



Highland Hills Pastoral Charge

Congregations of
Highland Hills United Church and Maple Lake United Church
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Thursday, December 17th, 2020

Dear Members, Adherents & Friends of Highland Hills Pastoral Charge,

Seasons Greetings! We hope that this communication finds you and yours safe and well during this Advent & Christmas season amid these challenging times.

The Unified Board of Highland Hills Pastoral Charge has been continuing to monitor the COVID-19 situation as related to Pastoral Charge business, including consideration of when to open our church buildings for various types of activities including face to face worship services. The Unified Board is not comfortable with resuming face to face worship services currently. In recent weeks the number of new infections in Ontario has remained high and several jurisdictions have had to retreat into lockdown. Our churches will continue to stay closed except for essential small meetings, some in-person pastoral visiting sessions for individuals or couples, and the preparation of our Zoom worship services. Your Unified Board has also authorized a protocol for the use of the sanctuary for a funeral if needed.

In addition to the new AI-Anon group mentioned in our last letter, a new group has begun to use our Lower Hall on Friday afternoons. This local Seniors Drop-In group facilitated by Haliburton Highlands Hospital Services staff is striving to address the stress of isolation and mental health in seniors by creating a relatively safe environment for face to face interaction. Thanks to the support of HHUC they are now able to safely meet face to face with appropriate COVID-19 protocols in place.

Even though COVID-19 has changed so much in our lives and taken away much of what we often took for granted, this Christmas remember the people and things for which we are truly thankful. It is with thankfulness that we think of all of you that have continued to support our ministry together in these challenging times. By all reports to date and estimations made to the end of the year, your churches, Maple Lake United Church and Highland Hills United Church plus the Highland Hills Pastoral Charge, are weathering the storm of COVID-19 by reducing expenses as much as possible and carefully managing your donations. Additionally, the timing of the sale of the Zion United Church building and adjacent vacant lot has helped our whole pastoral charge by providing a small injection of operating cash to HHUC and setting up a larger capital reserve. Some of the operating funds released after the sale were used to purchase a needed new furnace for the manse for the benefit of the charge. It must be stressed that the capital funds from the sale of Zion cannot be accessed for regular church operation expenses. Only the interest from the investment of those funds can be used annually without special permission from the East Central Ontario Regional Council. This ensures that the legacy of the founding families of Zion United Church will continue to support our active ministry for many years to come.

We greatly appreciate your ongoing support of the two churches in Highland Hills Pastoral Charge. Without this support, we would not be able to continue to operate as a Pastoral Charge during these challenging COVID-19 times. Please keep our churches in mind as you plan your future donations.

Enjoy this Advent & Christmas season, connect with family and friends safely and give thanks to God for all God's gifts and the gift of life found in a new born baby.

Merry Christmas and here's to looking forward to 2021!

Sincerely,

Rev. Max Ward
Minister

Lois Deacon
Board Chairperson