



EASTER 2021



When life shut down a year ago, I suspect I wasn't the only one who believed life would return to normal in a month or so, certainly before Easter. Obviously, I was wrong. I don't know if optimism is a weakness, but I'd rather be an optimist than a pessimist. Last year, there were images posted on Facebook and elsewhere saying things like, "It's okay if the church is empty on Easter, the tomb was empty too!" Although the borrowed tomb was indeed empty that first Easter morning, not being able to worship our Risen Lord together on Easter Sunday was far from satisfying. I am once again optimistic that at least some of us will be together this coming Easter Sunday, and many more of us will be worshipping together online.



In fact, I'm optimistic that Easter Sunday there may be more people wanting to attend worship, that we may, for the first time, have to regretfully inform some people we don't have the space to accommodate them. Sad – but a wonderful problem to have! As more and more of us are vaccinated, we too can experience a resurrection of sorts – rising again to life beyond our homes and apartments. Life as He intends it to be, lived in community with family, friends and strangers. Opportunities to exchange smiles – and eventually handshakes and hugs! Oh, glorious day! Am I being too optimistic again? My faith in our Risen Lord Jesus – the One who conquered the grave – daily gives me hope that life will once again be filled with joys and blessings.

Through these difficult months, I am thankful for the many church staff and volunteers who have continued to bless our church family and wider community. I pray that you have experienced the Lord's presence and witnessed His blessings during this year as well.

Breathe into your soul these words of Peter:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." – 1 Peter 1:3

In His love,
Pastor Greg



Romans 15:13 "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

I cannot remember a year when the onset of Spring was more welcome than in 2021. For a year, our lives have been dominated by the colours of the restriction levels, punctuated by periods of lockdown. It has been a long and dreary winter. Sometimes it has been difficult to hope.

The Byron United Church congregation has not lost hope, however. Our church has continued to connect, grow and serve through calls and cards, creative worship leadership, small group participation, and volunteers who ensure that all are included and served.

What lies ahead? Easter, Spring, vaccines and warm sunny days. Hope is becoming easier. This Easter, as we remember the sacrifice and grace that gave us salvation and eternal life, let us also give thanks for the power of God's love that strengthens hope for all of us during challenging times.

In His love,
Ric Graham,
Congregational Designated Minister (CDM)



UPCOMING WORSHIP SERVICES



March 28	Palm Sunday	10:00 am
April 2	Good Friday (Communion)	10:00 am
April 4	Easter Sunday	10:00 am
May 9	Mothers' Day Service	10:00 am
June 20	Fathers' Day Service	10:00 am

If you would like to attend in person, the protocols to RSVP can be found in BUC Wheat or on the church website.

WE WOULD BE PLEASED TO SEE YOU.



BIRTHDAYS

Ken Mahood, March 14 – 90 years young
Mary Loree, March 20 – 90 years young
Ray Canon, April 6 – 93 years young
Lillian Hammond, April 11 – 99 years young
Donald Gellatly, April 26 – 92 years young
Marion Fahner, April 29 – 93 years young
Ralph Neely, April 29 – 91 years young
Evelyn Hick, May 1 – 95 years young
Charlie Tulloch, May 10 – 97 years young
Garnet Aldrich, May 12 – 90 years young

ANNIVERSARIES

John & Marg Ferguson, March 9 – 53 years
Bob & Carol Clarke, April 9 – 55 years
George & Elsie Wallace, April 16 – 62 years
Ron & Joan Nicholls, April 27 – 64 year
John & Joan McLean, May 8 – 56 years
William & Marlene Law, May 23 – 52 years
Bill & Elaine Dunn, May 30 – 57 years
Brian & Barb Chinnick, May 30 – 51 years

DEATHS

Frances King December 31, 2020

PRAYING FOR A BETTER YEAR IN 2021



Exactly one year ago, on Saturday, March 14th, we cancelled our Sunday worship service because a person in the Middlesex-London region had contracted COVID-19. The past twelve months have shown the strength and determination of our church family to remain connected to each other despite being unable to meet in person for many of our special Christian celebrations, small groups, and other special events. We have recently been allowed to again hold in-person worship with specific safety protocols in place and are now inviting some priority groups to hold in-person meetings within our church facility. We are moving cautiously ahead, with hope for more safe opportunities to share experiences that draw us closer to Jesus.

The Leaders' Board will hold a Planning Retreat on April 13th to discuss what steps we need to take now to move us forward to the new "normal" of what Byron United Church will be as we continue to *live with the pandemic* that surrounds us. Our focus for this Zoom Retreat will include how we can continue to support and foster fellowship and discipleship/spiritual growth for all ages during the pandemic and beyond. We will reflect on what we have done that is working well and also on elements of church life that may be missing and need to be included. We are seeking ways to enhance church life that will appeal to all in our church family.

