

Hello,

March 27, 2020

Needless to say, these are trying times. Please give everyone plenty of emotional space as we all figure things out at different rates with different priorities. COVID-19 has caused significant disruptions to our community of faith. This disruption will not be measured in weeks, but in months. The Board and various committees have met over five times since the onset two weeks ago. We are in various stages of putting into place plans for how the Ministry of our Community of Faith will continue while we are all apart.

Before I get to those, I would like to update you on some practical items.

First, the building is effectively closed to both our congregation and the public. This includes all rentals, user groups and tenants. The only exception is E2 Academy. E2 is regulated by the Province of Alberta under the Education Act. As such, like all schools in Alberta, classes are closed but school remains open. In talking to them I am satisfied they are taking appropriate safety measures.

With COVID-19, the office team has been working their tails off! This week, Ministry and Personal and I offered office staff the opportunity to work remotely and both Valerie and Jackie are doing so. The physical office will be closed; however office hours will continue remotely with the same hours as before: Monday to Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. If you need assistance during those hours please call the office at 780.430.7275 and leave a message. Messages will be retrieved every hour.

Valarie has been doing an amazing job! However, just like normal times she can't do it all. If you need help or want to help, please go to our website www.riverbendunited.org and at the bottom of the home page you will see a form you can fill out. Today the needs may be few, but they will grow as time passes.

One of our first priorities is regular phone calls from members our Congregation to members of our Congregation. I think Valerie has enough, but if this speaks to you, give her a call.

We are trying numerous methods to sustain our Community of Faith. As an example of new way of doing things, I understand the Lenten study group meet digitally by computer video conference call on Wednesday and it went really well. We will likely see more of this kind of thing. Some will work, some won't. Please let us know what connects with you and what doesn't. You can do that by commenting on the YouTube page, the Church email, or the Church website.

The budget we passed a few weeks ago is effectively obsolete. It funded programming that we can't do anymore and needs to be replaced with programming we can do. Once we figure out our new programming, we will figure out how to fund it. The Finance committee is meeting this weekend to begin action planning. For those of you who normally did weekly envelope offerings, consider mailing those in instead. Alternatively, you could join me and other congregational members on PAR – pre-authorized remittance. There is also a red DONATE button on every page of our website, please consider making a contribution that way if monthly PAR donations do not work for you right now.

Thank you for everything that you do in helping us remain a connected and faithful community,

Yours in peace,

Matthew Schoenhardt