



*We give thanks to God for you our brothers and sisters, because God chose you. So stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by word of mouth or by our letter...comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word. 2 Thessalonians 2*

Dear Bethany

A year ago I was writing you a Lenten-Easter letter to say we were facing an uncertain future; the building was closing (for how long, we had no idea), worship would need to be virtual (we didn't yet know what that would look like) and we were then just sorting out a phone tree, where volunteers would make regular calls to all of our 300+ households. Our Sunday School, youth group, seniors programs, outreach ministry, faith studies, all on hold. We waited. We worried. We prayed.

We now know what did lay ahead for us. While our building was closed major renovations took place. Barry Paton stepped forward to record, edit and add beautiful photos, creating stunning 30 minutes virtual services. Ann's phone tree took hold and we remained connected (there is a great story about this in this month's **Broadview Magazine**).

Those of you who shared with me your email address received one of my daily messages with one of Brian Williams' photos (coming up to number 365!). This photo caught my attention, a rough path, lots of footprints, darkness in the background and yet...a light shining through. For many of

us nature, landscape, Creation was God's touch and reminder that we are not alone. Some of us needed that phone call, some needed an email, some needed a virtual service, some needed to step into God's Creation, some needed to extend a welcome, helping-hand, an offering, to those in need. And guess what? We were not alone. God was there. Neighbours were there. The church was there. *Let's keep on keepin on!*

Throughout Lent take some time to remember who you are, who God has called you to be, whose you really are. Remind yourself of Jesus, his walk, his talk, his touch, his deep connection, to others, to God. Repentance is a fancy word for "turning around", and thus I encourage us to shift our thinking from our culture's demands (success, popularity, competition) to the demands of the Gospel (peace of mind, community, compassion). And finally, as Easter looms, **focus on Resurrection**, the new life offered to the early disciples who were huddled in fear only to catch a glimpse of Jesus risen from the grave. The Roman Empire could not change the most important thing about humanity ever experienced, love never fails, love endures and love lasts forever.

We are back to in-person worship every Sunday. We are physically distanced, in masks, and there is no social time after service. But we are together again, we can see each other, and when Ann asks us to stand and make a symbol of peace to one another I can feel the deep connection. It is a joy to see many of you again. Not all of you are feeling safe to return to public spaces just yet. We totally understand and we don't want anyone to do anything unless they feel safe to do so. In time we will be together again. I am in no rush and neither is anyone on staff or on our leadership team.

I offer no platitudes, no false promises, no Pollyanna predictions. I don't know how 2021 will unfold. The pathway is indeed icy, full of snow, slippery and somewhat treacherous. We need to be careful, cautious and safe. We need to follow the rules. But ultimately it is not the speed with which we travel that saves us, nor following the rules, nor making the pathway as beautiful as possible. What saves us from our worry is knowing we are not alone, that we have this purpose (to love one another), that we can laugh as well as cry, that we are truly all in this together.

Walking beside you. Kevin