We recognize that the Lord has blessed us in many ways because we have taken our needs and concerns to Him in prayer first before discussing them among ourselves. We ask that you support us by praying for the Leaders' Board and this planning day that we may indeed focus on what God's plans are for our Church in 2021 and beyond.

Linda Peck, as Chair of Leaders' Board

Annual Congregational Meeting - Part 1

We held the first part of this year's Annual Congregational Meeting (ACM) on Sunday afternoon, March 7th. Approximately 53 people participated via "Zoom" technology to review the 2020 Annual Report (Part One) and approve all items of business on that agenda. A highlight of the meeting was a slideshow depicting portions of our worship services and other aspects in the life of our church family over the past year. We thank Pastor Greg for preparing this presentation for our enjoyment, and Dave and Cheryl Chambers for photos from the first few months of 2020. Members of our governing body (Session) and planning teams were elected, as well as other church positions for 2021. These included our four 2020 lay representatives to Regional Council continuing for the 2021 year.

Later this spring we will hold the second part of our ACM. At that time we will review financial matters, including our proposed 2021 budget. Details about that meeting will be provided in the coming weeks. It is an uplifting experience and privilege to chair a congregation in which so many people volunteered in new and creative ways while living in a pandemic. We are truly grateful for the ways in which God continues to bless His Church at Byron United.

Linda Peck, Chair of the Congregation



FINANCIAL UPDATE

as of February 28, 2021

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
General Fund Givings	\$57,637	\$56,649
Outreach Fund Givings	5,468	5,212

THANK YOU for your faithful and generous support of your church!

There are now 88 families on PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance). If you would like to learn more about this most convenient way to assure that the church has your monthly givings, or to sign-up, just contact Deb Farrell, Church Administrator.

NEW ASSETS & FINANCE FACILITATOR

The Assets and Finance Element oversees the Church building, property and its finances. This Element is comprised of three teams for Property, Finance, and Stewardship. Ron Carruthers has been the facilitator of this element for the past eight years. In December Ron submitted his resignation from the facilitator position but will continue to serve on two of these teams. He has regularly promoted the work done in all three of these areas, most recently in overseeing the replacement of our sidewalk areas this summer. We thank Ron for his dedication to these needs of our Church and for his continuing involvement in Finance and Stewardship.



The Leaders' Board welcomes **David Tennant** to the position of Facilitator of the Assets & Finance Element. David and Jennifer joined Byron United in 1975. He served on the former Executive Board many years ago. More recently he was a member of the Leaders' Board as Facilitator of the Governance Element and served as Chair of Session and the Congregation. He is presently a member of the Stewardship Team.

In his working life, David formed his own property development company in 1982, involved in projects in London and South Western Ontario. Decades of involvement in Politics at Local, Provincial and Federal levels have provided him with experiences that are definite assets for leadership decision-making. Participation in one of our Church's small groups inspired him in 2006 to found a volunteer organization, CEDASS (Canadian Economic Assistance for Southern Sudan) to help the people there become self-sufficient in food production. This ongoing project has also opened a school and medical clinic. David brings considerable experience related to the three components within this Element. We look forward to him again participating in this level of Church leadership.

NEW MINISTRY ELEMENT FACILITATOR

The Ministry Element supports those in leadership and service and encourages the congregation to use their God-given talents and abilities in service to His Church. In December 2020 Cheryl Chambers submitted her resignation as Ministry Element Facilitator after six years in this position. Cheryl's focus during that time was leadership development and encouraging people to consider the many opportunities for service within our Church. We thank Cheryl for her dedication to increasing the number of people involved in leadership roles.



The Leaders' Board is pleased to welcome **Anita Bacon** to the position of Facilitator of the Ministry Element effective September 2021. Anita is excited about the opportunity to serve in this leadership position. Her family have been members at Byron United since 1987 and throughout those years she has been involved in various ministry opportunities within the church. She was a choir member for many years, has supported Scouting and Youth Ministry, and served on the Ministry and Personnel Team. Anita has also been part of Joint Needs Assessment and Pastoral Search Committees.

In recent years she was part of the planning team for supporting Syrian families. Anita has been a leader of the Monday night Women's small group since its inception in 2007. Anita recently retired from serving as an Executive Director with Christian Horizons, and has now prayerfully considered this new opportunity to serve in ministry within our church. We look forward to working with Anita as a member of our Leaders' Board.