

## **Dear Family and Friends of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church:**

On behalf of the entire Council: Hello! We hope that you are all as well as can be!

Although all of us are processing this era of the "Covid Pandemic" in different ways, we share a common bond as part of the ORLC community. Before going into council highlights of our most recent monthly meeting (October 19) with some new initiatives and an overview of our financial situation, it is good to put all this into the context of us, the ORLC "extended family," going through these past seven months of "Covid times" together.

### **SEVEN MONTHS (so far) OF BEING CHURCH TOGETHER (while staying apart)**

Last March, we, ORLC, had to collectively support the nationwide efforts to keep the dangerous coronavirus from spreading. Since that time, when we had to shut down our usual ways of worshiping and having fellowship, ORLC has undergone a quiet but noticeable change. Besides the obvious flurry of new activity, such as learning to use technology, creating a new Covid Leadership Team in order to develop Covid Safe Protocols for WorksafeBC, and similar measures, there has been a subtle shift in our way of being the ORLC congregation. We seem to have discovered a renewed connectedness with each other. This was helped partly through the summer's Skaha small gatherings, partly through more phoning and emailing, partly through appreciating the weekly worship services and Bible studies via YouTube or printed text, and partly through our prayers for each other. There seems to be much quiet reflection going on, as we can no longer take each other or the church community "for granted". There seems to be a fresh sense of thanksgiving, as we recognize the gifts and goodness in each "family member" with whom we interact.

We are giving each other support in multiple ways. Some of us are deepening our friendships with each other. Others are beginning to acknowledge to each other our pain and grief about the loss of "Church as it used to be." Yet others are sharing more deeply our burdens of illness, loneliness, or major changes such as needing to move from a familiar house or community to a different place. We are learning to share our uncertainties about the future, as individuals and as church community. All this abundance of sharing, trusting and cherishing each other during this challenging time gives us courage to continue to "be church" together as ORLC.

### **COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS: ACTIVITIES**

Council's activities during Covid Times reflect continuity, flexibility and innovation. As mentioned in our September letter to the congregation, we have several new initiatives going on right now. By Zoom, we have regular Tuesday Morning Tea with Pastor Aguirre as well as Wednesday evening Bible Study. We just completed the two scheduled in-person Quiet Times in the Sanctuary. Also, the Sunday morning worship, via YouTube videos which are prepared so

diligently by Pastor Curtis with organists Lorraine and Roswitha, and which are being watched by 62 people every week, are continuing into the fall and winter.

At October's Council meeting it was decided to again reach out in several ways to give support to the needy, both locally and in the wider world.

**FOOD BANK:** Due to Covid restrictions, the Penticton Salvation Army may no longer accept non-perishable food items from bins around town. Instead, we at ORLC can drop any loose change or cash donations into the decorative white and gold Donation Box labelled " LOVE". That Donation Box will be available in the narthex, on the north sideboard, every Tuesday and Thursday morning, during office hours. It is a way to safely continue our church's longstanding support for the local Food Bank.

**CLWR:** Again, due to Covid restrictions, Canadian Lutheran World Relief has needed to change its way of giving needed supplies to refugees and other vulnerable folk around the world. Sending items like quilts or baby kits, etc across international borders is no longer feasible. So, here, too, the best way is to support their excellent work by contributing money. For ORLC folk, it is easy to designate an amount for CLWR by marking your regular church envelope. (For example, if your monthly cheque for the church is 150, and you wish to donate another 50 to CLWR, make the cheque for 200 out to ORLC, but on the envelope mark that 150 goes to ministries of our church, and 50 to CLWR.)

**MEN'S COUNSELLING and SOWINS:** at the next monthly meeting, (Nov, 23), Council will be deciding on how best to support these two local agencies.

### **COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS: WORSHIP**

October 25, REFORMATION SUNDAY. You may have noticed that the YouTube worship service was prepared by the teamwork of all the clergy in the 8 congregations in our Southern Interior Region. (Did you also notice the creative contribution by our confirmand, Eli, and our own Pastor Curtis Aguirre, regarding Luther's interpretation of the Apostle's Creed?)

