

Parkdale United Church

building connections · living faith · acting for justice

December 9, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of Parkdale United Church,

This is an Advent Christmas season unlike any we have ever known. Many of our annual traditions are altered and disrupted this year. Clearly, there is disappointment and loss in not being able to be in the company of loved ones, participate in festive in-person gatherings or enjoy activities that have been meaningful over the years. This will be a difficult season for many of us and those with whom we share life. Christmas will come, as will the New Year. One of the special invitations for us this year is to be God's messengers, angels of grace. With intention, we can hear angel words like, "Be not afraid." We can act with hope and trust, "With God who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine." We can be encouraging, supportive, and kind, "Peace be with you, and may you know God's Christmas blessings of faith, hope, joy and love filling your heart and guiding your days."

Life for our faith community has shifted and adjustments keep being made to sustain the wellbeing and work of our congregation. Council has met regularly providing responsive leadership and wise oversight in guiding congregational decisions and planning through these uncertain times. The Operations Committee has carefully planned and worked through the provincial health protocols to maintain a safe environment. Our Sunday worship hosts have warmly welcomed participants and encouraged respectful community interactions. The Worship Arts team has adapted worship and created Advent Christmas experiences to help nourish faith for both in-person and distant participants. The monthly Book Club and weekly Text Study Group meet by Zoom. The Prayer Circle is praying, and the Zoom Advent Family Christmas Craft event was hosted by the Children's ministry team. The Faith and Justice Committee provides resources through Band-Aid and is resuming Movie Nights with Zoom. There have been Celebrations of Life, Interments, even a Baptism, all reshaped and offered with care. Phone calls, emails, back yard visits and walking chats have helped our community be resilient and connected to one another. We are grateful for all who keep making our congregational life vital, satisfying, and meaningful.

Friends, we thank you for your consistent generous financial support of the programs and work of Parkdale United Church. Your giving through the church has been needed, steady and close to our anticipated budget figures. We have received Federal Wage Subsidy funding and will be eligible for additional funding from this program in the New Year. The biggest operating budget challenges have come from significantly reduced building use revenues (about \$80,000.00) and the cancelation of the Garage Sale. Council is cautiously managing our financial resources and revising the 2021 operating budget. In the Advent Christmas season, many people make additional financial gifts to organizations they value. This year, all not-for-profits are experiencing significant financial challenges and need support. All gifts to Parkdale United will be gratefully received, and donations offered prior to December 31 are eligible for a 2020 tax receipt.

Unfortunately, our Christmas Eve in-person services have been suspended this year. A taped video Christmas Eve worship experience will be available prior to Christmas. If this is a useful resource, we will create similar worship experiences on special occasions in the New Year.

We hope you and yours are healthy and safe throughout this season and into the New Year. We pray that love will warm hearts, faith be sustained, fears will flee, and peace will prevail. God's blessings.

Sheila Campbell, Council Chair and Rev. Dr. Murray Laverty, Minister