

## *Leaning into Easter...*

2019

*We're not quite there yet, but the running into Easter has begun. People are excited to be planning family gatherings. Some are travelling away from home and some are preparing to host those who are coming. But you can't get to where you are going without a bit of planning can you? You don't just jump in the car on Saturday night and find your host ready on Sunday morning without a little bit of forewarning. (at least, I hope you don't!)*

*In the church, this is what Lent is for: a time of planning; a time of deciding what to take with you and what to leave behind. It is a time to evaluate, again, who and what is important to you and to find a way to balance all of those pieces.*

*During Lent, the church challenges us to look at our attitudes. As people who consider themselves Spirit-connected (whether we are in Sunday Church or not), we are asked to look at how we treat the world and the people around us. It's a tough six weeks of questions: Are we looking after the vulnerable or looking after ourselves? Do our words and our actions match up? Does speaking up against violence and discrimination terrify us when we do it... or do we choose to stay silent?*

*Easter is a time for us to move out of the planning and into the action. It is another, annual, opportunity to say to ourselves that we will do better. Not only can we get along as family for a day or two without fighting (we can can't we?), we can be ready to put our words of care and compassion into action for our community, our world.*

*What one thing can you add or change in your attitude that will make the world a better place? Do your words speak your faith, your conviction, that ALL people should be treated with respect? As the United Church of Canada, our focus is clearly named to be Social Justice. We say that we offer hope and support to those who need it most - whoever they are. We do our best to make our actions mirror our words... even when it's hard or unpopular to do.*

*"Love Your Neighbour" Jesus said. But we can't do it alone. It takes more than one village to support God's children, our neighbours, all around the world. For some folk, this is a time when they feel most alone as they find themselves without people to welcome them or prepare for them. We all have a role to take to be the Love. The poor, the lonely, the broken, the sick, the young are depending on us to get it right.*

*I invite you to join us in the last three weeks of the Church Lenten Journey. Come and hear the challenges and the joys of Loving our Neighbours. During Holy Week, on Thursday, Friday and Sunday, come and be reminded of the stories of our faith that tell us that, even through the worst of circumstance, God walks beside us and lifts us into new life when we are ready for it.*

*May you feel God's spirit with you. May your Love of Neighbour shine into the world through your words and actions. Blessings to you on this most Holy Time of our Faith.*

*Helen*

*Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister  
Pioneer Pastoral Charge*



## Easter letter, 2019

Congratulations! You have made it through one of the most brutally cold winters in memory. We hope that spring is now here, and we can come out of our homes and into the light. Sadly, not all of our people survived the winter. We have lost some dear people, and our hearts go out to the families and friends who are grieving their loss. Please know that our hearts are with you on this journey of loss.

We are into the season of Lent, and edging our way to the Easter experience. As I think about the message I want to impart on our Lenten journey, there are a few things that have come to the forefront.

The first that comes to mind is in regard to our annual meetings on March 3. All congregations had good attendance, as did the Pioneer Pastoral Charge. Thank you! Thank you! This enabled us to take care of the essential business of keeping our churches open so that we can do God's work in the world. All of the congregations made a big effort towards returning our minister to full time. The recommendation of the M & P committee was that we begin the year with the Rev. Helen Reed full time through July, and then re-examine our finances at that time. We are pleased with the support of our congregations to make this happen. We pray that the support will continue so that we can keep our minister full time. Thank you to all who helped make this happen.

The second thing that I want to address is our upcoming election. NO, I AM NOT GOING TO TALK POLITICS! But I do want to address the way that people are treating each other in the run up to the election. I would like to plead with you to be civil and kind to each other. I see people posting things on Facebook that they would not say to each other in person. (Or at least I would hope this is the case.) Somehow, we feel free to insult, demean, and call names behind the anonymity of our keyboards. As Christians, we need to ask ourselves, what would Jesus want us to do? Jesus included all kinds of people in his circle. The ones who received the most criticism from him were those who devalued other people.

As Christians, our lives should be guided by the teachings of Jesus. Whenever I have to make an important decision I try to look through the lens of what Jesus would want me to do. I don't always succeed in making the wisest decision, but I try. I use as my guidepost the teachings in Matthew 25: 35—46. "For I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you welcomed me. I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came to me." There were no "ifs" or "buts". There was just kindness and inclusivity. We are heading into the season of Easter and the resurrection.

This is a good time to rid ourselves of negativity, and, dare I say it, nastiness. The early Christians were called Children of the Way. We, too, can be Children of the Way.

Our opening song this morning, March 24, was Tree of Life. I should like to close with the two verses we sang.

Light of life beyond conceiving  
Mighty Spirit of our Lord,  
Give new strength to our believing,  
Give us faith to live your word.

Give us eyes to see you clearly,  
Make us children of your light.  
Give us hearts to live more nearly  
As your gospel shining bright.



Have a blessed Easter.

Georgia Sullivan, Chairman, Oyen United Church