

# WE CAN CONNECT



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OCTOBER 9, 2020

## Back to Worship!

Exciting News! This week the Board decided that it is time for us to get back to in-person worship in our sanctuary. This coming Sunday the Board will be attending to get a sense of what things will look like and how it will run. The following Sunday, **October 18<sup>th</sup>**, we will begin in-person worship with appropriate protocols in place (please read on). This will allow a limited number of people to meet together weekly in the sanctuary to worship and fellowship together.

Those who do not attend in-person are invited to join the service via Zoom, with the link being sent out each week.



Of course, things will look different when you attend. Chairs are set for safe physical distancing and people will be required to wear masks the entire time in the building. When you enter the building, hosts will greet you at the door where you will be asked to sanitize your hands, attendance will be taken and you will be asked a few questions about your health - all practices recommended by Alberta Health. There will be music but no singing. In order to maintain everyone's safety, we will have someone appointed to monitor the protocols.

In order not to exceed our minimum numbers, you will be asked to register to attend the service. Each week, you may phone the office (403-938-4357) or email ([okunited@telus.net](mailto:okunited@telus.net)) to register for the upcoming Sunday. You will be asked the number of people who will be attending in your party. That way we will have seats set up for your cohort. Seating will be assigned. If we exceed the number allowed you will be placed on the list for the following week. You may also register for a week you wish to attend, but will not be able to register for more than one to allow everyone equal opportunity to come. We hope that you will register and not hesitate because you think someone else needs to go more than you. We want everyone to have an opportunity to attend who wants to. You may not be able to attend weekly but we hope that most people who want to will be able to attend regularly. And if you know some others with whom you'd like to attend, give them a call and ask them to register for the same Sunday.

There will not be a fellowship/coffee time following the worship service but you are encouraged to visit with the people around you (while seated). While it may look different, many people who have entered the sanctuary have noted that it feels peaceful and comfortable and are looking forward to attending. The sanctuary is set up in a semi-circle so you will be able to see the people who are present.

I look forward to seeing you once again to worship together.

Watch for more information in the coming weeks.



### Please Pray For:

- Trochu United Church
- Government leaders making major decisions
- Boards of both Communities of Faith



## Summary of Survey of Congregation re Reopening

### What have you missed most about not attending worship in the building? Check top 3

This was a hard one to report on due to the rating of choices, but the top four items were *Singing, Sermons, Energy and Presence of Minister and Worshipping Together*. Followed closely by *Fellowshipping together after the service and Children's Time*.

### What have you found surprising or what has worked well for you spiritually during this time? Check top 3.

Again, the rating system made this difficult to put on a chart but the top three were *Daily Faith Videos, My own spiritual practices and Talking with my friends at OUC or others in the congregation*.

### What worries you most about worship re-entry?

*Those who may not take COVID seriously* came out on top with *Someone may get sick and we'd have to close again* and *My physical safety* both about half that number.

### If we did everything possible to create procedures and protocols to make returning to worship as safe as possible how likely would you be to return?

60% said they most likely would

### If you were required to wear a mask for the protection of the whole community, how likely would you be to return?

86% said *I am prepared to attend wearing a mask*

### If we did not meet weekly, how likely would you be to watch the service from Okotoks if it were live streamed?

80% said they either *Would definitely or Most likely would*

### Where do you experience any anxiety about our community of faith this pandemic time? Check top 3

Top three were *Keeping people safe, Our relationships with each other and Our inability to worship together*. Followed closely by *Our Mission to our community and People detaching from their commitment to the church*.

### Annual Dominican Republic Fundraiser – Moving Virtual this Year!

On October 18<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm, Partners in Deed (PID) will be having their annual fundraiser for the TEARS Charity in the Dominican Republic. Okotoks United Church has partnered with PID for the last 8 years in organizing our team trips to the DR. Many of you have attended this annual fundraiser in the past at the Varsity Bible Church. This year with Covid-19 the event will be held virtually over the internet. The Zoom session will last approximately 45 minutes and will focus on a tour of the Barrio of Maria Auxiliadora and all the wonderful things the TEARS charity is accomplishing (School, Church, Clean Water, Health & Wellness and Community Sporting Programs).



If you are interested in joining the "Barrio Tour" you can sign up at [www.partnersindeed.com](http://www.partnersindeed.com). Tickets are FREE!!!! For more information please contact Gary Dzurka @ 403-992-3334



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## ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH HAPPENINGS

*Written by P. Marie Wedderburn*



On Tuesday evening eleven (or twelve) vehicles left St. Andrew's United for another birthday drive-by. As the sun is setting earlier and earlier now, we left the church at 6:30 instead of 7. We drove to the birthday celebrant's home and honked our horns and waved as the celebrant and family waved back to us. This has been an encouraging way to connect again physically distanced in our vehicles. And who knows whether we will be able to have birthday drive-bys in the coming months not because we do not want to continue them, but because of the weather. In the meantime, let us continue to pray for one another daily.

Stay tuned in the coming weeks to hear about our forthcoming virtual Christmas concert.

