



St. Paul's United Church Lenten Easter Newsletter

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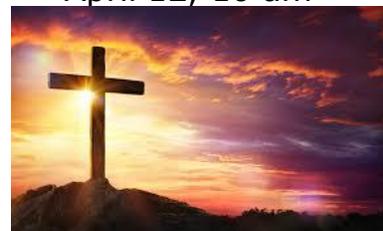
Holy Week Services

Palm Sunday, April 5, 10 am

Maundy Thursday April 9, 7 pm

Good Friday, April 10, 10 am

Easter Sunday Service,
April 12, 10 am



Please join us for these services via our live streaming at:

www.youtube.com/channel/UCctO6avKTwwSRA1H-COh5Lw

Message from the Chair of the Official Board – Zena Pendlebury

We are in the brief post Annual General Meeting period which is a relatively quiet one for the Board! In anticipation of the "Big Dig", the reconstruction of King street, church representatives have met with the construction company. Given the age of St. Paul's building, both the contractors and the church want to ensure there are no problems caused by the work on King Street.

We are already in the season of Lent and approaching Easter. Although this is the most somber part in the Christian calendar, it is my most anticipated time because it is about Hope and Renewal. This year, we are currently in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting over 100 countries, as well as an international refugee crisis. I ask you to pray with me that the message of Easter will bring healing and peace to all, everywhere.

Shalom, Zena Pendlebury



Minister's Message:

**A Lenten/Easter Message from your Minister,
The Reverend Karen Ptolemy-Stam**

In preparing for Easter, we are reminded of those first women at the tomb. They did not know the story as we do. Hindsight was not theirs. They gathered in the quiet hours of the morning when there was just a hint of daylight and made their way to the tomb. Their walk was slow, weary step after weary step. Sometimes there was silence, and you could hear the quiet snuffle of a broken heart and spirit. When there was enough light, the tears could be seen, slowly running down their cheeks. Women in grief. Resurrection was nowhere on their horizon. They had the burial spices and anticipated gently rubbing them on Jesus' bruised and tortured body. It's no wonder they could hardly comprehend the stone rolled away and the angel's message of good news. Raised from the dead? Resurrected? What could this mean? Was it a cruel trick? They didn't quite get it. Easter is a leap of faith, where hope is birthed in the unexpected and startles us into a changed reality of new beginnings and new life.

We hold on to that Easter hope in the midst of these times. Easter is a seed of hope planted by God. Even in the darkness of our world, there is the promise of God's reign on earth and God's reign in our hearts and lives. Whether it is our personal journey in the darkness, or the world's journey in which we are a part, God will continue to always break in with fresh, startling love and grant us grace, dignity and hope. New beginnings, new life, transformed lives. Resurrection - it is always on the horizon, waiting to touch our lives.

This 2020 season of Lent and soon Easter has been one that is unprecedented in recent history. We are in the midst of a global pandemic. Many of us have been self-isolating and following the directives of our Chief Medical Officer, the World

Health Organization and our Government. We as Canadians and others around the world are trying to lower the curve of this virus. Our hospitals are being overwhelmed, people are dying and others are recovering. Many of you have been temporarily laid off. Some of you are finding it hard with so many stores closed and worrying about the future. Others are on the front line working long and exhausting hours, putting their own lives at risk. Know that God is with us. God is with us each and every time we wash our hands, social distance, stay in our homes, reach out to call and help those in need via phone, email or zoom video calls. Please know that if you need help to just call the church number.

As of Wednesday March 24th, all the staff are working out of their homes except for Sonya Donahue, our custodian. She is at home with her children. The government has asked employers to allow this as the schools are closed. Louise Therrien, our Administrator, is still working full hours from her home. The church phone calls have been redirected to my cell phone so you can still use that number and call. To reach Louise please email her at stpaulsunited@rogers.com.

