

Ministry Personnel Zoom Meeting
March 17, 2020
Notes and follow up

1. INFORMATION TO SHARE

A. EMPLOYMENT

The General Council Office has offered the following guidance in regards to pastoral relationships and employment in local congregations <https://www.united-church.ca/news/employment-and-pastoral-relationships-event-church-closures>.

B. REGIONAL COMMUNICATION

Leadership Zoom Meetings: We have begun a series of video conference meetings, using Zoom, to support key leaders (Ministry Personnel, Community Ministers, Chairs of Boards and Lay Leaders). After the first round of meetings, we will figure out the frequency.

Website: Our website <https://shiningwatersregionalcouncil.ca/emergency-plan/> is home-base for all our key information including: quick links to the main United Church information; links to public health information; an archive of outgoing e-mail communication; resources for worship; a list of congregations who are worshipping on-line; and a form to identify your local emergency contacts. There is also a link to the community events calendar where you can list your own on-line re-occurring events that will be distributed in a monthly newsletter on the 1st of every month.

Staff: [Jody Maltby](#) is the first point of contact for communities of faith who face particular challenges.

Social Media: We are actively using our Shining Waters Facebook page www.facebook.com/shiningwatersregionalcouncil/ to share information and to support and lift up our community. The United Church of Canada has generated a hashtag to mark things of interest to UCC members, #uccancovid19.

2. ISSUES THAT EMERGED

A. ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING

How do you sign up?

Zoom has developed a [special support page](#) to help with the effective use of Zoom during the coronavirus pandemic, including training sessions and suggestions for using zoom in a variety of situations.

What are the account options?

Here is the [Zoom pricing plan](#). We recommend starting with a free account which offers up to 40 minutes of free meeting time for up to 100 people. Although the cost of the Zoom Pro Account is quite reasonable (approx. \$20 per month) and very worthwhile. [TechSoup](#) is an on-line service that offers discounted software, including Zoom, to registered charities. Although there is a registration process to verify your account that can take 10 days to process. Here is the [TechSoup Pro Plan Zoom bundle](#).

What are the privacy/security issues?

The [Zoom privacy](#) page is here if you want to see how Zoom uses your personal information. Our United Church IT services have reviewed the privacy policy and find it in line, if not more robust than many other similar options. They have encouraged all our staff to install and use the application and consider it reasonably safe and secure (assuming you update it often when patches are released). If you have a concern about a meeting getting hacked, which is highly unlikely according to our experienced users, you can require participants to register with a password.

People are using Zoom for on-line worship including live streaming to YouTube. Watch [George Bott's introductory video](#) to see how it's done. Others are using it for a drop-in/social hour time to connect with people and for small group discussion. As we experienced in our meeting, the breakout room feature is a nice way to have smaller conversations.

B. FINANCIAL CONCERNS

How do we face the challenge of meeting payroll, paying mortgages and loss of rental income?

If local congregations, because of closure, experience cash flow problems, particularly for meeting payroll obligations, consideration should be given to reserves that may be held or lines of credit that may be secured through your local bank. If you have reserves and aren't sure if you can use them, please contact Jody Maltby.

If local resources or credit are not available to a congregation, contact Jody Maltby. As a region, we are exploring options to be able to offer short-term support to congregations where all local sources have been exhausted.

If your congregation currently has a loan or mortgage with Toronto United Church Council (TUCC) please contact them directly to discuss options around payments.

Ensure that your congregation has more than one authorized ADP representative who can instruct ADP payroll services.

We need to get the word out to continue to give

Members who are not currently on pre-authorized remittance (PAR) for regular church donations should be encouraged to continue their donations through CanadaHelps.org (all registered charities, whether your church has signed up or not, are listed with CanadaHelps, and any donations made will be forwarded to your congregation). Consider asking for an extra one-time donation from those who are able to do so. National Stewardship staff are working on more resources.

C. PASTORAL CARE

What are people doing about funerals?

Some are having small family gatherings (the current directive is no gatherings more than 50 people) and deferring a memorial service until later. Some have postponed all funerals. We encourage communities of faith to make the choice that is best for them in their circumstance, even if that means saying no to an in-person funeral. There is a [resource on our website](#) for an on-line funeral.

How do ministers who are high risk and need to self-isolate respond? We encourage all ministry personnel to do what is necessary for their own well-being and the well-being of others.

What's the message to AA groups?

Alcoholics Anonymous is temporarily closing many of its meetings across Canada in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19. Here's a link to a google doc with on-line meeting options. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1a71ccw7ihaWelksKwOp4AzAkYIVqSoKiN6Gsm38bKMU/preview?fbclid=IwAR2BcakDUxeCz2PjpmzyVVuskvteFSpgvUJv6zv6TtPC_gSLSOeGndYGvAc#

D. WORSHIP

Who is doing on-line worship?

- Shining Waters Regional Council is listing on-line [worship on our website](#) including the Moderator's weekly on-line worship. Please add your event to our calendar if you want to share it in our regional Community Events Newsletter that goes out on the first of every month. Here is the [Add An Event Form](#)
- Watch the recording of [On-Line Worship Tips and Tools with George Bott](#)
- View the [national interactive map of on-line services](#) across the United Church of Canada

Who is working on worship resources?

Rose Ann Vita and James Ravenscroft open to collaborate on creating worship materials including materials to distribute off-line.

E. LAY EMPLOYEES

Should church administrators be expected to be at work? How do we address independent contractors vs. employees? What are different strategies for compensating different workers? Staff are working on guidelines to address these and other issues.

F. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Meal programs are changing their practice to take-out, but may still be accepting donations. The government has made special provisions for the EI program, e.g. waving the delay period. See the [Canadian Government page on social services](#). Check @cathyacrowe on Twitter for homeless concerns. Community Ministries are meeting this week and the notes will be shared from their discussion.

G. SOCIAL MEDIA

How do you compare YouTube to Facebook for live-streaming. Social media could be a topic for a future zoom meeting.

F. MISINFORMATION

What strategies are there for addressing misinformation? Let's continue to direct people to official sources for reliable information.

3. RESOURCES TO SHARE

Rev John Crowdis from Chinook Region has created "[The Accessible Faith Project](#)" which is a series of online YouTube resources that I am sharing with my congregation and then getting people to share their thoughts with each other. (Thanks Greg Daly)

[Tithe.ly](#) is a good giving app (Thanks Kerry Stover)

4. FOLLOW UP

Topics for future discussion:

- Holy Week and Easter planning
- How are people providing pastoral care by phone? by zoom?
- How do we support wellness in a holistic way, without being able to move to in-person gatherings?
- What's happening with hospital and residential care visiting protocols? Would people be interested in bringing a chaplain from a major hospital as a resource person?
- Share resources you have created with others, send to [Susie](#).

Let's meet again weekly for the time being.

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 24, 10:00 A.M.

<https://united-church.zoom.us/j/417057619>