we were to let Easter hold in itself the tension of new life even in autumn, of waiting, of hope in the heart of darkness?

I've been reading *On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity, and Getting Old*, by [Parker Palmer](#) who is a spiritual leader, a Quaker, and the founder of the [Center for Courage and Renewal](#). He writes, "darkness and light, death and life are not opposites: they are held together in the paradox of the 'hidden wholeness'. In a paradox, opposites do not negate each other – they cohabit and co-create in mysterious unity."

Looked at through this lens, light and darkness are interdependent; life and death are natural parts of a cycle. Easter then is not about victory and triumph. It is not an "either/or", but rather a "both/and". It makes room for ambiguity. It cradles the tensions, paradoxes and polarities that we are feeling right now.

Being held like that, we can risk asking what this time of fear, disorientation, and even darkness has to teach us. We can open ourselves and listen deeply. The time will come when we will be released from this tomb where we've been confined. How will we re-enter the world differently? How will we live as risen beings?

Wishing you grace and peace for the journey,

Rev. Pegi



EASTER THOUGHTS

Dear Friends:

I write these few words at the end of March. It is now week 3 of the pandemic. Young, middle-aged, old – our lives have been altered in ways we never dreamed of 2 months ago. In the midst of all this uncertainty, what is the relevant message that still needs to be proclaimed?

May I state 2 facts:

1. In the midst of fear and panic, a Biblical promise keeps running through my mind. “Do not be afraid, for I am with you.” (Genesis 26:24) God said this centuries ago. I believe that God has kept repeating this, generation after generation, decade after decade. I believe that this promise is for Easter, 2020. As we have experienced this truth multiple times throughout the years, we can claim this promise in our present crisis and uncertainty.
2. As I think of the life, death and Easter Resurrection of Jesus, my faith still turns to the words – “Fear not.” Once again, this Easter, we are blessed to remember that Jesus’ Resurrection from the dead has signified that there is life beyond death - for you and for me – and all God’s children. Therefore, I believe that Jesus says – Fear not, for you will be with me.”
I am reminded of the United Church Creed which states- In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone.
May we, this Easter – and in the coming months – continue to say to ourselves and to others – “Fear not, for God is with us.”

Rev. John

Note from Pastor Paul for Easter

Easter is upon us. No, Easter is not cancelled. Easter is here, it just does not feel that way with all of the challenges and struggles we have been facing this past little while.

The stories of the bible and the stories of our lives reminds us that Life is a struggle. We need to know that we are not alone; God is with us through it all. We need to know that the power of Easter is unstoppable. “wherever harm appears, grace and healing multiply”, Romans 5:20.

Easter’s power is everywhere: in the love so many are showing by working long and hard hours as cashiers, stocking grocery shelves and folks figuring out how to work from home and care for children for weeks at a time.

Easter’s grace flows through the hands of our dedicated healthcare providers, cleaning staff and personal support workers who care for the most vulnerable.

Easter is present in the peaceful way our community is heeding the advice to stay home and to wash hands properly when we are in contact with any surface outside our homes.

Easter’s strength is seen in the many dedicated people of our faith community who worked tirelessly to keep our church running, assisting with the Inn out of the Cold group, the many members who are keeping in touch with those who feel alone and for the members who are reaching out to our youth in fun ways to let them know we are here for them.

Easter’s power is everywhere, and I am seeing it in every one of you. Easter is here, Happy Easter and God Bless

Pastor Paul

As I sit down and write this letter, I wonder what will change in the next second or minute. We are dealing with a global Pandemic that we are unable to manage. God challenges us not only as individuals, but also as a church each and everyday of our lives. He has a plan in place not only for me and you but Central as well. We pray everyday that his plan will allow those that are battling this disease to feel well again. We pray that the world will go back to what it once was, such as our parks being full, kids in the playgrounds or at school learning. This virus has impacted the church in a number of ways. We have cancelled not only church but all events at the church except the Inn Out of the Cold. This dramatically limits the amount of revenue that we are receiving. We have asked our staff to work from home with full salary. Technology allows Cathy to monitor our church emails and phone messages while Lauri has choir practices through zoom. Carl and I are the only ones going to the church on a everyday basis. We have to check the mail, sign checks as both the bills and our staff need to be paid. We also have to be there if any work is being completed such as we installed four new security cameras. One was put in the office and 3 more were installed outside facing the parking lot. Unfortunately cameras at most church's are a reality and also a sign of the times. Property members also come in to clean, disinfect and to check the property to make sure we have no rain water in the building or anything that seems out of place. Council is meeting over the internet to make decisions that concern the church. One of the big decisions we just made was to allow the Inn to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during this Pandemic. This was an unanimous vote made by both the ministerial staff and the council executive. The Inn has been working with the City and there will be 24 hour security and they will have a company come in and sanitize the entire church to make sure its safe for everyone to return when allowed. A lot of us at church have struggled in dealing with the loss of Marilyn Willis who left this world way too soon. She was our Pastoral Care chair, was on Pegi's transition team and was also on a the Inn out of Cold team. She also was a past chair of Council. Central will not be the same without her, but we must find the strength to move forward as she would want us to do. She always wanted today to be better than tomorrow. I want to make a challenge to the members of this church family. When the church reopens, the family plans to have a celebration of life for Marilyn at the church. I would call on each and everyone of you to do something that makes the world a better place in her memory. When we have the chance to celebrate Marilyn, she will be looking down from heaven and her smile, which we all loved, will have her knowing that even though she is gone the world is that much a better place because of her always positive and caring influence. Take care of yourself, your family and each other and also by the way Happy Easter.