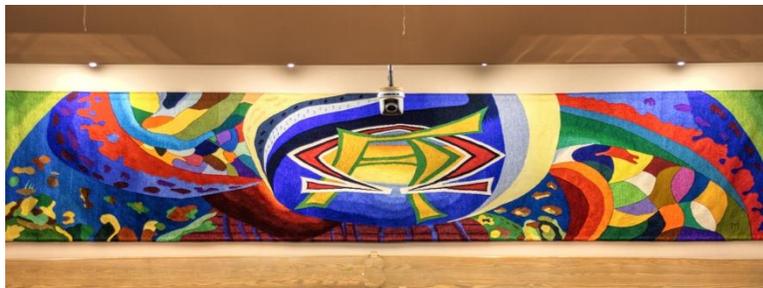
As you know, Glenn Erwin, our Technical Services Director, Victoria Warwick, our Music Director and I with one other Tech volunteer are working hard to enable live streaming of our worship services to continue. Last week's service had 421 views in one week. We now are only allowed 5 people maximum in any one gathering. We invited Unity United Church, our closest sister church in Vasey to join us in worship. Their minister, the Reverend Lois Brown, is now part of the live streaming. Colleen Gareau, our Pastoral Care Worker, is putting in her 12 hours per week phoning and emailing people and working with me to set up networks so that we are in touch with one another via phone and email. Rebecca Amadei, our Children and Youth Worker, is reaching out to our young families as well. We ask that each and every one of you reach out to someone you know, so that people do not feel isolated and alone.

We are grateful for Fran Hill, our Website master, www.stpaulsmidland.org and Linda Wilcox, our Facebook volunteer, for all of the extra work they are doing as we reach out in social media. Our Chair of the Board, Zena Pendlebury, has been working with various committees and the United Church of Canada to find our way through this difficult time. We are using a video conferencing tool called Zoom and brought together 22 people on to our Official Board meeting. This is new technology with a learning curve for many of us!

I invite you to join us for a number of special services and Holy Week Events. Invite your friends and family to go on our website at stpaulsmidland.org. Check out our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/channel/UCctO6avKTwwSRA1H-COh5Lw and help us get the word out. Our Palm Sunday service is on Sunday, April 5th. Our Maundy Thursday communion service is at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 9th. I invite you to have a piece of bread or cracker and some juice or wine near you so that you join me in a virtual communion. The Good Friday service will be using music that helps to stir us to deeper places as we contemplate the story of Jesus' death that is transformed by courage, grace and love. It is at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, April 10th. There will **not** be an Easter morning Sunrise service as any gatherings of six or more

are prohibited at this time. We will celebrate Easter with our live streaming service at 10:00 a.m. The Moderator of the United Church of Canada, the Right Reverend Richard Bott, will also be live streaming an Easter worship service and invites all of us across the country to join him. Go to <https://www.united-church.ca/> and look for Moderator's Online Worship under Blogs. Check out our United Church website and learn more about your church!

In these unusual times, we continue to be faithful to the one who calls us to follow the path of Christ, living with integrity, compassion and grace. May we be a source of love, laughter, hope and courage for all.



Happy Easter!
Karen

Choir

I bring *virtual* greetings from St Paul's Choir! In the midst of this pandemic, the choir has been regularly "meeting" via Zoom conferencing software. Although this system will not work for a virtual rehearsal, it does work nicely to allow the choir to check in with each other and to buoy each other up during these challenging times of self-isolation. It is heart-warming to see how choir members are finding many ways to stay in touch with each other.

It is a rather odd experience to live stream from St Paul's with only the tech team, Karen and I in the space and we are certainly missing having everyone there with us. However, we are excited by the growing online audience, and we hope we are providing you some comfort as we navigate this new world.

Missa Gaia has been postponed with the new date yet to be determined. The bell and chime choirs are on hold for the moment and we are keeping in touch with each other until we can meet in person again.

Holy Week and Easter will certainly look different this year, but Karen and I are determined to stream services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday morning.

Thank you for your encouraging comments and stay well everyone!
Victoria Warwick, Music Director



Congregational Life

Ah...Spring! As I write this report it's quite warm and raining, but I've spent enough years in North Simcoe to know that still - anything can happen. Some of our worst weather has come in late March and April, however, church life carries on!

Recently the Congregational Life committee hosted a soup luncheon following worship. It was an amazing success! We fed over 80 folks with a variety of soups, rolls, crackers etc. and a lovely cake compliments of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers. The event was a financial success and you'll likely see this happen again in the fall.

2020 will be a pictorial directory year. The organizing group is in place, photos will be taken in August and September, so watch for an opportunity to sign up for your photo shoot.

