



April 3, 2020

Dear EOORC Communities of Faith,

Life has changed so quickly since we wrote on March 14, to the point where our churches are no longer permitted to gather for worship because of the pandemic that is affecting the whole of creation. As we have moved through Lent towards Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Good Friday, and Easter, the anxiety has grown with the longing to be together, and the need to find ways of celebrating the blessings of our faith, apart, yet not alone.

We recognize that these are stressful times for everyone and for a great variety of reasons. Our lives are all affected in one way or another – because we have to work; because we cannot work; because we have children at home; because we have parents and friends that we cannot visit; because we love someone who is an ‘essential’ worker and every day is risking their own life to save others; because there’s an occasion to celebrate and we can’t be together. Yet, we are not alone.

In the words of Rabbi Bulka and Archbishop Pendergast in their prayer for Canada this week,

We gather together separated by life-saving distancing, but united more than ever in spirit;

We know we are in a war against COVID - 19 together, and the more together we are, the better and stronger we will emerge:

We know the challenges are enormous, yet so are the opportunities;

That whether we are in isolation with loved ones, or alone, we will have abundance of time;

We have recognized that this is like a marathon, not a sprint. Information keeps changing the longer it goes on, and we need to make decisions but it is hard to know what to do. Answers are coming, resources are being organized, and the church has never worked so quickly to make decisions and develop policy.

Webinars are being produced nationally every week for Treasurers and worship leaders; Regional Council staff are reaching out through zoom, offering gathers for different groupings of Ordered and Lay to get support, share ideas, do some theological reflection; on-line worship services are being created to allow us to be together, even as we are apart, and phone calls are being made to help connect, to offer help or just to listen... to be a presence in challenging times.

There are challenges around funerals, food banks, and care for seniors, and the heartbreaking realization that this sacred time of year with Holy Week leading to Easter, and special times of gathering cannot be what we want this year. Some of these things are beyond our control and we

have to abide by the regional health regulations, but also recognizing how blessed we are in this country to have the health care system and governments taking the situation seriously. There are many financial resources being made available to ensure that community of faith staff do not have to face immediate layoffs as they strive to do ministry in new and creative ways. Donations do not have to stop because worship is coming into your home.

The Finance Team will be meeting on Wednesday, April 8 to address what support can be given, and what resources are available locally, taking into account what federal funding is being offered, and the guidance of our national UCC financial officers. Recommendations will go to the Executive meeting on Thursday, April 16.

We encourage you to continue to check the EOORC (www.eoorc.ca) and the United Church's (www.united-church.ca) websites for updated information about resources, and guidelines.

We encourage you to stay calm even as we face this health crisis.

We hope that you will take this as an opportunity to find other ways of reaching out to those who are in need throughout this crisis, especially with the use of technology.

We are with you in prayer, and we will continue to do our best to provide guidance during these challenging times.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Rosemary Lambie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small mark at the end.

Rosemary Lambie (Rev.)
Executive Minister