

# the front pew



Vol. 18 No. 3 RIVERBEND UNITED CHURCH 14907-45 Ave., Edmonton, AB Fall 2020

## Valerie's Reveries

I was always touched by this quote from TS Eliot's "Four Quartets":

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

In the same work is also this line:

*In my end is my beginning.*

One of our beloved hymns echoes the same theme. You know it:

*In our end is our beginning  
In our time, infinity  
In our doubt, there is believing  
In our life, eternity  
In our death, a resurrection  
At the last, a victory  
Unrevealed until its season  
Something God alone can see.*

And from Revelation in the Bible:

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

I do not know what the new life at the end of this CoVid age will bring. I do not know what the world will look like or what our days will look like. But I know that even through the frustrations, loneliness, and pressures of *these* days, still we have a precious glimpse into a new way to be humanity together, a way that lends time and energy to the depths of meaning and goodness we belong to.

Whenever we return to where we started, may we know the place for the first time and welcome our new beginning.

*Peace friends,  
Valerie*

## Yoga Resumes

We are pleased that the Official Church Board has agreed that yoga classes can resume in the lower level hall this fall. We are in the process of searching for a new yoga instructor as our previous instructor is off again on maternity leave – good luck Avery! If you are interested in participating, please be assured that we will be following all Alberta Health guidelines and requirements. Classes will cost \$10.00 per session as long as a minimum of 10 participants are registered. Please contact Jackie in the Church office at 780.430.7275 or email her at [contactus@riverbendunited.org](mailto:contactus@riverbendunited.org) if you are interested.

## Message From the Board Chair

Just my luck. The year I become chair of the board a pandemic breaks out. Then our pianist moves away and our sound system dies. Nice initiation for the rookie chairperson. To be honest, it hasn't been that bad. Having an experienced board has been helpful as well as an exemplary church staff led by with Valerie who has risen to the challenge of recorded worship with week after week of interesting and thought provoking services on diverse topics from racism to gardening. Valerie has welcomed others to participate and we have had excellent services from Joel Fleck, Carolyn Miller, Doug Spaner, and Matthew Schoenhardt over the past few months. And of course David Faber provided 2 services in late August, allowing Valerie to take a much needed vacation.

We had planned to resume live worship in mid-September, but the board recently decided to have a few "test runs" in September, with the goal of resuming live in-person worship in October. Our resident risk management expert, Matthew Schoenhardt, has developed a very detailed plan for a safe return to worship. To be sure, worship will be different, with no choir and the congregation masked and distanced. However, for those who are comfortable attending indoor gatherings during a pandemic, every effort will be made to make the service as "normal" as possible. We will also try our hand at livestreaming our live services and the livestreams will also be saved and posted

on-line so people can watch at their leisure. However, we plan to continue with our pre-recorded services as well at least until we are confident in the quality of the livestreams.

Even though the church has not been open for worship since March, it has been a busy summer around the church. Our new facilities chair, Don Trenn has undertaken a number of projects which he has described in a separate article. I also must give special mention to Joel Fleck who we were able to hire under the Canada Summer Job program for the summer. Joel has been a godsend for us! He has provided assistance to Jackie in the office, served as our groundskeeper and painter (along with Don), helped with the production of most of the recorded services and provided not one but two complete Sunday services. Thanks so much Joell!

Most importantly, our success is due to the continued generosity of our congregation. While our givings were solid, our rental income has dropped. The finance team (led by Ian Meier, Matt Schoenhardt and our treasurer Ray Hawrelak), have taken advantage of some government initiatives. The result is that our finances are in surprisingly good shape and we have been able to retain all our staff with no cutbacks. I would like to thank everyone for their generosity and I hope that everyone is able to continue to support the church as we navigate these "interesting times".

*Marv Severson, Board Chair*

## Farewell to Sharon Gritter

The pillar of Brander Gardens ROCKS (Reaching out to Community Kids) for the last ten years has been Sharon Gritter, who served as the program coordinator. It was Sharon that reached out to the church and supported the launch of our annual community dinners. This event has proved to be a fixture on our church calendar - always lively and fun!