Fast forward to a few weeks later... a time of concern, confusion and upheaval. I've just watched Sunday Worship through live-streaming - wonderful job Karen, Victoria and the Tech Team! We recognize the adjustments we will all have to make for a period of time. Personal visiting has been curtailed as the care residences have been locked down to visitors, but Colleen and her team are connecting with folks by telephone and e-mail, showing our concern and support.

As the church is closed, all meetings are cancelled. This will include the Bereavement Support groups, Connections Team, the study groups and our March Food and Fellowship dinner.

We eagerly anticipate a return to normal practices and at this time we pray for all who are impacted by COVID-19. Karen spoke of remaining calm, supporting each other and recognizing the blessings we have. Let's all heed this advice and get through this difficult time together.

Sheila Thompson (chair), Colleen Gareau, Sandra Flint, Ron Neville, Sharon Penrose, Jean Stainton, Congregational Life Committee

Congregational Life – Pastoral Care

There is a promise of spring in the air and I would like to thank all the Visiting team members for continuing to touch base with our shut-ins, retirement and personal care home members. Your dedication to delivering bulletins, newsletters, annual reports and being a connection to their church family is so appreciated. Special thanks to the Youth Group for crafting beautiful Valentines which were also delivered to celebrate the special day.



Our visiting team consists of the following individuals:

- Argyle Gallichan and Carolyn Hendry – Bayfield House Retirement Lodge
- Mary Vaillancourt and Diane MacMenemy – Georgian Village
- Jean Stainton, Fran Hill, Helen French, Doreen & Ken Gunson – Heritage Place & Hillcrest Home
- Marlene Drinkill, Helen French, Diane Marr – King Place
- Joan Neville, Doreen & Ken Gunson, Diane MacMenemy – Tiffin Place
- Fran Hill – The Villa Care Centre

- Barb Carswell – The Villa Retirement Lodge
- Home visits – Diane Marr, Zena Pendlebury, Sandra Flint
-

Should you wish to become a visitor (either monthly, or occasionally when needed to fill in) please give me a call at 1-204-724-7337.

Our next big event will be in conjunction with Congregational Life and Rev. Karen as we will host two Communion Services followed by lunch. Extra help is always needed for driving, kitchen, serving and clean up. Please mark your calendars!

WEDNESDAY, JULY 11th and WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2nd both at 11:00 a.m.

Thank you also for keeping in touch with pastoral concerns so that Karen, myself and the visitors can follow up. Without you, it would be impossible to be able to faithfully care for such a large congregation.

Colleen Gareau. Pastoral Care Coordinator

Faith Formation –

The St. Paul's Faith Formation committee has been busy this year. We had a very successful bowling night at the Penetang Knight Haven bowling lanes. This new venue for our annual event worked out well and there was a wide variety of ages in attendance. Plans are already in the works for next year.

Faith Formation groups for adults have been well attended. The Bible Study Group and Theological Study group are up and running. There is also a new Poetry group being run by Karen. In this time of physical distancing, Karen is working to find ways to continue these groups through some form of technology.

Our Discovery Kids program on Sundays continues to evolve. Rebecca has been exploring some new curriculum which focuses on building relationships with the children while taking part in storytelling. There is always another adult with Rebecca and the kids on Sunday mornings. If you would like to help with Discovery Kids just let Rebecca know that you are interested. You would not need to teach a lesson, just be there to support Rebecca.

Camp Awesome is scheduled for August 10th to 14th. As we get closer to the date, there will be more information available.

Faith Formation – Youth Programs

During this unprecedented time of extreme physical distancing, we are working on creative ways to stay connected with the families, children and youth of our congregation. I am very much missing the in-person connection with our children and youth and I know many of them are feeling this great loss as well. I am hopeful that the right mix of technology, creativity and the Holy Spirit will keep us connected!

During the winter months, both the Youth Group and Discovery Kids were discussing some of the challenges facing indigenous populations in Canada. As part of a United Church of Canada initiative, we reached out to the Canadian Government asking it to uphold their promise to Indigenous Peoples and Treaties.