Scott Doupe, Chair of the Board.

Finance and Stewardship in COVID-19 Times

For over 145 years the people of Central United Church have worked to share God's love, the "Good News" of Jesus' ministry and to provide care for each other and others in our community. As a congregation we have done this through world wars, pandemics, and economic recessions. We have also done this in times of peace making, new medical cures and boom economies. We continue to work together to ensure that Central is here to help today and will be here to help tomorrow. THANK YOU.

Today, beyond overnight accommodations, we are now helping our community's homeless people find daytime shelter when public buildings and restaurant dining rooms are closed due to COVID-19. When we're told "Just Stay Home", some folks are now able to do that at Central. That's vital for the safety of everyone. The mission and outreach we do is important and needs your financial support as well as your prayers.

Like everyone else we have had to adapt to different ways of doing things in order to "keep caring forward". While we are not able to physically join together in worship every Sunday at this time due to COVID-19, staff and members continue to provide pastoral care, prayer, fellowship, leadership and continue to manage mail, process 'Givings' and pay utility bills and salaries.

By the end of Feb, year to date expenses in the church's General Fund exceeded contributions by \$10,566. A deficit often occurs during these months at the start of the year. Now revenues have decreased with worship services halted and rental groups on hold.

Note: How can I help to continue to financially support Central during the COVID-19 time?

- Join our members using Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR). This allows for an automatic once a month transfer from your bank/financial institution. You can download a form from the church website, under Donations, complete it and return it DIRECTLY to the church by mail or church mail box or contact Cathy directly for a form at admin@centraluc.ca or phone 519 631 3503. DO NOT EMAIL scanned copies of a completed form nor copy of a cancelled cheque as this IS NOT SAFE for Banking Information.
- You can donate on-line using a credit card through our website www.centraluc.ca Click donations, then click on-line giving and follow the instructions. We are using the platform Canada Helps for this way of giving.
- You can e-transfer money to the church. To do this you e-transfer to our church treasurer's email cuctreasurer135@gmail.com Just add this information to your bank e-transfer information.
- Write cheques. Old school still works including postdated cheques! Mail your cheques or place them in an envelope and drop them off in the church's mailbox by the outside doors by the parking lot. We are picking up the mail daily. If you send cheques, please contact the office by phone or email the church to tell us and the amount. We want to make sure we are able to account for everyone's contributions and nothing "gets lost in the mail".
- We recognize that some church members are losing employment or business income and may not be able to respond at this time. Know that our prayers are with you. If you are fortunate to be maintaining your income, please consider to increase your 'Givings' at this time of need.

NOTE: Regardless of how you choose to give all methods will result in a tax receipt.

We appreciate all efforts to maintain regular 'Givings' to the church and ask that you consider a special Easter Offering as well. THANK YOU AGAIN, your contributions of time, talents and finances continue to make a difference in lives in, and the life of, our community.

Despite these trying times may you look for and find Joy this Easter.

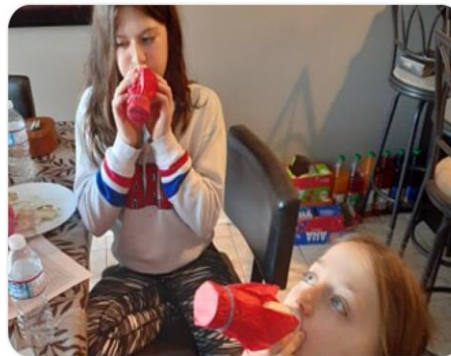
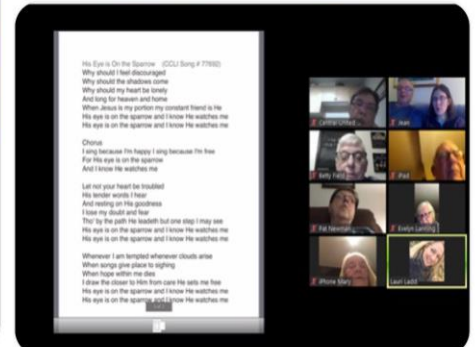
Carl Fletcher on behalf of Central's Finance and Stewardship Committee.



A 'Note' from our Music Director

Even a global pandemic can't stop our choirs from singing & making music together! The Senior Choir has met via Zoom, and the Junior Choir connected over Facebook live to sing, play Ukes & drums & make instruments. Although we are missing each other, this has become a time to pause and give gratitude for how incredibly blessed and loved we are. Stay safe & be well ❤️
Happy Easter!

Lauri Ladd ❤️ xo



**DEMENTIA
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COMMUNITIES**
ELGIN-ST. THOMAS

COVID-19 Message: We are very aware of the importance and value of the programs and services we deliver to our clients. With this in mind, our office is currently closed to the public however we continue to provide supportive services in other ways. Updates and support are available by phoning our office at 519-633-4396. More information about the virus and your healthcare during the pandemic can be found at <https://www.swpublichealth.ca/>

I photocopied an Easter Scavenger Hunt for the children on this page.