



# Newsletter

## Women's ministry

### COVID-19

What challenging times we live in! I just wanted to share a little the challenges, the ups and downs that I have been living with as I'm sure you all have as well and some of what God has been teaching me. I was so encouraged by the reports that I received back after this winter's newsletter that I sent out. It's amazing to see how you are all so dedicated, implicated and faithful in your women's ministry. But then it all changed from one day to the next. We had to stop gathering in our churches, in our women's groups and stay isolated in our homes.

For some of us that is easier than for others. Living in the country as I do makes it much easier and living on the farm still gives me a lot to do. I have the added blessing that we work together as a family, so I still get to see my children and grandchildren. But to say that I'm ok would be a lie. I realized just recently that I'm affected in ways that I could not understand for a while: feelings of discouragement, emotions that change from one day to the next, lack of motivation, struggles in the marriage and others.

### We are not okay!

I recently read a blog by Bryce Ashlin-Mayo, Pastor of Westlife church in Calgary, that helped me understand that these feelings are normal and that it's ok to say: "I'm not ok!" So I have to first acknowledge all these things and admit to myself that I'm not ok and not feel guilty about feeling this way. We all have had to adapt to a new way of connecting, church online, connecting with family online, questions about how to continue ministries in our church but all through technology. Some are doing great with this and others are struggling. We went in to crisis mode! That is what I have had to do in my local church here in Noyan. I had to learn how to work zoom, transmit information from the district and from the National office. Keeping the church connected with what is happening such as prayer meetings, prayer vigils, Easter services, communion services, all online. I'm not very gifted when it comes to dealing with technology and so it's been a burden for me, but I felt the responsibility of informing people and trying to engage people. Even simple things such as doing groceries have become a stress to me!

### Joy and Laughter

This same pastor wrote in his blog, that in times of stress, we need to cultivate joy. He writes that as we encourage each other to persevere and have hope, let us not forget joy and laughter! Just as Paul and Silas sang for joy in prison, we can sing and laugh in the midst of this pandemic. As we walk through this pandemic together, encouraging, sharing, praying and helping each other to get through it, let us also foster laughter and joy in Christ. I have started watching and listening to things that make me laugh!

Slowly the de-confining has begun in the last few days, kids are heading back to school, and people are going back to work. There is a real fear of how this will all go. Will we be ok? Will we have another spike in cases? What will our summer look like and how will we continue our church life? We need to come out of crisis mode and be able to adapt to a new normal. I'm not sure what that will look like! As Pastor Ashlin-Mayo says: We need to shift gears from crisis response to strategic planning. Each church will have to come up with a plan to do church differently, with social distancing and other safety measures in place. What will our Sunday school classes look like, what about our women's ministry meetings and men's meetings? For smaller churches it might be easier to adapt, but for large churches this will be a real challenge.

## Faithfulness

This past Sunday, as we were celebrating Mother's day, my husband shared a message with our congregation about women in the Bible. He spoke about Hannah, Mary and the widow who gave all. How are these women examples to us? Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:9-17 was a woman who shared with God the desire of her heart. She wanted a child and God heard her prayer. She dedicated Samuel to God and gave him back after she had weaned him. How hard was that!! As a mom I cannot imagine letting go of my weaned child. The Widow's offering in Luke 21:1-4 tells us the story of a woman who gave everything she had. Most people gave their gifts out of their wealth, but she, out of her poverty gave all she had to live on. And Mary. The angel Gabriel visited her to announce some incredible news. How did Mary respond? She asked one question: "How can this be, since I'm a virgin?" Logical question I would say, so the angel explained, and how did she respond after that?" I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled". No questions were asked about the consequences this could have on her life. Other women in the New Testament that are examples of faith and surrender are Anna, the prophetess. She was in the temple day and night, praying and fasting. She recognized Jesus for who He was right away and proclaimed it to all. The women who followed Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and many others, helped support Jesus and the disciples from their own means. You can read their story in Luke 8: 2-3. The lives of all of these women were hard, challenging, and dangerous even. Would we trade our lives today with one of theirs? The story of Mary touched me the most, she accepted her situation without a lot of drama, and she didn't express her doubts and fears even though they might have been there. She surrendered her life to God's will.

## Questions...

I have been asking God a lot of questions of late. Why, and how and when. Wanting to hear from Him and responding in the right way. Wanting to know what to do, how to act, how to respond. Mary didn't do, she simply was. Facing this crisis is not so much about doing but about being. There are things that we have to do, we all have to continue to be the light and the salt that God has called us to be. But it is also a time to let God do His amazing work in us. He asks for our trust, our surrender, and our faithfulness. A deep relationship with Him that will cast out all fear! I know that many of you are working harder than ever, on the frontlines of this pandemic. My prayers and my heart go out to you and I extend my deepest gratitude to you. Some of you are struggling financially. You've lost your job and taking care of yourself and your family is a burden and a stress every day. May God give you the strength, courage and resilience you need each day to walk by faith. I would love to hear from you! How are you managing? What has God been teaching you? Do you need help or support? May we continue to persevere with faith, hope, joy and laughter having confidence that Our Father in Heaven is sovereign!