In Discovery Kids, the children have been exploring many parable teachings. Some of their favourites are the stories of The Good Shepherd and The Sower and the Seed! The Youth Group has also been doing some great things! In January, they made Valentine's Day cards for some of our St. Paul's community members. In February we honoured Black History Month by hosting a discussion around power & privilege and ways in which we can promote anti-racism. A couple of members of our Youth Group also helped with the clean-up after the very successful Soup Luncheon on March 8th!

Rebecca Amadei, Children and Youth Program Leader

Property Committee

It is a very different Easter period this year. The COVID-19 virus has affected everybody and put almost every activity and program on pause. Here at St. Paul's the building has been closed, with all our community groups having to suspend their programs. We are taking advantage of this lock down by cleaning and sanitizing all areas of the church. We are not sure how long this pandemic will go on and for now, most of our committee is self-isolating. Spring is here, according to the calendar and we need a break from our isolating every now and then. A good way to spend your break is to help us with the gardens around St. Paul's. This year, the plan is to redesign all the gardens, removing some of the older bushes and plants and plant new ones. We will need several "green thumbs" and others to dig and remove old plantings and help with planting new plants and bushes, doing this at a safe distance from one another. Also, we would like to ask all of you to consider donating a plant or two for our gardens. A Hosta or two would be a nice added touch! Please contact Bruce Wilcox at 705 526-8553 or email him at lbwilcox@csolve.net if you can help.



Members of the Property Committee, who generously give of their time, include Hans Mueller, Tom Barber, Colin Whiteside, Floyd Tilson, Bruce Wilcox, Cam Bonner, Rev. Karen and Honorary Member George Leck. We would all like to wish everyone a very Happy and Safe Easter.

Bruce Wilcox, Chair, Property Committee

United Church Women (UCW)

These are very difficult and trying times for our church family as well as the whole world. Not knowing just how long this will continue, many activities have been put on hold. I will do my best to stay on top of things and will keep in touch.

Make a phone call, send an email to each other and as a Church family we will get through this Keep well and safe.

Blessing, Sharon

St. Paul's Yearly Talent Auction 2020

St. Paul's yearly auction was scheduled for Saturday, May 1, 2020. With everything so uncertain with COVID-19, we won't be in a place to do it at that time. The plan is to go forward with it as soon as we can, as this is an important fundraiser for the church. Please hold on to the items that you were going to donate and we will keep you posted with new developments as they unfold. **For more information**, contact Judy McConnell at 705-529-1826 or email her at itsally58@gmail.com



Social Media and Tech

It has been difficult to focus on writing about what the Social Media and Tech group have been up to in the last few months when like all of us, our attention is so firmly set on what is happening in our world right now. News of COVID-19 dominates just about every aspect of life and yet it has also provided some opportunities for us and even some surprising benefits. The biggest opportunity of course was to spread the concept of live streaming beyond our congregation and into the community at large. Sadly, in today's world time to reflect on Lent and what it means is often swallowed up in day to day busy-ness. Not anymore! We have lots of time and the internet can be a wonderful tool to assist in this. We will be including some links to aid you in your reflections. Right now, both the United Church of Canada and our region, Shining Waters are good places to start. Simply click on the 'Links' tab on our [Home page](#).

We hope that you will find both the website and our Facebook pages have provided some useful links to help you in this time of reflection and the new normal of social distance and self isolation.

Website: Right now, the website will be somewhat fluid as we try to keep abreast of what is happening and how we can care for one another while remaining safe. The link for live streaming of Sunday worship has been moved to the top of the page to make it easier for everyone to join us either when the service is taking place or at a later time.

Facebook: Linda Wilcox has been doing a marvellous job keeping the page up to date with information about the pandemic and information on all the activities still taking place and how you can participate.

Live Stream and HUB: Glenn, with the help of one volunteer has ensured that the live streaming of the service can continue providing a much-needed link to the peace and reassurance that we crave in such frightening times.

Shortly before the pandemic was announced, we learned that we have a congregation interested in accessing the HUB and we look forward to moving forward with this in the not too distant future.

LED sign: Thanks to Louise this is working well and is a good way to keep the community at large informed about our activities.

We hope that what we provide helps to enrich your experience and keep you in touch with life here at St Paul's United.

Fran Hill



Hi from Glenn and the rest of the Tech Team.

