



# THE GOOD NEWS LETTER

FROM ST. JOHN'S STEVENSVILLE UNITED CHURCH

QUARANTINE ISSUE: APRIL 2020



Dear Friends;

“We gather together as we remain apart” is a sentiment we have heard a lot lately, but it is true for us here at St. John’s Stevensville United Church. We are all missing each other during the quarantine but are doing our best to stay connected and support each other in this strange time. It is a privilege to be the Minister of this community who cares so deeply for each other.

And we do continue to gather, both through FaceBook bible studies and creative spirit on the Embrace site, and, gather to worship on Sunday mornings at 11am over our livestreaming site at **niagaraonlineworship.com**. As the weeks go on we are learning new skills around providing for an online community, but we ask that you continue to be patient with us. We are also working hard to involve more people in the Sunday services, both from our own congregation and friends that are unable to join us on a regular Sunday due to other responsibilities. It is wonderful to see the “Joy of the Lord” ring out over the airwaves.

I would also remind you that Rev. Bill and myself are always still available to attend to pastoral care needs, just give us a call. And remember we will soon be together again.

*Blessings;*  
*Rev. Cheryl Wood-Thomas*

## Not As Empty As It Looks

- *John Bedell*



Rev. Cheryl asked me to give a brief report about live-streaming from our empty sanctuary; however before I do that I'd like to give some history that gives a little bit of context. It is almost exactly 7 years ago that I launched the Niagara Online Worship project with test broadcasts during Easter of 2013. Just prior to that, I had roamed through the churches of Niagara Presbytery checking out those that were interested in participating in the program. At one of those churches I heard Rev Cheryl preach for the first time. I enjoyed it then, and I enjoy her preaching now, and it's one of the pluses of settling at St. John's Stevensville, and it makes it feel a little like I've come full-circle.

In those early days I was moving my gear from church-to-church, at first every Sunday, then on a monthly basis. And learning many things along the way....I've done broadcasts from more than a dozen different sanctuaries, and streamed regular worship, anniversary services, confirmations, funerals, concerts, and special events and guest speakers. I've done large crowds, and small - although none quite so small as these days of quaran-streaming. But even though it's a new experience, and a challenge to tie together all the pre-recorded bits and pieces to make a complete service, it's very satisfying to be able to do so. I've always felt that there's no time the church is more needed, and more helpful, than during times of adversity. And a global pandemic is certainly a time of adversity! I hope the congregation (both our own family, and those who are only connected online while their own churches are shuttered) are enjoying the ability to tap in to worship in this way. It's not as good as being together, but we are doing the best we can under the circumstances. And it makes me very happy that we had the infrastructure in place to be able to do this, while many other churches are either completely closed, or are way behind the curve, scrambling to get online, sometimes with nothing more than a cellphone and Facebook account. In the past couple of weeks I've had conversations with several of our own churches who were needing guidance, and some others as far away as Virginia who needed help, which I'm happy to be able to provide.

I hope that when life returns to "normal" (whenever that may be), we can apply some of the lessons we've learned about reaching out beyond our walls; live-streaming worship, but also continuing Rev. Bill's online programming and the other ways we've been reaching out. There are people we can reach who might not even think of coming through the doors of the church, but we have the tools to reach them where they are instead, so maybe that's a small silver lining to what's happening. I'm looking forward to continuing to work with Rev's Cheryl & Bill to find ways to carry on with these new ministries.....So yeah, we're broadcasting from an empty building. But not from an empty church.

## A Prayer in the Midst of COVID-19



Living, Loving God,  
In the midst of this Easter season, we find ourselves  
with those early disciples,  
walking the road to Emmaus.  
We want, we need, to share with this passing stranger  
the events of this past week.  
We want to cry out against the need for social  
distancing and,  
the loneliness of quarantine and self-isolation.  
We pray for the sick and dying, knowing they are  
surrounded by strangers,  
loving, compassionate and kind, but strangers  
nonetheless.  
We grieve with those who are grieving, left with the  
echoes of words unsaid,  
and embraces stolen by an unseen foe.  
We shake our heads at the crowds gathering in the  
name of the economy,

a night out at a favourite restaurant or a HAIRCUT!!!  
We don't want to be xenophobic or indifferent towards  
our neighbours but,  
we don't want to see our borders opened up too soon.  
We need to share our tears and our fears, our sadness  
and grief, our anxieties and yes, even our anger.