Sharon and her husband Bruce are following some of their adult children to the lower mainland of BC and so her work with the community has ended. The church and the community said farewell and thank you to Sharon at an outdoor concert in the park featuring the fantastic Martin Kerr. A few members of the turkey team distributed MANY popsicles to many happy kids. Thanks to Diane Trenn for her popsicle wagon and Jill Spaner for the lovely presentation of flowers to Sharon.

In a thank you email Sharon said: "Please thank the church and the turkey team for being such great supporters of BGR over the years. I love the flowers!"



## Autumn Health Corner

Greetings everyone. Autumn is telling us that she is coming closer and closer every day as we can see the leaves on the trees change colour and feel a little nip in the air, especially in the mornings.

As this is a Health Corner, I guess I should begin by talking about the virus that has changed how we have been living since March; the novel coronavirus, otherwise known as COVID-19.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause respiratory illness ranging from mild common colds to severe illnesses. Novel coronaviruses are new strains of the virus that have not been previously identified in humans. COVID-19 is believed to be spread mainly by coughing, sneezing, or direct contact with someone who is sick with COVID-19 or with surfaces they have recently touched. All of us have been asked to wear a mask and to practice physical distancing to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing involves taking steps to limit the number of people you come into close contact with. It can help you reduce your risk of getting sick, and help prevent spreading the virus to others.

Alberta Health Services has asked us to keep 6 feet apart from others to ensure physical distancing. 6 feet or the length of a...

- hockey stick
- Refrigerator
- Christmas tree
- yoga mat
- MacBook charger
- high school locker
- Cow

For more information on COVID-19, please visit [www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca).

Moving on to **September**, we have the annual Terry Fox Run. The Terry Fox Run seems to hold a special place in the heart of all Canadians. Terry was only 18 years old when he was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma (bone cancer) and forced to have his right leg amputated 15cm above the knee in 1977. While in hospital, Terry was so overcome by the suffering of other cancer patients, many of them young children that he decided to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research. He would call his journey the Marathon of Hope. It was a journey that

Canadians never forgot. After 18 months and running over 5000km to prepare, Terry started his run in St. John's, Newfoundland on April 12, 1980 with little fanfare. Although it was difficult to garner attention in the beginning, enthusiasm soon grew, and the money collected along his route began to mount. He ran close to 42km a day through Canada's Atlantic Provinces, Quebec and Ontario. However, on September 1st, after 143 days and 5373km, Terry was forced to stop running outside of Thunder Bay, Ontario because cancer had spread to his lungs. Terry passed away on June 28, 1981 at the age 22. The heroic Canadian was gone, but his legacy was just beginning. To date, over \$650 million has been raised worldwide for cancer research in Terry's name through the annual Terry Fox Run. Currently, the Terry Fox Run takes place in over 9000 communities across Canada every year and are accessible to anyone with no entry fee, no minimum pledge, and in a non-competitive atmosphere. This year is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Marathon of Hope. In Edmonton, the Terry Fox Run is taking place, virtually, on Sunday, September 20. For more information, please visit [www.terryfox.org](http://www.terryfox.org)

Sunday, **October 4**, 2020 is Edmonton's date for the CIBC Run for the Cure. One in eight Canadian women are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. More than 85 000 Canadians, in the largest, single-day, volunteer-led event will be dedicated to changing the future of breast cancer.

With physical distancing being the reality for the foreseeable future, the CIBC Run for the Cure will be virtual. Please visit [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca) for more information.

"Grow a Mo, save a Bro". This is the tag line for Movember. Growing a moustache in **November** can inspire donations and conversations regarding men's mental health, suicide prevention, prostate cancer, and testicular cancer. Movember views mental health through a male lens. Globally, men die on average six years earlier than women, and for largely preventable reasons. Visit <https://ca.movember.com/> for more information.

