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For Children: Our Second Cool School video is available by clicking here: [CUC Cool School Video #2](#)

You are welcome to share this with others but please note that you must use the link provided. It is not available by search.

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www.charleswoodunited.org/donate. Thank you to all those who have continued to contribute regularly.

Please enjoy our online worship and feel free to share with others. The **link for sharing** is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPPvezoWoFg>

Dear Friends

Welcome to worship for Sunday, November 1, 2020.

Is faith an *essential* service?

Ask half a dozen people and you may get half a dozen different answers. The dictionary in my office says that *essential* means something that is "absolutely necessary" or "indispensable". If I take that to heart then I must confess that there are things that may be more *essential* than worship, pastoral care, or spiritual nourishment. Jesus spoke about what is *essential* when he said "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink..." (Matthew 25:35-36). The basics of food, water, health care and other human rights are what religious people should immediately recognize as *indispensable* and *absolutely necessary*.

But there is a broader category of things that are considered *essential* these days and I tend to think that the care of our spiritual/religious life should be included among them. When the Great Commandment says to "love God with all your heart, mind, body, and soul" (Luke 10:27), I believe that what we are reading is Jesus' description of who we are *essentially*, namely that we have been created with people of emotional, intellectual, physical, AND spiritual needs. He believed it is *absolutely necessary* to search for meaning in life and to care for your spirit with intention and purpose.

Not everyone agrees. In fact, most of the people you and I talk with and meet in our community probably think that faith belongs in the optional category rather than the essential one. It explains some of what I have recently experienced. Having called ahead to a Senior's residence last month and being told I was welcome I went to visit one of our members and was stopped by the screener at the front desk. Her explanation was that a minister was not an *essential* worker. On another recent occasion I went to Grace Hospital, having been allowed to visit three days before, but being prevented to enter at the front door. I tried to explain that I wasn't there as a visitor but at the request of the patient. No luck. A phone call instead.

These are tough times and I don't hold anything against others who are doing their best to flatten the curve and protect the vulnerable. Bless them. Better safe than sorry. But I wouldn't want being accommodating and respectful to become an indication that care of the spirit is not *essential*.

Some of our sisters and brothers in other faith communities don't help the cause. One of the reports from Manitoba Health this week was that a person who proved to be Covid positive went to a large faith-based gathering and then followed that up with a visit to a family member in a care home. Loving our loved ones is *essential*. Going to a worship service as though public health directives don't apply to you is not *essential*. And it's not faithful either.

I believe nurturing our faith is an *essential* service. For the time being, we are using an alternative method, the on-line worship, as a means of delivering this *essential* service. Loving our neighbour, reaching out to those in need, care for the sick and sorrowful, prayer, seeking justice, remaining united in Spirit. These are *essential* as well and they continue throughout the pandemic in the best ways possible.

You are *essential* to the body of Christ. You are indispensable. You are absolutely necessary. Being apart does not alter that.

Grace and peace,

Michael

P.S. Would you like to follow along with today's bible reading? Click here: [Matthew 5:1-12](#)