

Watch this week's service on YouTube by clicking: [March 14 Worship Service Video](#)

- The **2020 Annual Report and Financial Statement** are now posted on our website: [CUC 2020 Annual Report](#). The Annual Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 23 at 7:00 and will be held on Zoom. Information on joining in will come in a separate email.
- Join the **HeBrews eCafé on Zoom** Sunday at 10am for an hour of informal fellowship.
Link: <https://zoom.us/j/98193600858?pwd=K0lIOWMOZWdsRmhUTkNWcmFvbkm5Zz09>
Phone in: 1 204 272 7920
Meeting ID: 981 9360 0858
Passcode: 438120
- **Lenten Study - Faith On The Move** - Thursdays at 7:00. *Special Guest this week: Dr. Rob Fennel from Atlantic School of Theology*
Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/96227374307?pwd=Q0xkRFpkemdtVDBZdHZlVWFwODU4QT09>
Meeting ID: 962 2737 4307
Passcode: 677320
Phone in option: 204 272 7920

Dear Friends

Welcome to worship for Sunday, March 14, 2021.

One year.

We had our Annual Meeting on Sunday, March 8 last year and not a word was said about the possibility of suspending worship or what our plan was for the year ahead aside from doing the many things we have always done to give us life. By Sunday, March 15 our Council and staff were meeting after worship and a decision was made to suspend worship services and activities in the building. For three weeks. The hope was that in three weeks we would have a better understanding of what we were facing and maybe even a glimpse of how we would pick up where we left off.

If we only knew then what we know now. I don't need to revisit the ups and downs, the various stages and codes that have unfolded since then. Why describe that which we have lived through. But over the course of the last year we have beheld more than we ever would have imagined.

It was serious, and it remains so. Manitoba has had the highest death rate of any province on a per capita basis, 912 of our fellow citizens as of this time of writing. And remember, that significant number came to be while most of us took extraordinary precautions all year long. What might that number have been without the public health measures issued and followed.

We have been made keenly aware of vulnerable people in our society, particularly those living in Personal Care Homes. In fact the majority of deaths in Manitoba were suffered by people living in care homes of one form or another. The outbreaks in specific residences created crises with horrific consequences.

We have also been made aware of different forms of vulnerability such as poverty and underemployment, the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on women and people of colour, the closure of small businesses, the near shuttering of some industries. Let's be honest, this has been exceedingly difficult.

The Gospel of John is noted for the profound and eternal observation that “the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.” There is something more powerful than any obstacle, any adversity, any disruption we may face. It is the power of love to renew and redeem us. It has been revealed to us in the good news of Jesus Christ and we experience it in the movement of the Holy Spirit. And it is the church’s responsibility to bear witness to this truth.

We have seen people reach out and connect with one another in a myriad of ways, whether that is re-discovering the long lost art of a telephone conversation or teaching ourselves to use a new technology that can feel like something out of *The Jetsons*.

We have seen the incredible courage of those whose vocation was to stand by their post and continue to provide healing and hope in the most trying of circumstances, working in health care, hospitals, and nursing homes.

We have seen the tenacity and the creativity of students and teachers in keeping the fundamental necessity of education going. They have had to change and alter their methods of learning over and over again as waves of risk rose and fell. I think of an 8 year old heading into the classroom every day wearing their mask and keeping their distance and wonder why some adults cannot have the same determination and resiliency.

We have seen heroes in the most unexpected of places providing what always has been, but was never previously referred to as, essential services. I have marvelled all year long at the people who work in my local grocery store. They have continued to greet me with the same friendliness they always have. And I think that grocery store employees are but a symbol for everyone who has had to make the best of a difficult situation so that the rest of us could be provided for.

We have seen wisdom, leadership, and even breakthroughs from the *people-who-know stuff*, a phrase I used back in February 2020 to remind us to trust in those whose whole lives have prepared them for a moment like this. This was a health crisis and we have always done best when we set aside other voices and listened to the best health advice. And now it seems as though the *people-who-know-stuff* will lead us out as vaccines promise to reduce those numbers we follow every day to a level where the busy-ness and activity we desire can resume.

Finally, we have seen, and we have become, a community apart from one another and yet mysteriously united in Spirit. We have adapted and worked together to be a caring and compassionate community looking to one another’s needs. We have sought to be a beacon of hope and I pray you believe we have been so.

May the year ahead of us also prove to be one beyond our imagination. But always in ways that are renewing, restoring, and redeeming.

Grace and peace,
Michael

- For news and events please have a look at **Life & Work**: <https://charleswoodunited.org/media/life-work/>
- You can **donate to the ministry of Charleswood United Church** by visiting: www.charleswoodunited.org/donate
Thank you for your generous support.
- Read the scripture lesson for today by clicking here: [John 3:14-21](http://John%203:14-21)
- Please enjoy our online worship and feel free to share with others. The link for sharing is:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPhPDftQQkE>