

March 19, 2020

Dear friends,

Thanks to all who joined us for our congregational conversation on Sunday – and those who sent in thoughts and ideas via email. Events are changing rapidly day by day and here's what you need to know today from your Board:

- Physical worship in our church building is discontinued until further notice;
- You matter to us. Let's stay connected.
- Join us this Sunday, March 22, at 10:30 a.m. on Zoom.
- Call us at 604.885.9822
- Email us at care@stjohns-united.org

Following the advice of our medical professionals, we have decided to discontinue Sunday worship gatherings in the church building. However, that does not mean that Sunday worship needs to stop. We will be offering a virtual gathering via Zoom this Sunday, March 22nd, at 10:30 a.m. using Zoom. You can join us via this link: <https://zoom.us/j/985848046>. We will send you more detailed instructions about how to join us Sunday within the next few days for those of you who may not be familiar with Zoom.

So much is happening with COVID-19, and so quickly, but we want to stay connected even as we are all called to keep our "social distance."

You matter to us.

1. What happens if we can't meet in the same place?
 - a. There are many creative ways we can be together as a congregation and as community. We will be providing a list of ideas and suggestions in the coming week, both on our website and via email. Stay tuned for more on this!
- 1) We want to care for each other in this time.
 - a. If you need anything, or know anyone who does (within our congregation or not) please send an email to care@stjohns-united.org. A small group will monitor that email and then do their best to find resources or volunteers to meet any needs we are told about. Please do not hesitate to send us a note! Equally, if you are available to volunteer, please let us know at this email. Assistance can be of any type, from running necessary errands, assisting with food, to companionship or pastoral care over the phone, to financial assistance, so don't hesitate to reach out.
 - b. A telephone tree has been established so that we can stay in touch with every one of you.
 - c. Many of us have taken self-protection to heart and we commend each person who is doing that. Please continue to care for yourselves. We are very fortunate to live in a place where the sun is shining and we can get outdoors without being too near others!

- 2) Your Board is following the direction of the National church and the Health Authority in **closing the church building**. - This means that **church groups and user groups will not** meet. Church teams will be meeting in other ways.
 - a. We will be sharing information about using Zoom shortly as many of you may find this a good way to stay connected during this time. It's free for 1-1 online conversations and allows you to see the person you're talking with, which is an entirely different level of connection from just being a voice on the phone.
If you want help getting set up with Zoom, please email care@stjohns-united.org and we are happy to talk you through setting it up. Many of you may already be using other tools like Facetime or Skype or Google Hangouts.
- 3) Staff will be working from home in the coming weeks; however you can continue to call or email the church office as usual, and those calls will be picked up as usual.
- 4) Finances
 - a. This is a challenging time financially, for individuals, businesses and for society, including our church! Many of our funds come from Sunday offerings.
 - b. We -invite you to consider switching to PAR (pre-authorized remittances), even if only temporarily. If technology is your friend, please download the PAR signup form from https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/form_par-authorization.pdf and fill it out, then scan it and email it to donations@stjohns-united.org.
If technology befuddles you, please feel free to simply email donations@stjohns-united.org and we will figure out how best to get the documentation necessary to get that started.
 - c. We will be adding an online donation button to our website in the next couple of days, and this is another way of donating to St. John's.

This situation with COVID-19 is not likely to resolve itself in a week or two; we are likely looking at multiple months. This is a marathon and not a sprint.

Above all, be good to yourself; do what you can to care for your neighbours and friends, be creative about how you stay connected with each other, and remember that our God is a God of possibilities who says "I go before you and will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." (Deuteronomy 31:8)

Your Board and Minister

Jamie Bushell, Isobel Gibson, Katryn Harris, Joan Hibbard, Sue Lamb, Ian Poole, Bernadette Richards, Jack Young, Sybil Young