To access a link in this newsletter, please press CTRL + mouse click on the highlighted link.

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| [View this email in your browser](https://mailchi.mp/3b6b79f8392c/covid-19-update-march-18-2020?e=%5bUNIQID%5d)Next Deadline for submissions: March 20[Sign up for our newsletter & forward this one to friends.](https://wowrcucc.us20.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b&id=65ceaaaf22) |

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| https://gallery.mailchimp.com/3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b/images/7ca08f90-338c-43bc-8214-6d3190721c7b.jpg |

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| ****Dear Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council,****Your creativity and compassion during this period of disruption are inspiring. Thank you for the steps each community of faith along with their ministry personnel and governing body are taking to promote best public health practices while remaining available to offer the encouragement of faith and the assurance of God’s presence. We are privileged to be your colleagues.Your inbox may be experiencing information overload. We have tried to make this letter as comprehensive as possible to reduce the frequency of our correspondence. Thank you for your patience with its length.Please click on any of these links to take you to the section below:[Reaching Communities of Faith](https://us20.campaign-archive.com/?u=3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b&id=34f134cfff#Reaching)   [Check Websites](https://us20.campaign-archive.com/?u=3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b&id=34f134cfff#Website)   [Regional Council Office Closed](https://us20.campaign-archive.com/?u=3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b&id=34f134cfff#Closed) [Community of Faith Support](https://us20.campaign-archive.com/?u=3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b&id=34f134cfff#Community)   [Holding Meetings](https://us20.campaign-archive.com/?u=3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b&id=34f134cfff#Meetings)   [Staff Support](https://us20.campaign-archive.com/?u=3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b&id=34f134cfff#Staff) [Event Cancellation](https://us20.campaign-archive.com/?u=3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b&id=34f134cfff#Cancelled)   [Connecting](https://us20.campaign-archive.com/?u=3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b&id=34f134cfff#Connecting)   [Facebook](https://us20.campaign-archive.com/?u=3430c44e426848fe31d8afb4b&id=34f134cfff#Facebook) |

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| **Reaching Communities of Faith and Their Leaders**We have expanded the recipient list for this email drawing on the information recorded in the pastoral charge’s ChurchHub account. This is a critical time to ensure that the contact information in the ChurchHub account is accurate. Please update the information for your pastoral charge.Please also share this newsletter widely and encourage others to join the mailing list through the Subscribe button at the end. |

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| **Keep Checking the Website**Updates from the regional council will be posted to the [Emergency Plan: COVID-19](https://wowrcucc.ca/emergency-plan/) page of the [Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council](https://wowrcucc.ca/) website.Please check it regularly. |

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| **Regional Council Office Closed**On Monday, the General Council Office announced that it was closing the office with staff working from home until at least Monday, March 30th. Regional councils were encouraged to do the same. As of Tuesday, March 17th, the regional council office is closed.Regional council staff frequently work from home and have access to secure email remotely. They also receive phone calls through their laptops. Staff remain available to you during regular office hours. Staff contact information can be found on the [Staff Directory](https://wowrcucc.ca/staff/) page. |

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| **Community of Faith Support****Staying Connected**Communities of faith are being innovative in the ways they connect. Some are holding meetings and worship by Zoom; others are streaming worship over their website or through Facebook Live. A resource for [streaming worship](https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/worship-online-during-covid-19) has been prepared as well as a growing [interactive worship map](https://edgeucc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/00d5083bcaff4120863a8badb2d0928a) to help you find a congregation streaming worship near you. Additionally, communities are ensuring continuing contact with members, some of whom may be at risk, either through phone calls, notes or social media. **Managing Finances**To provide as much stability as possible during this period, please encourage those who remain able to contribute to donate by:1. Forwarding their offering by cheque to the church office;
2. Enrolling in [PAR](https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/get-involved/give-regularly) (pre-authorized remittance for automatic payment);

Activate your community of faith's [Canada Helps](https://www.canadahelps.org/en/) page to provide for on-line donations. Go to the website and type in your community of faith's name in the search bar. Every community of faith is already listed, with several donation options.***Value of Other Property***Covenant Commission Chair, Ann Harbridge, wishes to advise communities of faith that the Covenant Commission has taken the following action: The Covenant Commission of Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council authorizes communities of faith with funds restricted by either the previous presbytery or regional council to access these restricted funds, if needed, to cover payroll in March and April of 2020. The governing body's decision to access these funds to be communicated to the Covenant Commission via the respective staff. (Minister, Congregational Support and Mission, John Neff)We are taking these measures to support communities of faith as they support their staff during these uncertain times. As always, we encourage staff to be on ADP.A scan of Column 50 of the Year Book indicates that almost all pastoral charges show an amount under Value of Other Property, Endowments, Investments, Etc. This property may not be in the form of cash, but the governing body could authorize borrowing against this resource if necessary.Any pastoral charge without reserves struggling to make payroll is encouraged to contact the Minister, Congregational Support and Mission, John Neff.***Mission and Service***Please support the Mission and Service Fund. The fund enabled us to respond to the pandemic when it first erupted in China. It also enables the church to provide outreach ministries for vulnerable people. It supports hospital chaplaincies. It helps provide ministry in Indigenous communities. It is important that resources be available to these ministries. These ministries need continued support just as congregations do. |

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| **Holding Meetings**Some decisions will need to be made about conducting business of the congregation and communities of faith are asking how best to accomplish this. **Governing Body Meetings**Because we are a conciliar church, key decisions rest with the governing body (Council) of the community of faith. Please consider holding your meetings electronically to avoid putting Council members in the position of choosing between their own well-being or that of a vulnerable loved one and their responsibilities to the church. Consider experimenting with on-line technology to hold a meeting in real time without personal contact. **Congregational Decisions*** ***Notice of the Meeting***Some congregations are asking how to hold meetings concerning the pastoral relationship. Congregations holding virtual worship can deliver the notice electronically in the service. Congregations that are not gathering electronically for worship have an alternate option during this time of disruption. Based on [The Manual](https://gallery.mailchimp.com/ee15470ca4eab124ea964929b/files/88a877d4-aa8b-43ab-8791-69dad393b520/the_manual_2019.pdf) Section G.3.6.2, congregations are being authorized to give notice by telephone, email or post at least seven days before the meeting to the members known contact information. The minutes for the meeting should indicate how notice was delivered and that this was in light of the current situation. This alternative way of giving notice is only available while communities are not meeting for worship.
* ***The Meeting***Any meeting for such an important matter must happen in real time; that is, people must be able to hear one another and to speak. Technology can make this possible. On-line video conferencing, e.g. Zoom or Skype, are some options; conference calling is another. The Governing Body/Council will need to decide in advance how it voting will be handled. There are some polling/voting options with [Zoom](https://zoom.us/). If such a meeting is happening, please consider speaking with regional council staff in advance.
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| **Support for Ministry Personnel and Other Staff**The linked General Council page provides advice on the continuing employment of ministry personnel and other staff. Ministry personnel will continue to have demands on their time whether it is learning new technologies to facilitate online opportunities, providing people with pastoral care and spiritual support, responding to those who are ill or who are grieving. Ministry Personnel will be continuing to provide leadership to your community.Please see this [General Council page](https://www.united-church.ca/news/employment-and-pastoral-relationships-event-church-closures) for guidance on employment in congregations.Ministry personnel are also reminded of the resources available to them at this time. Minister, Pastoral Support, Kevin Steeper, is available as the minister for the ministers. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with him.Ministry personnel also have access to [Employee and Family Assistance Program](https://www.morneaushepell.com/ca-en/employee-and-family-assistance-programs), EFAP, and may wish to reach out for additional support.If ministry personnel or other staff members (working in excess of 14 hours) become ill, please remember to access the Restorative Care Benefit. Minister, Pastoral Relations, Diane Blanchard, can assist with this. |

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| **All Regional Council Events Cancelled Until After Easter**All in-person regional council events are postponed until after Easter. We will definitely reschedule the celebration of the ministries of Joan Tuchlinsky and Kim Uyede-Kai. As is no surprise to any of us who have had the privilege of working with them, they are very flexible on this and we will find another date once the current situation eases. |

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| **Connecting**We have planned an on-line (Zoom) TOWN HALL gathering for the Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council on Wednesday, March 25th at 1:00 p.m.This is the link to [join the on-line meeting](https://united-church.zoom.us/j/504423107) on March 25.We have the capacity to host up to **two members of each pastoral charge**.Please determine which two people will be present from your pastoral charge. At that time, we’ll provide a brief update on the actions the regional council is taking and also have an opportunity for people to share what is working for them and their communities as they manage the disruption. This is also your opportunity to ask some questions. |

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| **Facebook**We have been planning a Facebook group for Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council and now seems like the right moment to launch it. Check out Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council's [Facebook group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/wowrcucc1/).This group is a place for members of the regional council to share ideas, to offer encouragement, to update one another with congregation events! Share your Good News! Let everyone know what your congregation is doing. Invite neighbours to plays, fundraisers, BBQs, bazaars and special worship services. Let everyone know what's working.\* The existing page [*https://www.facebook.com/WOWUCC/*](https://www.facebook.com/WOWUCC/) remains in place. It is a Facebook 'page' which is not the same as a community forum or group. Thank you to Laurie O'Leary who has done a wonderful job of maintaining this necessary connection as the region laid its groundwork. We are hoping that many of you (if not all) will also join our group and share the Good News. |

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| We are all in a time of stress as we navigate new waters. Everyone is doing their best. The more we can demonstrate patience and understanding the less anxiety we will add.Please share this newsletter widely and encourage others to join the mailing list through the Subscribe! button below. We count ourselves privileged to be in ministry with you. God be with you as you continue to serve faithfully. Shalom,Gary ClarkPresident[Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council](https://wowrcucc.ca/) |

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| **The Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council newsletter welcomes submissions of upcoming events, regional news and educational opportunities. This is also the place to keep up-to-date on information from the regional office.** |

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| ****Connecting, Supporting, Transforming**** Western Ontario Waterways Regional CouncilThe United Church of Canada |

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