



3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 200
Toronto, Ontario
M8X 2Y4 Canada

416-231-5931 1-800-268-3781
F: 416-231-3103
www.united-church.ca

April 6, 2020

Peace be with you as you work diligently to provide important pastoral leadership during this public health crisis.

As you provide leadership to your community of faith during this time, I know you are finding innovative and creative ways to continue to provide ministry, while respecting the public health guidance to maintain physical distancing. As the staff at the General Council office and your regional council offices work very hard to provide you with support and respond to your inquiries, I write to you today out of concern for your own wellness.

I think that we are all realizing that the adrenaline-led sprinting of the last few weeks is transitioning to a marathon as we realize that this will not end at Easter. While these final days of Lent are unlike anything we have experienced in our vocational life, I can imagine that the normal stress of Holy Week preparations is heightened. In listening to a recent podcast by Christian writer Rob Bell (<https://robbell.com/portfolio/robcast/>), I was reminded of the importance of being grounded during these times. I realized that I had been so busy with keeping up with all of the doing of work and family responsibilities these days that there had not been much room for prayer and time to simply be. During these stressful days of COVID-19 response and Holy Week preparation, I encourage you to breathe and name 5 things you're grateful for in the moment. As we tell the familiar story of the final days of the life of Jesus, it's important to remember that even during one of the most stressful times in Jesus' ministry, he did take time by himself in the garden of Gethsemane to pray. Jesus took time to be grounded in prayer. Is there room now to ground yourself, like Jesus, in prayer and simply being – even if it's only for a few moments?

Our colleague Rev. Diane Strickland provided vital trauma support to ministry personnel and communities of faith after emergencies in Alberta in the last decade. In the midst of this public health crisis, Rev. Strickland continues to provide assistance to all of us through a helpful set of Pandemic Practicum videos, which share her wisdom from trauma training and response (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBxxkRUPC5c_smPuiiiiCSQ).

In the coming weeks, I look forward to sharing some other tips with you. The staff of the Office of Vocation continue to pray for you. As you journey towards the cross, may God's love continue to surround you. May you be reassured by the hope that comes from the empty tomb.

The Reverend Adam Hanley
Program Coordinator, Ministry Personnel Vitality
Office of Vocation