November 1, ALL SAINTS SUNDAY. In addition to the regular YouTube worship service, Pastor Curtis will send an email invitation to everyone who has access to Zoom, to join a special Zoom meeting for "Communion in the Home." It will follow established liturgy for "Communion in Extraordinary Circumstances", and last no longer than about half an hour. Pastor Curtis will explain this in more detail when he sends the invitation by email.

FIRST SUNDAY in ADVENT: November 29. We can look forward to the festive appearance of the Sanctuary during all the Advent Sundays' YouTube worship services, beginning with the Advent wreath on the altar. (And, yes, there will also be a Christmas tree. 🎄 Different, but lovely. )

## **COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS: FINANCIALS**

CHALLENGES for the financial well being of ORLC:

- the usual ups and downs of offerings varying from month to month.
- the lack of opportunity for fundraising events
- the loss of major year-long renters due to Covid,( Bridge Club, Seniors' exercise group)
- January, February , and September our net income was in the negative, while in April, May, June, July and August the net income was in the positive. By the end of September our books show a total negative of \$ -5,245.99
- expenses so far this year include some added costs (for furnace repair, secure mailbox, replacement of old office copier,) besides the usual (insurance, salaries, and property upkeep such as irrigation, snow removal, etc., etc.) .

### **HELP RECEIVED to KEEP ORLC Financially AFLOAT:**

- Congregation members are generous. They have been making a conscious effort to keep up with -- and even exceed-- their monthly offerings. For some, this meant bringing their envelopes to a Skaha Lake small gathering, asking a council member to come pick them up , or coming especially on an office day to drop them off with Anette. The new, secure mail box has been a help for receiving donations securely. Several members also give via monthly E- transfer, which can be set up with our treasurer, Debbie Jones.
- Council needed to lay off the custodian, with the expectation that she would be able to access some gov't help. Secretary Anette Engel's job description has been modified to include the Covid Cleaning and Disinfecting tasks since mid- March.
- Treasurer Debbie Jones has kept on top of all the possible grants and loans available through the federal government. As a result, for three summer months, ORLC received direct grants to help with paying the salaries. She also applied and received a \$40, 000 gov't loan, which we will need to repay, but, \$10,000 of that we can keep.
- The BC Synod has promised each congregation in the Synod a gift of \$ 10,000, which ORLC will request for early in 2021.
- Rentals have begun to pick up in a small way.

We have two counsellors who coordinate when they do some one-on- one counselling out of the nicely reorganized "parenting room", with strict Covid protocols in place. (That room will always be available whenever the church needs it in the future for children during church services)

A one- off all day workshop was held on September 24 for folks connected to Interior Health. Covid Protocols were strictly followed.

One small fitness group of 6 plus instructor have booked the hall for safely- distanced one-hour workouts from Oct. 6 to January 6, each Tuesday and Thursday.

Elections BC has booked the hall for Oct. 24, with Covid conscious entry and exit, with supervisors for Covid protocols.

## **COUNCIL and CONGREGATION CONNECTIONS, GOING FORWARD**

Dear Congregation Members,

Any path of friendship and connectedness involves folks firming it up by treading gently and often in both directions. It is heartening to hear of so many in the congregation interacting with old friends and newfound ones by phone visits, emails, Zoom, and more. If you know someone who is not staying connected and might appreciate being contacted, could you let me or one of the other Councillors know? Please never hesitate to contact me at any time, to share concerns, clarifications, or updates. The other members of Council are Stephanie Staus, Lynne Marand, Darryl Jones, Ferd Lamens and Kim Hoath. Also supporting the specific work of keeping us connected are Maureen Downey and Secretary Anette Engel.

The "Covid Leadership Team" consists of Pastor Curtis, Lorraine Cameron-Uberig, Lynne Marand, Stephanie Staus and myself. We are the ones needing to stay super alert to the changing government regulations as well as to the specific needs for protection from Covid in our congregation.

Wishing you all the best for the wintry cold spell that has moved in. May you keep cozy and warm. (Some of us might even be motivated to begin writing Christmas cards, while looking at the beautiful winter scenery all about us! ☁️👶).

Let's continue, together, to "Be calm, Be kind, Be safe! "

Sincerely,

Brita Park, ORLC chair, on behalf of Council

(250-498-8889 or 250-488-8443)