With COVID- 19 disrupting our daily lives including closing St. Paul's doors temporarily, let me say that I hope that this day finds you and yours well. Our group of Tech Team volunteers and myself are working hard to assist Karen and her team in bringing the service to you in your homes. We are working with a smaller group of volunteers than we normally do and are taking steps to ensure that we are staying healthy. We did our first closed door live streaming service on Sunday March 15th and judging from your response, it was a success. We had over 70 streamers during the service and as of March 18th we had 234 viewers. Thank you to all for the supportive emails. So, keep watching, whether it be on your computer, smart TV or phone. We are there for you and thank you for being there for us.

In other news, we are in the early stages setting up to partner with other churches on our live streaming service. This will certainly bring some changes in the weekly service, but change is good and a part of growth. There will be hiccups and learning curves for both myself and the Tech Team as we adjust to working with other churches. We will get through it, learn new skills and have some fun along the way. Well that's all from me for now, and remember we are always looking for new volunteers.

**Thank you to all,
Glenn Erwin, Technical Services Director**

Worship

Musings as I sit here on this overcast day and there are installers putting in my new kitchen. Everyone (except essential services) are hunkered down waiting for the COVID-19 to run its course. The installer's wife and helper just asked me if I felt spoiled getting a new kitchen. I said yes.

Can I still feel spoiled when so many are impacted with this virus? Lots of emotions are felt with this pandemic, as we are concerned for ourselves and for others. There is anticipation as spring arrives, joy as a baby is born, sadness as people die. We are blessed in the knowledge that God is always with us no matter the circumstances. We live in a world of uncertainty. One thing we are certain about is that God understands. Making phone calls to family, neighbours and friends helps keep us connected and feel loved.

Together we can keep balance in our life and some kind of routine. Spring is here and the Easter story gives us Hope. We can look forward to the day when we can once again worship together and be glad. Until then, be strong, accepting, keep busy and call a neighbour. Praise God. Pray for our front-line workers, our governments, and all who are affected at this time. We can feel spoiled in the presence of our Lord, He comforts us. Thank you to all our staff who are caring for us and the work of the Church.



Cathy Metzgar, Chair of Worship

Shining Waters Regional Council - Encouraging and connecting communities of faith in The United Church of Canada from Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario. Please be sure to check their website regularly at <https://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/> for updates on COVID-19 Emergency plan and other great resources.

Shining Waters Regional Council has introduced a new stream of stories to their website. WELLSRING: A DEEP DIVE INTO SPIRIT is a regular blog, authored by Julie McGonegal, who will share stories of inspiration, revitalization, and innovation from around our region. Check it out at

<https://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/introducing-wellspring/>

If you have a story idea, please share it with [Susie Henderson](mailto:shenderson@united-church.ca) at shenderson@united-church.ca

A beautiful message from Bill Gates

What is the Corona/COVID-19 Virus Really Teaching us?

I'm a strong believer that there is a spiritual purpose behind everything that happens, whether that is what we perceive as being good or being bad.



As I meditate upon this, I want to share with you what I feel the Corona / Covid-19 virus is really doing to us:

- 1) It is reminding us that we are all equal, regardless of our culture, religion, occupation, financial situation or how famous we are. This disease treats us all equally, perhaps we should too. If you don't believe me, just ask Tom Hanks.
- 2) It is reminding us that we are all connected and something that affects one person has an effect on another. It is reminding us that the false borders that we have put up have little value as this virus does not need a passport. It is reminding us, by oppressing us for a short time, of those in this world whose whole life is spent in oppression.
- 3) It is reminding us of how precious our health is and how we have moved to neglect it through eating nutrient poor manufactured food and drinking water that is contaminated with chemicals upon chemicals. If we don't look after our health, we will, of course, get sick.
- 4) It is reminding us of the shortness of life and of what is most important for us to do, which is to help each other, especially those who are old or sick. Our purpose is not to buy toilet paper.
- 5) It is reminding us of how materialistic our society has become and how, when in times of difficulty, we remember that it's the essentials that we need (food, water, medicine) as opposed to the luxuries that we sometimes unnecessarily give value to.
- 6) It is reminding us of how important our family and home life is and how much we have neglected this. It is forcing us back into our houses so we can rebuild them into our home and to strengthen our family unit.
- 7) It is reminding us that our true work is not our job, that is what we do, not what we were created to do. Our true work is to look after each other, to protect each other and to be of benefit to one another.
- 8) It is reminding us to keep our egos in check. It is reminding us that no matter how great we think we are or how great others think we are, a virus can bring our world to a standstill.
- 9) It is reminding us that the power of freewill is in our hands. We can choose to cooperate and help each other, to share, to give, to help and to support each other or we can choose to be selfish, to hoard, to look after only ourselves. Indeed, it is difficulties that bring out our true colors.
- 10) It is reminding us that we can be patient, or we can panic. We can either understand that this type of situation has happened many times before in history and will pass, or we can panic and see it as the end of the world and, consequently, cause ourselves more harm than good.

