

Watch this week's service on YouTube by clicking: [Sunday Worship Service Video](#)

- **For Children: Our 3rd Cool School video** is available by clicking here: [Cool School Video 3](#) You are welcome to share this with others but please note that you must use the link provided. It is not available by search.
- We will be holding a **White Gift Week** November 30 – December 5 to encourage donations for our Christmas Hamper Program. Information including the grocery list and how to donate can be found by clicking here: [CUC Christmas Hampers](#)
- Our annual **Women's Advent Service** will be posted online on **Monday, November 30**. A link will also be sent out on our email network.
- Would you like to follow along with today's bible reading on the video? Click here: [Matthew 25:14-30](#)
- A special **Remembrance Day Anthem** called "The Inscription of Hope" has been released by the **Bison Men's Chorus**. We have a warm affection for this choir as it includes three members of CUC, Richard Ball, Don Murchison, and Associate Director Nic Stroud. Please watch it here: <https://youtu.be/BJANedfX6dU>
- For news and events please have a look at the **Life & Work** insert: <https://charleswoodunited.org/media/life-work/>
- You can **support the ministry** of Charleswood United Church by visiting: 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://youtu.be/dCI8VTdJy4M>
- **Did You Know** that our YouTube channel contains a **subtitles feature**. If you would like to read the sermon or prayers while listening you can do so by activating the subtitles button on the lower bar of the YouTube screen.

Dear Friends

Welcome to worship for Sunday, November 15, 2020.

I will confess that I am more than a little perplexed that the news we received at the end of September, that cases of Covid-19 in Manitoba were increasing and that the concern warranted a move to Code Orange, didn't result in a downward trend during October. In fact, although most of us began to wear masks more often and in more places, the arrival of November saw our new daily cases increasing at an alarming rate along with positivity rates, hospitalizations, and deaths. So it is we have come back to a level of restriction and suspension of daily activity that we first experienced last spring, when the actual numbers were far lower. We are in Code Red.

This is difficult. I know from speaking to many of you that isolation has been the default way of being since all this began. In that sense, the new level of restrictions won't make much practical difference. If one has been exercising a high level of caution then what is required now is simply to continue doing so. Many of us continue to be relatively safe even while there are places of residence that clearly are not.

But being safe isn't the most difficult thing, is it? The challenge is the loss of hope. In the face of any obstacle, be it an illness, a period of unemployment, or an extended period of loneliness, hope comes from the knowledge that we are headed in the right direction. Any small step away from that which is discouraging, and any modest advance towards that which is encouraging, this is hope how sustains itself. Or at least one way.

The book of Hebrews says, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (11:1) Christian hope does not find its origin in progress, however slight it may be, rather it is born as a consequence that in Jesus we have witnessed just how much God loves the world. The cross reminds us that even when we do not feel as though progress is being made, there is reason to remain hopeful. You need not see the sun in the middle of the night to know in your heart of hearts that it will rise again.

It is not my intention to be 'foolishly optimistic' when I say that the best thing we can do for ourselves when the numbers rise and the restrictions increase, is to give thanks. Give thanks for where we live and the incredible people and resources we have working courageously and skillfully for our well-being. Give thanks for the capacity we have to remain connected to others via phone, letter, text, email, video, and other creative outlets (yes, including on-line worship). And give thanks that hope is not dependant upon us or what we see around us. Hope is a gift from God.

"Just as we cannot live without dreams,
We cannot live without hope.
If dreams reflect the past,
Hope summons the future."
---Elie Wiesel

Grace and peace,

Michael

P.S. Some of my letters from the spring address the situation we are presently in. I offer them for any encouragement they may provide:

[Re-Imagining Isolation](#) on faith as an asset during a lockdown

[Serenity, Courage, Wisdom](#) on spiritual gifts for times like this

[Peace of Mind](#) on the relationship between spirituality and mental health