

## **From the Pastor's home office**

**Ezekiel 37: 1- 3**

*The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. 3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"*

*I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."*

To begin this devotion, I want to assure you that I have not seen our church community as 'dry bones'. The question, however, 'can these bones live' struck me as one we might have asked ourselves over this past year as the pandemic continued to affect our lives for months rather than weeks. I certainly did not know how much church life was going to change for us to continue to be a community.

It was a year ago, that I went to church on Sunday morning saying that I thought the board and session should meet after the service and decide what we were going to do about worship. The covid 19 virus was now in Ontario and we had been asked to reduce our contact with people. I remember Ken and Don saying that if we were going to close then maybe we should make the decision before church so I could make the announcement to as many as possible. With their agreement and a few others, we made the decision to close the church building.

Many thought this would be for a couple of weeks. I had hopes that we might be back for Easter - which was a month away. Little did I know that Easter was going to be our very first venture into livestreaming. With a new Face book page, we started being present with several of you on Sunday morning again. In a world which was changing fast and days were running into each other, I felt fortunate that we found a way to make Sunday feel like a day of worship for ourselves and for you. This felt like a huge accomplishment.

As the days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months, John and I realized that we were entering a new way of being together as a church community. We were looking at each other and wondering 'can this church live'? We did not know the answer but we did know that the Lord was with us and we would continue to ministry to the best of our ability as we had been called to do.

One year later, we are very happy to be able to worship in person with some of you

on Sunday morning and the rest of you on live stream. We are pleased that many of you have been blessed by God through our devotions, the Wednesday prayer sessions and the Thursday evening music. This still feels like a church community. This is a blessing.

I thought these questions offered by Karl Vaters in an article he wrote recently were an interesting way of reflecting on the past year. 1. Have we represented Jesus well during lockdown? 2. Have we represented Jesus well as we come out of lockdown? 3. What have we learned and what are we still learning?

I hope we have learned and are learning that we are a church community even though it looks nothing like it did a year ago. The Lord has been with us as we have figured out how to reach out to people and stay a community that cares for one another. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have tried to be patient and kind in as many of our interactions with people as possible in a time of high stress. We have looked to the Holy Spirit to guide us in our actions letting us know who needs our care today. We have attempted to focus on gratitude attempting to find God in each day reminding ourselves that He is with us in all that we do.

I wish I could say that we will be back to 'normal' for Holy Week and Easter but that is not going to be the situation. However, this year we can assure you that there will be Holy Week services including Maudy Thursday, Good Friday and, of course, Easter - there might even be Easter eggs. You will be able to participate in person, on line, by email or mail.

It has been quite a year but we are alive and we are here. This is no small accomplishment. May we praise God for this feat. May we continue to find ways to worship together and take the hope of Christ to our larger community.