

A Message from the Official Board Chair

April 17, 2020

Folks,

As I indicated before Easter in my announcements, COVID-19 has considerably altered how we interact as a faith community and the manner in which we carry out and support our ministries.

Our first priority was to reach out to every member of our Congregation regularly by phone to make sure everyone is OK, assess if anyone needs anything or, alternatively, whether they can help others with their needs (e.g. grocery shopping, mail, other), and do a general “check in”. As of Easter Monday our more than 20 callers completed and logged 137 of 193 planned calls. Wow! If you haven’t received call or know of someone who may not be on our list, please call the office.

Our second Priority was to figure out how we can be the Body of Christ in a socially-distanced world. How does delivery of our Ministry change? Valerie and her team have done a great job of adapting! Among the many adaptations they have made have been our You Tube or Online services and our live-streaming of last Sunday’s celebratory Easter service. Please give us your feedback on what Spiritually connects with you and what doesn’t.

The third and decidedly final priority was worrying about money.

Your Finance team has been working hard on this! In reviewing our March month-end statements we have only a partial picture. Of the five Sundays in March, two were regular services and three were online services. As a result, we only have a partial picture of Covid’s impact to our finances. We commit to sharing a more formal review with you of our congregational finances after April’s month end. In the meantime, we can provide you with brief update of our financial situation and actions.

1. Current cash flow modelling indicates Riverbend United Church has been blessed with sufficient cash reserves to avoid insolvency for about eight months.
 - a. This does not mean we are “good”.
 - b. It means we have the time to faithfully respond to God’s call for us to be his Stewards.
2. On spending:
 - a. We have eliminated all discretionary spending including all capital and non-critical maintenance items.
 - b. We continue to pay all permanent staff in full (Minister and Office Manager).
 - c. We are in the process of applying for all relevant government wage grants. As of now these grants are only applicable for our two permanent staff.
 - d. For now, all other Contract staff are still being paid for March and April. They are completing different, but comparable services and hours.

- e. We have opted for a 3-month deferral on our Mortgage with Servus, temporarily saving ~\$5000/month. If this turns out to be a poor decision, we can apply the missed 3 months of payments as an anniversary lump sum this fall costing us about \$260 in interest.
- f. We continue to offer up our regular contributions for the operation of the greater United Church of Canada and for the Mission and Service Fund.

3. On Revenue

- a. In March, between fairly negotiated rent reductions and cancellations, our rental income has dropped by about ~\$3000/month. Our two major tenant leases, E2 and Rogers, are continuing.
- b. About 65% of our offering is received through PAR (pre-authorized remittances). So far this appears to be unchanged. Thank you!
- c. The remaining 35% of offerings are mostly Sunday envelope and offering plate collection. This is down less than we feared, but is still 60-70% less than budgeted or about \$5000 per month. Thank you to those who are already using alternative ways of getting your offering to the Church.
- d. If you typically put your offering (envelopes or cash) in the Sunday collection plate, consider some alternatives:
 - i. Join the 65% of the congregation on PAR! Doug McEwen our envelope steward at d.mcewen@shaw.ca or 780-433-5378, can help you with this.
 - ii. Drop off or mail your envelopes with post-dated cheques to the Church at 14907 45th Ave NW, Edmonton, AB T6H 5K8. We would also be pleased to pick them up from you at your home.
 - iii. The last option is the "Donate Now" button on our website. While you will receive a full charitable donation receipt, the Church has to pay a 3.5% commission for this service.
 - iv. Coming soon! We will be able to accept interact email transfers.

- 4. Early financial results indicate we are, and will be, hurting financially. While we can weather this, we can't do it indefinitely. We will need congregational support to avoid painful decisions on staffing and programing for our Ministry.
 - a. Even with the above measures we are running a monthly deficit of about \$5000 per month.
 - b. Our mortgage deferral is only three months. When it expires our monthly deficit will increase from \$5000 to \$10,000 per month.

Yours in Faith, Matthew Schoenhardt