



The Reality is...

Gathering is at the core of who we are as churches and is a deeply felt desire in each one of us. We have always valued our ability to have corporate worship and teaching together and so the loss of this privilege has been a significant struggle since the pandemic has come to our province.

Pastors and leaders are required to walk out their callings in a very new reality that hasn't come with a how-to guide. Learning how to set up and use new technology in order to preach, teach and engage with their congregations has been a whole new world bringing a new kind of stress and challenge that seems to take more energy. Weddings, funerals, anniversary celebrations, births, etc, have now become new learning curves for pastors. How do we celebrate together? How do we now grieve? Important congregational care moments that have become challenging.

The financial impact of the pandemic has been significant. Members of our churches are without jobs, businesses are in jeopardy and, for some, savings and retirement investments are depleted and at risk. So much uncertainty in what the future holds and our pastors are having to learn how to be present in this uncertainty.

The creativity is there, but the work is substantial.

Yet we thrive...

Our heritage has left us with a strong resilience and it's showing amongst our leaders and in our churches. We are discovering new ways of connecting with one another and appreciating the intentionality behind a phone or video call. These connections contain a new sense of vulnerability with people sharing and praying together and having conversations that they may not have experienced before. Some describe a new depth to their prayer meetings and small group discussions.

Others are discovering ways of having video conference prayer gatherings, and more people than ever are 'attending' and participating. Prayer meetings are happening often, and people are appreciating those opportunities.

Another unexpected gift has come through the sermons for Sunday morning. The technology provides new spaces such as chat rooms where people can participate and give encouragement and feedback during and after the message. Some churches open up their zoom early and keep it on afterwards and have found that many people stay, as if there's coffee on in the foyer.

Finally, though there are many more stories to share, a church community used radio frequency to facilitate an Easter morning sunrise service. The church pulled up in their cars and watched the sunrise together while listening to the morning message. Beautiful.

Looking ahead...

Through it all, we have learned new ways to meaningfully connect with each other. To call someone or schedule a zoom meeting has allowed for times of sharing, prayer and connection that I believe will carry on.

Church online has re-connected people who have until now, been disconnected for a time. It can take a lot of courage to walk through the doors of a place you haven't been in a while, but perhaps after a month or two of connecting online, it won't seem so daunting.

We have been finding ways to serve and meet the needs of our neighbors. Delivering groceries, picking up medicine, or just intentionally checking in with others has become a way of doing life – something we've always done, but has become more meaningful and more frequent. In some ways our lives may have never been more connected and when all is said and done, we may come out with stronger bonds than before.

We may be re-discovering that family is key to spiritual guidance and teaching, and the responsibility and opportunity provided in leading our families in following Jesus.

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