Have a safe Thanksgiving weekend as we give thanks always to God. God's blessings upon you and yours as we celebrate Thanksgiving.

### Prayer Workshop and Bible Study

**Rev. Julia**

In the spring we completed our study of **Acts** via the Zoom platform. We were grateful for the connection and the ability to continue in a time when we were pretty much locked down and locked in our homes.

At the end of the study we discussed what we wanted to do for the Fall. The decision was made to spend a month on **Prayer** and then launch ourselves into the book of **Revelation**.

We are starting a little later than usual as we worked out the logistics of in-person study versus Zoom gatherings.

What I will be doing at least for the first month is a hybrid of both.

For four weeks on Thursday mornings from 10:00 – 11:30 I will be offering an in-person **Workshop on Prayer** in the sanctuary with protocols consistent with Alberta Health recommendations in place. At the same time, I will broadcast the workshop over Zoom for people who are uncomfortable with being present in person. You will be given a link for Zoom which will apply for the four weeks. This workshop will cover an introduction on prayer, different ways of praying and a time for practice.

If you would like to join us for the prayer workshop, please email Julia at [okjulia@telus.net](mailto:okjulia@telus.net). Everyone who wants to attend either in-person or via Zoom will have to register so we can get you the information you will need.

If there is enough interest in an evening workshop on prayer, I would be willing to host one on Wednesday evenings 6:00 – 7:30. Please let me know if you are interested. I would need a minimum of 6 people to go ahead with this.

People who register for the prayer workshop would not have to do the study on Revelation, although you would certainly be welcome.

I look forward to our time together.

Blessings

Julia

**Okotoks United Church Office - We're here for you!**

**The office continues to remain open at this time Monday to Friday 9:00 - 2:00. Please contact Diane at [okunited@telus.net](mailto:okunited@telus.net) or 403-938-4357 for church related news.**

Please contact Julia at [okjulia@telus.net](mailto:okjulia@telus.net) or 403-702-2249 (cell) at any time.

Congregational Care Team invites you to reach out for confidential spiritual and compassionate care by email at: [okcongregationalcare@telus.net](mailto:okcongregationalcare@telus.net)



**Kid's Ministry Zoom Program cancelled for this week, please join Zoom worship at 10:30.**

**Youth Group, Friday October 16th and 30th 6:30 - 8:30 pm**

Activities, stories, check-in and prayer, games, check-in and discussions

For more information about these events, please email Candice at [cndcsutton@gmail.com](mailto:cndcsutton@gmail.com)

### Hope as Resistance

Last week I was on study leave. During that time, I did a couple of things. I began studying the Book of Revelation which the Bible Study group decided we'd delve into this Fall. And I attended a global conference, the **Genesis Summit**, where this year's theme was "Suffering and Spiritual Formation."

During the conference the featured speaker, Dr. Phil Zylla, declared that "hope is an act of resistance." That is, despite circumstances that threaten to demoralize, deflate and destroy us, we will remain confident that this too shall pass and better times are ahead. This reminded me of what I had been reading about in my study of the book of Revelation. In the midst of extreme trials and immense suffering, Christians have always dared to hope.

This week, I have heard many tales of suffering. I have heard the struggle in people's voices as they spoke of their losses and the pain it has caused. People have expressed their concern for others and the hopelessness they may be feeling. And as the days turn cooler and daylight shorter, many are concerned at what might lay ahead over the cooler months.

We are not immune to suffering, nor can we ignore it. To be constantly cheery and positive is to deny our own suffering and the suffering of others. Suffering and pain are real and must be acknowledged. Humans are vulnerable and fragile and prone to circumstances that remind us that we are not in control. We must feel what we feel and share our pain. We need others to help us heal. If we do not take our own suffering seriously, we cannot empathize with the suffering of others and we lose compassion. Being human is hard work.

Yet, we will not give in to despair. Hope as an act of resistance says that we believe that things will change, that there are good times ahead and that we will survive, even thrive, in the face of our challenges. Hope projects to the world that we believe that God will ultimately bring about what we cannot and will heal the brokenness of the world.

Hope compels us to work toward that which brings healing to the world. When we come together and act out our hope, we are saying that we know and trust that God will work through us to create something beautiful. When we act as if God is already at work, we are pushing back the darkness to reveal something singularly beautiful in that moment. And in that moment there is life, which may be enough to give hope to another. A smile, a kind word, an act of service, a phone call, a wee note. Hope doesn't often come in one big dose but in many small packages that add up to something incredible.

This week, how can you nurture your sense of hope? And how can you share that hope with others? We are all vulnerable, no matter how strong we may seem and that small act of compassion may be just what someone needs to get through another day.

This coming Monday is Thanksgiving. Remember to give thanks for those people and things in your life that are life-giving and hopeful for you and resolve to do that for others. For as we are often reminded, "we are all in this together."

Have a blessed Thanksgiving. I am grateful for you.

Julia

Please refer to our website [www.okunited.ca](http://www.okunited.ca) for updated information and links to the newsletter.

### On-line Worship Services

If you would be interested in viewing live worship services, please go to this link:

<https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/worship-online-during-covid-19>