Yet, we are a resurrection people.  
We have seen life emerge from death,  
hope rise out of despair.  
We have seen those who mourn begin to dance and,  
heard songs of lament become hymns of rejoicing.  
We need to listen for the words of blessed assurance,  
watch for the glimmer of light.  
For if we open our eyes and unstop our ears,  
we will recognize you walking beside us, feel your  
words burning inside us.  
We pray that in our recognition of your presence we  
will be comforted and reassured and,  
we pray that as we hear the sacred story from the first  
days of creation to the prophets,  
from the accounts of Jesus' life to the stories of the  
early Christian community,  
that we will find our place and our role,  
carrying forth our light, raising our voices for a world  
more compassionate,  
more peaceful and more just.

Amen!

*- Rev. Bill Thomas*

## Isolation and Why We Need The Church

*- Jayden Dolinski*



*Jayden is a member of the  
South Coast Youth  
(Church MICE). You may  
remember him as "Papa  
Vito" during the Murder  
Mystery Evening. He  
always welcomes the  
opportunity to be active  
and share his time with  
the church.*

For the past 10 years I've gone to church every Sunday, as long as I wasn't working. When this COVID-19 came around, I thought it was going to blow over, but alas here we are and with isolation comes boredom.

The problem with not having church in person every week, as well as the obvious, is that for a lot of people that time is their chance to connect with their friends and to keep up on what's going on in the community. All we ever hear about nowadays is COVID-19 and how bad it is. Without going to church, people are stuck inside and not getting to have human interaction as much. They end up missing the sense of community that goes with church, as well as having everyone to lean on when things aren't the best.

Personally, I miss going to church and seeing everyone's smiling faces, as well as getting to sing the great songs that come along with church. We are missing so much, but the thing we have to remember is that we are all only a phone call away. If you ever need to, or want to, have a good ol' chat... the power of the internet is vast.

# The Pandemic Presents Challenges to Church Giving

- Terry Metcalf

While the doors to the church may be closed during the pandemic, its financial needs continue. How are we meeting those needs? For starters, St. John's Stevensville was fortunate to have received a substantial Embrace donation at the beginning of the year and those who have been giving through PAR (Pre Authorized Remittance), on line donations or cheques continue to do so. And we thank all of you for your ongoing support and generosity.

Our UCC Foundation fund took a hit with the financial down turn precipitated by COVID-19 and other events. In order to give this and other investments time to recover, while continuing online worship services and out reach programs without staff reductions or other more draconian measures, the Treasurer and Stewards have been exploring various government options for financial relief. We're eligible for the Temporary 10% Wage Subsidy and CEWS (Canada Emergency Wage Support) and an application for the latter will be submitted next week. And it appears that we may now be eligible for the CEBA (Canada Emergency Business Account) loan which would also give additional breathing room.

Since the start of the Pandemic shut down the United Church's "United in Learning" has been providing weekly webinars to assist Congregational Finances. And as well, the UCC's General Council has arranged through the UCC Foundation an Interest Free Emergency Response Fund to assist those congregations with the greatest needs.

While regular offerings made when the plate is passed during a worship service has been the traditional means of giving for many; with brick and mortar services being temporarily suspended, an appeal is being made to continue your generous giving by other means.



1. PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance) - contact Linda Gorham, our PAR Administrator at 905-871-3397 or email [lindagorham7@gmail.com](mailto:lindagorham7@gmail.com) and have Linda enroll you in PAR, whereby giving is done by a monthly automatic withdrawal from your bank account or charge to your credit card. Linda will guide you through the process and once done - no fuss, no muss, its all taken care of - and your church can continue to do its' good work.
2. Post Dated Cheques - drop a series of post-dated cheques in the mail to St. John's Stevensville United Church (14789 Sodom Rd, Stevensville ON, L0S 1S0)
3. CanadaHelps ([www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org)) - you can make an on-line donation through CanadaHelps.org by doing a search for St. John's Stevensville United Church (you'll know you're on the right page when you see the banner from our sign). CanadaHelps.org will issue you a donation receipt as soon as the transaction is completed and any funds received are transferred weekly by direct deposit to our bank account. There is also a direct link to CanadaHelps on the St. John's Stevensville United Church Facebook page. Either route, it works the same way. CanadaHelps is a secure site so can you be assured that your transactions are safe. And as an added bonus you'll get a nice thank you note from Valerie.

I hope this finds everyone well, keep safe, continue to practice your social distancing and keep tuning in to our weekly services live streamed on Niagara Online Worship and Rev. Bill, Rev. Cheryl and Creative Spirits Facebook posts.

# Hello From Creative Spirit!

- Carolyn Campbell

Facebook, FBLive, Zoom, FaceTime, Instant Messenger, text messaging, email... This is the new reality for Creative Spirit and well, for most of us, right? What a whirlwind of information sharing, tech sharing, tutorials, ideas and the list goes on. You might even find that the line has blurred as to where you end and your computer / tablet / smart phone begin!

There is much to consider when taking a group that meets faithfully every week to sing, reflect, pray and create as their spiritual practice and have that experience and connectedness not get lost in a virtual environment, just ask Rev. Bill and Rev. Cheryl!

The amazing thing about this current state though, is how much we ARE in contact with each other, helping one another to get online, video conference, teaching each other tech skills, digitally conversing more and more – you name it. We have been coming together in wonderful ways while being physically separated. This connectedness, though different, is an amazing gift.

It has been a steep learning curve for all involved to find Creative Spirit's online groove. Participants now video conference through Zoom, where we get a few minutes to chat and catch up, just like we used to in person. What a treat and sense of relief to be able to see, hear and interact with folks again! Then our session begins; sing a hymn, reflect on a reading, pray, explain the creative art portion, re-centre our minds with some breathing, all just like we used to do in person.

But as we are humans, this online, virtual world will never replace those welcoming hugs when we greet one another, the sense of well-being that comes from gathering together to worship God, to sit next to one another, to hear each other's voices sing in praise with you, it cannot be replaced by the online version.

So until we can safely gather once more, what our online community can and does do, is allow us to BE part of a community, a wonderful, caring, creative community in God, together.



If you would like to join in the Zoom video conferencing Creative Spirit session, please feel free to email me, at [Creativespiritministry@gmail.com](mailto:Creativespiritministry@gmail.com) and I will be happy to send you the information. We continue to post the sessions for 3:00 PM Mondays and Wednesdays on The Embrace Centre and the St. John's Stevensville Facebook pages.

Blessings!



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## Ongoing Events!

If you're really missing your weekly routine, consider tuning in with us through the Facebook Live events.

Monday and Wednesday @ 3pm - Creative Spirit





Tuesday and Thursday @ 3pm - Bible Study with Rev. Bill

Sunday @ 11am - Streamed Church Services

We understand that it can be hard when we are all isolated. So please keep in mind that both Rev. Bill and Rev. Cheryl are available to provide pastoral care over the phone at any time. Do not hesitate to call.

Anyone who is in need of food assistance, do not hesitate to call Rev. Cheryl or Rev. Bill and they will be more than happy to help you out.

Wondering where our streamed sessions can be found? Check out the following:

-  [www.stjohnsstevensvilleunitedchurch.com](http://www.stjohnsstevensvilleunitedchurch.com)
-  St. John's Stevensville United Church
-  The Embrace Center
-  [www.niagaraonlineworship.com](http://www.niagaraonlineworship.com)

## Contact Us

### **St. John's Stevensville United Church:**

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#### **Val Spear (Secretary and Treasurer):**

905-382-3344

#### **Rev. Dr. Brian Brown (Minister Emeritus)**