

social on Sunday morning via ZOOM in lieu of an after-church gathering. Rev. Dr. Warren Leibovitch, rector of St. Paul's, has been hosting a Wednesday morning virtual "coffee break," also via ZOOM, which is attended by up to a dozen people. Meetings among clergy and laity have also shifted to ZOOM over the last few months.

While technology like ZOOM and FaceTime has opened many doors for local churches, it has its limits – particularly for older congregations in rural areas.



"Our membership is encouraged to telephone members of this [vulnerable] sector in particular regularly to check in and keep connected," says Kerri Jebson, chair of the council for United Community Ministry (a group of six United Churches spread across western Kawartha Lakes and Brock County). "With varying qualities of (rural) internet access, it can be somewhat problematic to participate, or to communicate clearly," Jebson says.

Among the first questions asked by the churches during the pandemic was "how can we continue to serve our neighbour?"

St. Andrew's developed a boxed lunch

ministry for those who are ordinarily served by its Community Soup Kitchen and Sunday Suppers. Down the street, meanwhile, the Lindsay Salvation Army Community Church re-engineered its food bank program, suspending the use of shopping carts and requesting that clients place their orders ahead of time and make appointments to pick up their items.

Economic hardship has driven numbers of food bank users up across Canada, says Lt. Susan Roffel, who with her husband Lt. Bob Roffel, was only recently posted to Lindsay. People who worked in the service industries were hit hard by the economic shutdown and many found themselves making use of the Salvation Army's food banks, Roffel observes.

As a result of this ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the Canadian economy, many have been calling on the federal government to institute a guaranteed basic income. Among those who have penned letters on behalf of their denominations to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is the Currie, the Presbyterian moderator.

"Had a guaranteed basic income been in place before the COVID-19 pandemic hit," Currie wrote on May 12, "we would not be seeing nearly the same level of drastic and alarming economic repercussions, and the fear that many will not be able to make rent or afford to eat, that businesses will close, causing cascading unemployment that further contributes to economic chaos."

Making A Comeback

When will places of worship return to some semblance of "normal?"

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