On a personal note, I want to thank you one and all for thinking about and praying for the health, safety, and success of my son, Griffin, during his weeks of basic training in Wainright this summer. I am happy and proud to say that he successfully passed BMQ (Basic Military Qualification) and will continue to serve with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment as a Reservist for the foreseeable

## Return to in-Sanctuary Worship

We have decided to push back our return to in-Sanctuary worship from Sunday September 13<sup>th</sup> to Sunday October 4<sup>th</sup> in order to give us more time to practice the protocols for a safe return. We want to make sure we have them as solid as possible before we go live. October 4<sup>th</sup> is our target date, but it may change and we will keep you apprised in the weekly email as conditions in Edmonton may force us to change this date.

Returning to worship will look much the same as promised in the [“What to expect when you are expected to Worship in the Sanctuary”](#). The only difference will be adherence to the City of Edmonton’s bylaws in that everyone must wear a mask. We hope that you can bring your own re-useable one, but if you can’t we will provide single use masks at the door. You will be required to pre-register your planned attendance either online (our website) or by calling the office - with social distancing, space is limited and we are required to track all building users. Finally, a big shout out to Don Trenn and E2 who hooked us up with a fogging machine to kill viruses. This will make sanitation of the building faster, cheaper and more effective.

I would like to make two points about returning to in Sanctuary worship on October 4<sup>th</sup>:

1. Just because we can worship in the Sanctuary doesn’t mean you should. While we are taking all the measures to ensure safety, this doesn’t mean that worshiping in the building will be risk free. Safety protocols are all about reducing transmission: they are not perfect and you may still get exposed to COVID-19 if you come

into the building. If you are at-risk for adverse COVID outcomes, or have household, friends and family with whom you are in regular physical contact with who are in high-risk groups, please strongly consider remote worship.

2. We will continue to provide remote worship services. They may even start to be available “live”. The Tech team and the Spiritual Formation committee are working hard at that. COVID-19 will be with us for a while still, and we will continue to provide safe worship for everyone.

### Re-opening of the building for user groups:

At the September 1st meeting, our Official Board provided clear direction on return to building use by us and by renters. E2 started school this week. They will continue to use their exclusive space and our upstairs meeting rooms. Their safety protocol is based on the strict Provincial safety protocols set by the Ministry of Education, and having read it, is very comprehensive.

We will be allowing Elite Dance Kids to return soon to their regular evening basement use. I have reviewed their safety plan, which is excellent, and will audit its implementation.

The Ghanaians will be allowed to return to worship in our sanctuary shortly after we do. We will lend them and teach them our processes.

All other rentals and user groups will be considered in January 2021. Our internal user groups such as Wednesday Walkers, WeCan, Yoga, Crafters, Bell Choir and others can

return to the building. However, it will not be like before: you can’t simply show up or call Jackie for a room. Alberta Health Services requires us to have documented safety plans and be able to demonstrate adherence to those plans. The Return team will work with internal user groups to ensure safety protocols are present and in-force. All users will need to ensure social distancing, wear masks, take attendance during their event, wipe down high touch surfaces (door knobs, light switches etc) and use the fogging sanitizer after every event. This is required not just to comply with Alberta Health Services directions but to keep us all safe - the event attendees and those who work in or visit the building afterwards.

To conclude, our building is not open like it was last February, but it will not be closed as it was in April. Following the safety protocols will reduce the risk of COVID exposure and make it safer for us to begin returning to the building. I say the building, not the Church. The Church isn’t a building, it is our Community of Faith. The Church will never be closed.

***Submitted by Matthew Schoenhardt - Lease Manager and Re-Opening team lead.***

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future. He will also be entering his final year of high school this year so we both have a lot to be thankful for.



## Music News!

It is my pleasure to announce to you our new accompanist “team” that will be working for us this fall. Brendan McGrath, a U of A master’s student in piano performance and experienced church musician, will “officially” take Andrew’s place as our main accompanist. He will play for the choir at our now online Thursday Zoom rehearsals and provide music for our online services. Since Brendan, for health reasons, is not able to attend our live services, he has obtained a fellow student at the U of A, Boris Wala, another excellent player, to “sub” for him. We are looking forward to getting to know them both!

Andrew has kept in touch with the choir and has occasionally visited our summer Zoom sessions. He and Bryan are settled in on Vancouver Island and are doing well. We plan to keep in touch over the winter months especially when we need a mental dose of some “balmly” weather from out on the coast!

