

A Pastoral letter to the members and adherents of Summerlea United Church,
from Rev. Scott Patton:

Dear Friends,

I never imagined myself having to write such a letter under such circumstances. This is definitely one of those things they did not teach us about in seminary. But we all find ourselves in a situation that, even a few weeks ago, we could not even have imagined. But the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic is sweeping the world, and it is a virus that does not discriminate. It affects young and old alike, with deadly results. In response to “The United Church of Canada Emergency Plan” and its recommendations, we have closed our church and we will not be holding Sunday services until further notice. As I’m sure you are aware, we are not alone in this. Throughout the country, all large gatherings of people have been banned, which includes theatres, sports arenas, schools and universities – any and all large-scale gatherings of people have been banned, and this now includes ALL places of worship.

Some people have been placed in quarantine, and others have been asked to “self-isolate” (which includes anyone 70 years of age and over). Many people have been working from home, and many have been laid off from businesses whose operations have been put on hold. We have been asked to go outside only when necessary, and when doing so, to practice “social distancing” in order to slow the spread of the virus as much as we can. Many have taken to wearing face masks in hopes of protecting themselves, but the evidence suggests that face masks are only effective for people who have already been infected (to prevent the spread to others). This has left a shortage of face masks for people working in hospital emergency rooms, who know how to use them correctly. The most effective deterrent is frequent and thorough washing of our hands, and keeping a safe distance from others.

Since Friday, March 13, I have been working from home and using the telephone and email to keep in touch with people. I am very much aware that this situation we find ourselves in is often difficult to cope with. Some are feeling isolated and alone, some have financial worries, and all of us are wondering when all of this will be over. Unfortunately, we do not have the answer to that question, but the more we follow the recommended guidelines, the more we can help stop the virus in its tracks.

Since I am working from home, I am not using the church’s phone number or my office email address. My phone number at home is 514-694-0214, and my email address is scottieap@aol.com. Colleen is still working in the office during regular office hours, so you can still use the office phone number and email address, and if you leave a message for me there, it will be forwarded to me. I would be more

than happy to talk to anyone who has particular needs, or who just needs to reach out and hear a friendly voice. If anyone needs help with getting groceries or items from the pharmacy, please let us know and we will do our best to respond to any needs that arise. Even in this time when people are isolating themselves, please know that you are not alone. We can still be in touch with and care for each other, it's just that we now have to do that in a slightly different way. And know also that God's love and care go with us all, and will stay with us through everything that the coming days will bring.

May God's blessings and love be with us all during this difficult time.

Sincerely,
Scott.