

Message from Rev. Rick Hawley, March 18, 2020

Joshua 1:19 "Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go".

Dear friends,

I am sure that you would agree, that we are living in the most uncertain times of our lives. Some of you will have lived through war time experiences, but I guess that somehow that did not affect your daily lives as much as does our present situation. The fact that things change and evolve everyday creates further anxiety. Surely this is a time for trust, compassion and faith.

I am trusting in the leadership of our government. I am impressed with our Prime Minister's non-anxious presence as he calmly shares with us how the government will lead us through this especially as it has touched his family personally. This presence helps calm those who might be experiencing some panic. Perhaps something that we can all emulate.

Compassion, one of the most important tenets of our faith, is so important at this time. We need to be aware of those around us who may need our help. This can be done physically as long as we remember social distancing or through regular contact by phone or emails with those, especially who are alone at this time. I think that I prefer the term physical distancing rather than social distancing, as this is a time when we need social connection, for that is such a human need.

We also need our faith in such times. In a sense, I guess, we could say that this kind of trial for which we have been training. We need always remember that there is a promise that whatever we face, we do not face it alone; that God is with us all the time. We are God's beloved. We are a community of love and support and whether or not we can be together, we can continue to pray for each other. Let our prayers also extend to the wider community and the world, for surely this is a time when we can really see that we are a global community and that each one of us depends on the other. May the divisions that have separated us in the past be thrown aside as we strive to overcome this virus. We know that we will not be able to hold church services for some time. I am going to send out a message each Friday to those who have email and I will be in phone contact with those who do not, particularly our most vulnerable members. I want to express my gratitude to Steve Hardaker for his leadership at this time. We are fortunate to have him as our Board chair.

I would also invite you to tune in to the Moderator's Sunday worship on the United Church web site: <https://www.united-church.ca/covid-19> or UC Facebook: (<https://m.facebook.com/UnitedChurchCda/>).

Finally I would invite you join me in prayer from our Jewish sisters and brothers:

*Compassionate One, you are healer of bodies, who does wondrous deeds.
The wondrous bodies you made for us now feel more fragile. The openings by which we perceive your world now feel more vulnerable.
We are anxious and frightened by the uncertainty of what is to come. We love the lives we lead and we fear what disruption may come. We love our friends, families and neighbours, our children and our elders and we fear what illness may come.
We pray for healing of body and of spirit, speedy and complete, for all those who are ill from the coronavirus, both far from us and close to home.
Strengthen the hands of our caregivers. Give of your healing powers to our medical personnel and mental health providers. Give of your wisdom to our decision-makers and public health officials.
Strengthen our hearts to confront this challenge. Give us of your discipline, that we may not yield to panic or dread, but may protect ourselves with appropriate precaution and calm determination. Give us your compassion that we may reach out to our neighbours with kindness and solidarity.
We are grateful for our bodies and the life you have given us. We are grateful for our communities who support us. We are grateful to those who are working to protect us. We are grateful for your love and your sheltering presence. We know we are not alone.*

And finally, the prayer that binds Christians together all over the world, Our father who

Blessings, Rick