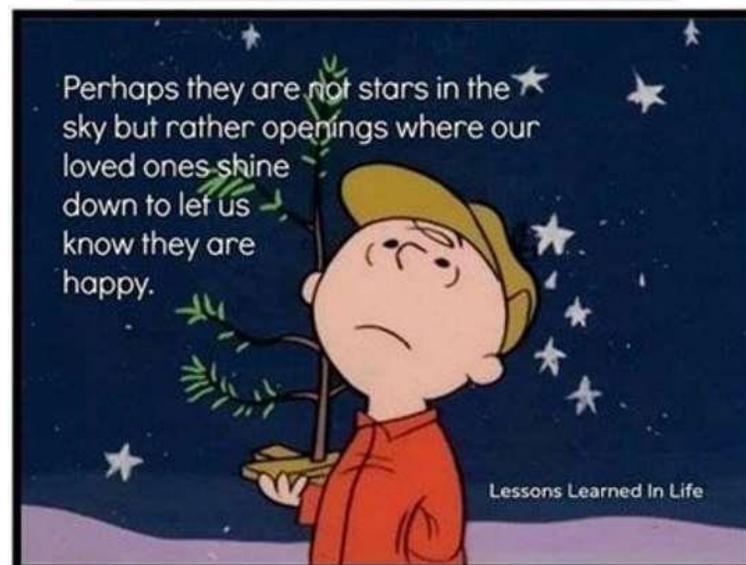
11) It is reminding us that this can either be an end or a new beginning. This can be a time of reflection and understanding, where we learn from our mistakes, or it can be the start of a cycle which will continue until we finally learn the lesson we are meant to.

12) It is reminding us that this Earth is sick. It is reminding us that we need to look at the rate of deforestation just as urgently as we look at the speed at which toilet rolls are disappearing off the shelves. We are sick because our home is sick.

13) It is reminding us that after every difficulty, there is always ease. Life is cyclical, and this is just a phase in this great cycle. We do not need to panic; this too shall pass.

14) Whereas many see the Corona / Covid-19 virus as a great disaster, I prefer to see it as a "great corrector".

It is sent to remind us of the important lessons that we seem to have forgotten and it is up to us if we will learn them or not.



**GOD OF STEADFAST LOVE,
IN THIS FEARFUL AND ANXIOUS TIME
MAY WE FIND ASSURANCE IN ACTS OF COMPASSION.
MAY WE SHOW UP WITH CARE AND PREVENTION.
MAY WE RESIST AND RENOUNCE
THE RACISM THAT FLOODS OUR MEDIA STREAMS.
MAY WE REACH OUT
AND BE PRESENT
WITH THOSE
WHO ARE ALONE
OR AFRAID.**

**WE PRAY FOR THE SICK
AND THOSE WHO
MINISTER WITH THEM.
WE LIFT UP OUR HEALTHCARE
AND FRONT-LINE WORKERS.
WE ARE MINDFUL OF OUR GLOBAL PARTNERS
AND DEEPLY VULNERABLE PLACES
AT HOME AND AROUND THE WORLD.**

**AS WE MAKE DO WITH THE EXCHANGE
OF A SMILE, MAY WE BE CERTAIN
IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ANY GREETING
IN YOUR NAME IS NOT DIMINISHED.**

**GUIDED BY FAITH, WE TAKE UP OUR CALL
TO BE THE CHURCH AND TO LOVE
AND TO SERVE OTHERS. AMEN.**



Shining Waters Regional Council
The United Church of Canada
shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca