

JUNE 2021



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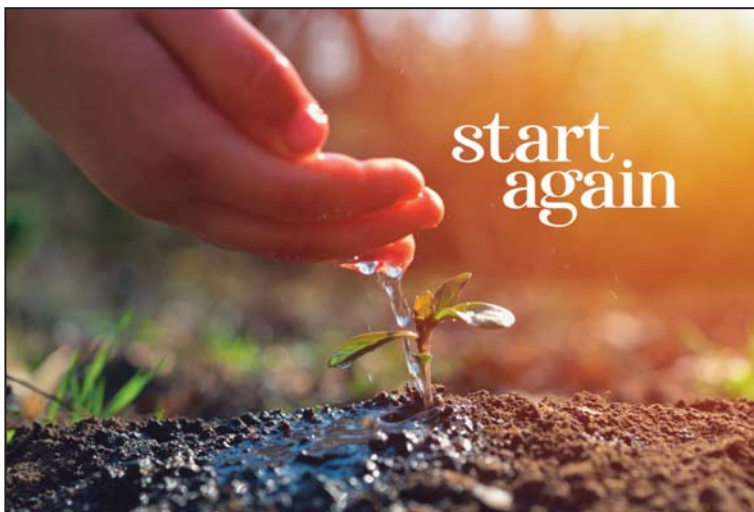
"Start Again"

What shall we pray for in this time of lock-down? As we move toward a return to "normal life"—to the world that we knew before the pandemic began—what things should we lift up to God as we attempt to start again?

These are questions I've been pondering for weeks. I suspect that many of you have wrestled with these same questions. Thankfully, we can rest in the knowledge that these are questions that faithful people have asked since the dawn of time.

One of the most impactful things we can do as people of faith is to ask God, "How shall we pray?" Jesus' disciples asked this question. The prophets and the psalmists often found themselves in the same place. When we start with that question we open our hearts to the kind of transformation that this world desperately needs (particularly at such a time as this).

A few days ago, while reflecting on this question, I stumbled upon a prayer written by Walter Brueggemann. It spoke to me... and, in many ways, helped me to understand what the shape of my prayers should look like as we move closer to the end of this time of pandemic. Brueggemann writes:



"You are the One who has brought our Lord Jesus Christ again to life from the dead; You are the One who by your summoning imperative has caused the worlds to be; You are the One who by your faithfulness has given a son to our vexed mother Hannah; You are the One who has the will and power to begin again, to start anew. You are the only self-starter whose name we know. And so we bid you, start again, start here, start now, start with us... start with your mercy, and with your justice, and with your compassion, and with your peace. Make the world new again, and young again, and innocent again... Start... before it is too late. Amen."*¹

What shall we pray for in this time of lock-down? Perhaps it is as simple as praying prayers to "start again"; prayers to "make the world new again". That might be the gift given to us this year—an opportunity to start again. To begin again with mercy, with justice, with compassion, with peace. Let this prayer of new

beginnings (of starting again) be on our hearts as we move away from the dark clouds of today and into the light and hope of a new tomorrow. Amen.

¹ From: "Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann" (©2003 Augsburg Fortress)

* Read 1 Samuel chapter 1 for context on this line regarding Hannah.

Rev. Dave



Marilyn Arthur
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Hi there! I hope all of you are enjoying the Spring season, the warm weather and the incredible signs of new life that Spring offers for us. For the past five months, six of our Riverside youth have embarked on our confirmation program. Along with the mentors that they chose, they were engaged with each other online, learning about one another, more about who they are and what they believe as they explored 13 topics in their resource book, 'Making Disciples'. We also met every few weeks on Zoom (video chat) as a large group to discuss and reflect on some of the topics, enabling them to hear and learn from each other.

Some of the topics discussed were God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Death and Resurrection, The Bible, the sacraments, Ministry, Gifts and Saints. We met together on Zoom with Rev. Dave who helped the group learn more about the Bible and the United Church of Canada. We were also fortunate to meet with Steve Harris, the Managing Director of Harris Funeral Home who taught us about death and dying.

In addition to choosing a mentor to work with they also had the opportunity to choose a saint. We discussed in the larger group the qualities that make someone a saint, and with the help of their mentors and parents, they chose someone to be their saint. They invited their saint to have a conversation with them so they could

learn more about who they are, their faith, beliefs and whatever else they wish to ask. This is always a beautiful opportunity for them to learn about another person who is part of our faith community.

I thank our six confirmands and their mentors for being part of the confirmation program this year, and participating in this program during the pandemic. It is so important for our young people to have trusted and meaningful relationships and I have such gratitude for our mentors who walked alongside them developing a relationship with them. Not being able to meet in person, and actively participate in activities like we have in the past was difficult but I am thankful to our youth and their mentors for making the best of what we had in order to keep everyone safe.

I asked our confirmands and mentors to reflect and answer a few questions so you could learn about who they are, about their faith and what they enjoyed about the confirmation program this year...

With gratitude and love,
 Marilyn Arthur

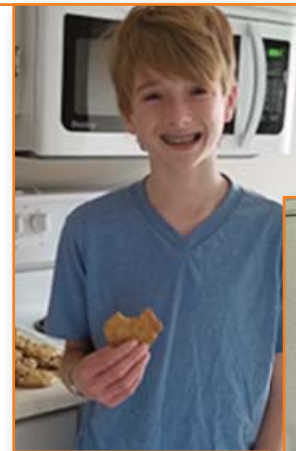
Confirmand & Mentor

Leah Exley	Susan Scott
Lila Foster	Jennifer Cross
Matthew Foster	Brent Scott
Zac Giffin	Linda Thompson
Caleb Scott	Ken Fraser
Emmett Sharpe	Lino Prelazzi

What did you learn about yourself and your faith during this confirmation process, about each other and lastly and about your saint?

Matthew: One of the things I learned during the confirmation program was that I knew more about the Bible than I thought I did. One of my favourite Bible stories in the book of Luke was about 'loving our neighbours' because I love caring about my neighbours and it's something I do in real life. It is a story I can relate to and reflect on because these teachings are based on my everyday lifestyle.

I felt like Brent, my mentor, and I really connected and had similar interests. One of the things I learned he likes is watching car racing. I also learned how his faith has grown while doing this confirmation program with me. Having Brent as my mentor made the program so much more fun. It helped to have someone I was comfortable with and he is interested in my life.



Brent: One of the things I learned is that I don't have all the answers to every question regarding my faith, and this is okay! With regard to my personal faith, being a mentor has stoked and rejuvenated my interest and practice in the creator. I learned how much enthusiasm Matthew had for meeting. He was always punctual and agreeable and brought good ideas to our study times.

Matthew and Brent and their saint, John Langford. John is a really good person and runs a program to help families in a developing country who have so little compared to us. John is smart and funny, and does a lot for the church community.



Lila: One of the things I learned more about during this confirmation program was my relationship with God and I know I grew in my faith. I learned more ways to share my Christianity with others and help my community. Perhaps someday I might have an opportunity to be a confirmation mentor. I was happy to learn more about my mentor, Jennifer Cross, than I already knew. When I was busy with school and feeling stressed and disappointed with the state of COVID, she was a caring friend and mentor and made our sessions more enjoyable.

Jennifer: In preparation for my discussions with Lila, I took this opportunity to reflect on my own faith and how much a part it is of my everyday life. Having faith in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit comforts me when I am dealing with difficult issues but also makes me so grateful for the beautiful gifts that God has provided to us in our lives. Faith is nothing without action and God's presence works through my words and actions. Lila is a bright and thoughtful young woman. She was dedicated to being prepared

for our meeting having done the readings and answered the questions. She expanded the topics by adding insightful comments. Lila truly cares for her family, friends and humankind.

Lila and Jennifer and their saint, Sharanne MacDonald. I learned how involved Sharanne is with Riverside United Church and how much she loves to give of her time. I also learned how she grew up very involved in her religion. She is funny, energetic and very outgoing!

Emmett: I learned how to look at the Bible stories in a new way and there's more than one way to look at them. I also learned more about the Bible and what the commitment is when someone gets baptized. I also built a better connection with my mentor, Lino Prelazzi, than I had before. He was fun to talk with, learn from and be with.

Lino: It was great to connect with Emmett on a personal level every Saturday. I got to see inside his mind and learn about what makes him tick. He at times impressed me with his knowledge of various issues. I liked the larger group meetings and seeing and hearing from the other mentors and confirmands.



Emmett and Lino and their saint Greg Schneider. Greg is an "average" person who gives, gives, and gives. We enjoyed learning his approach to life. Everyday of his life, he tries to make things around him better, to ease a burden someone is carrying, or to make our church attendance a more enjoyable experience.



Caleb: During this confirmation process, I learned that it's ok to not have all the answers in my everyday life or surrounding the Christian faith. Throughout this program I learned from my mentor, Ken Fraser, that there are no right or wrong answers or thoughts, and to keep an open mind for new ideas. I really enjoyed getting to know him and hearing his passions and experiences. I feel I have really connected to Ken and I hope our relationship continues in the future.

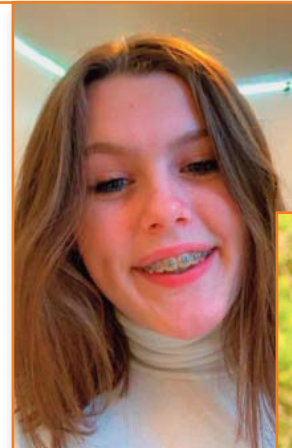


Ken: Our discussions often returned to common themes (social justice, the reality of having questions about big issues, my love for the United Church experience). I have learned that these are the things that I value as part of my church life. Caleb asked great questions. While we did not always have the answers, our discussions were very open, fun and thought provoking. I really enjoyed connecting with him not only about our faith and the church, but also about how our weeks were going, our families and school/work.

Caleb and Ken and their saint, Don Dittmer. Connecting with Don

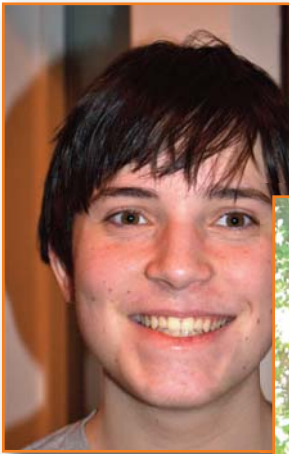
allowed us to connect with the broader church and talk about the different reasons that people are involved in church and the different ways we can share our variety of gifts. "I now know more people in our congregation and can talk to them about my faith or personal life. These relations helped me learn more about the Christian faith and helped develop my own thoughts on it." (Caleb)

Leah: Eventually through our meetings and discussions I realized that I feel really close to God in nature. I also enjoyed reading the Gospel of Luke. Before this program I didn't know Susan Scott that well and I was a bit nervous before our first meeting, but once our meeting started I felt like I was talking to a friend I have known my whole life! I am so grateful to have made a special relationship with Susan that will last a lifetime (even when confirmation is over we will still keep in touch and maybe even FaceTime each other and make crafts! The topic that I found was funny and we laughed about the most was 'Death and Resurrection' (especially when I said I wanted my ashes to be in an hour-glass so that I will always be included in game nights 🎲). I loved that Susan found this comment to be humorous because even when talking about a sensitive topic Susan will always find a way to make me smile!



Susan Scott: This process deepened my faith in believing that God works through the people that are put on our path. Exploring ideas with Leah helped me realize that I feel closest to God when I'm in nature, that one of our main purposes on earth is to serve others, and that the holy spirit is like the wind; we can't see it but at times we can feel it. I learned that it's important to ask questions, that we will never arrive at a destination with our faith but the journey of discussing and exploring our faith will bring meaning to our lives. We spent a lot of time praying for God to work in our lives through the fruits of the spirit and this motivated us on the days that were great and the days that were hard. Leah taught me so much about life; to be curious, have fun, and reflect on things that matter. We discovered our "Wonder Woman" super powers that God instilled in us!

Leah and Susan and their saints, Scott Roberts and Steven Forton. We had the chance to learn about their faith journey which was so inspiring. They shared some words of wisdom and they were incredible.



Zac: I have a better understanding of how the church works and how it functions with various people volunteering with different areas of interests. I really enjoyed my time with Linda. Covid made meeting more difficult but we were able to have meaningful and good conversations. Linda is easy to talk with and learn from. I was happy to get to know her better. I also really enjoyed taking the time to learn more about the Bible stories, and not to take them so literally. Many of [the stories] made more sense to me since I was able to interpret them and figure out how they can re-late to my everyday life. I really like the stories in the Bible that have random barn animals in them. I think they are funny and interesting to how we can relate these stories to our lives.



Linda: Over the course of this process, I found that the topics we studied made me stretch myself to think more deeply about the themes and concepts involved. The discussions I had with Zac made me think about the biblical stories and topics in different ways, giving rise to questions, thoughts, and feelings I might otherwise not have experienced. The questions posed in the Making Disciples resource and the program itself led us to discuss a number of different topics. I really enjoyed my time with Zac. I found Zac to be thoughtful in our discussions about the topics in the resource and our reading of the book of Luke. He and I often approached items from completely differ

ent directions, which made for really interesting and enjoyable conversations.

Zac and Linda and their saint, Peter O'Hara. I learned a great deal about Peter's love for math and also was interested to learn about Peter's involvement in various aspects of the church. He volunteers at the church in many different ways and helps wherever is needed. This is something I would like to involve myself with, being helpful at the church whenever and wherever help is needed.



Jan Shamrock
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Our Church Family:

IN HOSPITAL: If you know of anyone in hospital please call the church office at 519-472-6071 ext. 221 and let us know.

IN SYMPATHY: The sympathy of the congregation is extended to Maxine Kovacs following the passing of her husband, Bill Kovacs, on May 24th.

BROADVIEW MAGAZINE: It is time to renew your subscription or begin a new one. Broadview is an independent Canadian magazine featuring awardwinning coverage of spirituality, justice and ethical living. Through their compelling stories and engaging images, Broadview challenges and inspires readers seeking to live a purpose-filled

life. By subscribing through Riverside the cost is just \$25 per year, taxes included. Please have your payment to the church by June 15th.

SERMON BY PHONE: Need a boost of Sunday Worship? Why not try just listening to the latest service? It's a unique experience we promise you...Feel the inspiration of a Sunday sermon while going about your chores or better - exercise! Go on, give it a try! **519-266-0259**

JUNE BIRTHDAYS
Born in June? Wishing you a day filled with happiness and a year full of joy.





GIFT OF HOPE to Indwell Embassy Commons from Riverside United Church

EXCITING UPDATE!

In just three weeks the congregation has generously supported this campaign with \$6,190. Just think, we have furnished two apartments already, helping to fulfill Indwell's Mission of creating affordable housing communities that support people seeking health, wellness and belonging.

This campaign continues until July 4. Imagine how many more apartments we can furnish in that time. We will be helping to make a huge difference in the lives of people in our community - ***one apartment at a time.***

Outreach M6:8 gives great thanks for your generosity and ongoing support of this campaign.