The choir is anxious to get back to singing live, of course, but since that is still impossible at the moment, choir members are enthusiastic about continuing to record hymns...and they are becoming “pros” at doing that! Jamie Kidd (my husband) is happy to continue supporting our efforts and “mixing” all of our individual voices into our signature RUC choir sound.

It is unfortunate that our live services will not feature any “real” congregational singing (I know you love to sing!), but we are fortunate to welcome solo singers from the choir and the ensemble, as well as some “special guests” from the congregation to lead you through a few hymns each week as you “lip sync” silently under your masks. And I also understand that some of our instrumentalists will lend their sounds to these services every so often as well.

Needless to say, we are in for a different experience this season, especially when the cold weather arrives, but our music is still alive and well at RUC, and we are all looking forward to the day when we can let our sounds ring through the rafters once again!!

*Paula Roberts*  
*Music Director*

## Facility Maintenance Update – Welcome Don Trenn!

As your new facility director I would like to introduce myself. I was the General Manager of a very successful Edmonton-based business for 31 years; I retired at the end of 2018. We have 3 children and 5 grandchildren living in Edmonton, and 1 child living in Winnipeg. After I had painted our house this spring, I was looking around for something I could do to volunteer my time and give back to the community. I was introduced to the opportunity of the church maintenance facility director position. After meeting some of the amazing and passionate people who volunteer for the church, I felt this might be a good fit for me and here I am!

From the facility maintenance side of things we have accomplished a few tasks:

- painted the front entrance and front entrance stairwell;
- the basement floor has been cleaned and buff polished;
- the carpet in Narthex and administration offices has been cleaned;
- all the trees in front and east side of church have been pruned and dead branches removed;
- all the flower beds have been weeded;
- two of the large spruce trees that had a serious infection have had these branches removed;
- new banners added to Sanctuary;
- the front west door now has a new push bar and key pad installed; this hardware is much more rugged and rated for higher volume traffic;
- we now use a fogger everyday to spread disinfectant to all areas used by church—the disinfectant is a hospital-grade product, approved by Health Canada;
- we are purchasing an additional fogger that will be used by any future renters to ensure that these areas are properly disinfected;
- there is a hand disinfectant station as soon as you enter the Narthex and free disposable face masks are being provided to anyone entering the church.

I would like to give a big shout out to Joel Fleck for all his assistance with the mowing, painting and fogging the disinfectant.

*Cheers, Don Trenn*  
*Facility Maintenance*

## A View From the Rear Pew By Brent Skinner

Voluntary isolation day 163 and still no end in sight for the Covid 19 pandemic.

Our condominium overlooks the downtown river valley and the High Level and Walterdale bridges. There is no obvious sign that Edmonton is in the midst of a plague. Cars are zipping over the bridges. People are still cycling, scootering and walking the street and only a few are wearing protective masks. Still, Audrey and I are limiting our social interactions. We have the occasional visitors, including children and grandchildren, but our guests sometimes wear masks and always keep their 6 foot distance. Fortunately for us, we are not "hugger" type people and seem to survive from quiet day to quiet day.

Yesterday was exciting, as Audrey had to drive to a hardware store to pick up some bolts and washers while I got to sit in the car and track what portion of shoppers were wearing masks: about 60%.

I am washing my hands more now than ever, and reading a lot, thanks to my Kindle electronic book.

Audrey and I spend our days in companionable silence as, over the past 48 years, she has heard my coterie of amusing stories almost more than she can stand.

I am trying to limit my time watching CNN, as president Trump makes me both angry and depressed. For the first time in my life I wish that I was an American citizen, just so I could help vote him out of office this November.

On the other hand, there is no place that I would rather be confined than home. It is way better than a cruise ship cabin or a room at a "Super 8" motel.

Home is comfortable. It is stocked with our favourite foods and even has a unique Skinner smell - which may be enhanced by my delay in taking the garbage to the hallway chute. Best of all, we have been able to furnish and equip our place in accordance with our taste and needs.

A great example is my W.C. It has been renovated to compensate for my declining mobility. When you open the door, your first impression is that the room was designed by Cirque du Soleil. There are grab bars everywhere - inside the walk-in shower, beside the shower and next to the toilet. The toilet itself towers above the floor, with its lid

extension - so high that I need to take a running leap to get on board but can jump off like a paratrooper. The toilet also has arm rest grab bars, so I can switch to a parallel bars exercise routine if I have the energy. What a great space. The occasional visitor is absolutely amazed when they get a personal tour of this truly wonderful room.

So we live our lives on a day to day basis. I am grateful to have a home and shelter during this trying time.

I am reminded of the words of one of my favourite poets - Robert Louis Stevenson. The words are a little grim but they capture how I feel today.

Under the wide and starry sky,  
Dig the grave and let me lie.  
Glad did I live and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with a will

This be the verse you grave for me:  
Here he lies where he longed to be;  
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.

## Cell Tower Update

As of September 8<sup>th</sup> we now have agreement in principle for both the outstanding 2015-2020 and the 2020-2025 terms with 10% and 7.7% increases respectively. This deal took 5 years to arrive at. While I can say I am pig-headed, Roger's behaviour varied from bullying (threatening us with arbitration for 16 months, and then when I agreed to binding arbitration, they refused) to bold face lying about Rogers paying City of Edmonton property taxes (which they now are). Styles aside, a barrier to completion was the question: what was a fair rate increase? The contract language refers to market rates that could only be provided by Rogers and they refused to acknowledge any form of 3<sup>rd</sup> party data. Happily, cooler heads prevailed after Rogers replaced their team and the 2020-2025 increase is now based on the consumer price index. While not the best metric, the CPI for Edmonton is very transparent and will make future negotiations much simpler. Using both Rogers'-provided comparable data and our own privately sourced comparables we are receiving absolute top dollar from Rogers: it is a premium site and we are receiving a premium payment! The rent is at least 5-10% above what others are getting. The agreement also calls for a lump-sum payment for the rent increase not paid since 2015 along with interest. This was a long time coming!

*Matthew Schoenhardt*

## 40th Anniversary of Riverbend United Church - Fall 2020

A committee was struck many months ago to begin discussing plans to celebrate this special occasion. Then came COVID-19, forcing many exciting plans to be cast aside. The committee ensures us that this event will not go without recognition, but of course plans have changed. Stay tuned for more details!

One initiative that COVID will not impact is the compilation of an anniversary booklet. The committee hopes that many members of the congregation will send in brief autobiographical sketches: your family; what you do in your lives; what you do/have done in the church. Feel free to reminisce on what RUC has meant to you, and/or include some special or humorous memories.

The extended deadline for submission is September 21st. Photos are welcome! Email your submission to the church at [contactus@riverbendunited.org](mailto:contactus@riverbendunited.org) c/o the 40th Anniversary Committee.

Thank you for your assistance in this publication!

The 40th anniversary committee:

Kay Quon, Dave Greenwood, Fran Cuyler, Tom Sawyer, Georgianna McDavid, Patti Hunter, Jackie Hunt, and Valerie Oden with help from Bev Sawyer and Audrey Skinner

## Fundraising Masks for Purchase

Kristen Michalko, a crafty member of our congregation, has launched a fantastic fundraising initiative. She has 'become addicted to sewing masks'! Since we now must sport a mask when out in public for the foreseeable future, we need some good ones! Kristen has set-up a website to sell her masks and will donate HALF of the sales to RUC. The website is [michalko-making.myshopify.com](http://michalko-making.myshopify.com).

When purchasing masks, enter the discount code **RUC2020** during check out to direct a donation of 50% of the sales amount to RUC AND to get 15% off the retail price of the masks. Masks are just \$10.20 each with the discount code! Make sure to hit the apply button after you enter the discount code.

When checking out, select local pick-up and we will send details for a contact-less pick up at the church when your order is ready. Orders are typically ready for pick up in 2 to 4 days. We do have volunteers who may be able to Deliver upon request.

If you are unable to order masks online, please email Holly at [hruryk@hotmail.com](mailto:hruryk@hotmail.com) to request a copy of a simple catalogue.

Thank you for supporting this fundraising initiative!



the front pew



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**Next Submission Deadline: Friday, November 20, 2020.**

