

Easter 2020

THE  *BRITANNIA UNITED CHURCH*
Britannian

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Editorial

What are you?

Reverend Jim preached this morning on prejudice and people wondering “what are you”? Are you Christian, Jew, Moslem ...? Are you Canadian or immigrant? Are you from country X or ethnic group Y? I agree with his point that it doesn't matter what you **are**; what matters is what you **are doing**. Are you being a good friend and neighbour? Are you helping someone in need? Are you standing up for another person?

The next few weeks and months will be difficult. What will make the difference is not what we are, but what we are doing.

Peter Bain
Editor

p.s. please see [page 6](#) and the church web site for updates on planned events.

Minister's Message

The following was posted on the Facebook page of a friend in ministry:

The *contagion* I'm worried about is "anxiety". I'm worried it will seep into the cracks between our relationships: neighbours, spouses, friends, parents, children, co-workers, etc and its infection will be manifested in anger, self-medicating, addiction relapse, hoarding, scarcity, and depression. The spill-over effect of fear may be as or more dangerous than the virus itself.

It hung in the air tonight like a grey sky with the sweet smell of impending snow. It was worn on tight smiles, heard through nervous laughter among strangers, and was ominously portended by empty shelves where pork and beans had been hours before.

We must love our way through this. We must be gentle with our neighbours, our families, our friends, and most importantly, ourselves.

The most enduring stories of hard times are those of community and care. Let's make some stories that will outlast and outflank the "anxious contagion".

On Sunday, I announced that we would not be shaking hands at the door until the concerns over COVID-19 had passed. This morning I received the message that West End Villa was closed to visitors. At our Worship Committee meeting, we talked about ways to do communion that would not involve passing trays from one person to the next. A former congregation member, who now lives in Southern Ontario, posted that her church has made the decision to cancel all church activities and worship services until further notice.

Concerts and sporting events have been cancelled. Schools in Ontario will be closed for two weeks following the March break. Businesses are telling their employees to work from home and we are being advised to keep a distance of six feet away from other people. It is no wonder anxiety is rising.

Times like these can bring out the best and worst in people. As a church community, we should strive to bring out the best. It begins with the simple things, like washing our hands and staying home if we feel sick. We should be checking up on each other, to make sure everyone is okay, sharing instead of hoarding, helping as we are able.

I listened to an interview with a man who belongs to a group of volunteers who are assisting people who are in voluntary self-isolation. He spoke about a woman who had come back from China right after the outbreak. She had decided to stay home, even though she was not showing any signs of being ill. His group of volunteers were delivering groceries to her house. One man was Skyping with her every day, so she would not feel lonely. He found out that she liked dogs, so he was sending her videos and pictures of his own dog. He was bridging the distance with kindness and caring, and even though she was in isolation, she did not feel alone. Sometimes the small things are the big things.

We are just at the beginning of this pandemic in Ottawa. It will get worse before it gets better, but I pray that we will rise above it, and that in the face of fear, faith will enable us to love our way through it, and make some stories that will outlast and outflank the "anxious contagion." Stay safe. Stay well. I am holding you in my thoughts and prayers.

Rev. Jim

News from the Syrian Refugee Family in Kingston

As Easter approaches, the Shaao/Artin family continue to enjoy their new lives in Kingston. In a stretch of 6 days, Rim, the new midwife, delivered 7 babies. She is very busy creating population growth in Kingston and a 100-km area around it. She is equally busy at home while on call and seeing to the needs of her two boys Jack, 13, and Christian, 10, who are flourishing in a French school and picking up English as well. Jack delivers community flyers and earns some spending money. Abboud carries on with an English citizenship class and English training. He has many home responsibilities while Rim is away on duty.

Easter is a very special time for this Christian family. They hope to return to Ottawa for a visit to see friends and family soon. They wish to be remembered to the people at Britannia United and in the local community who helped them so much at a difficult time.

MARCH IS FRAUD PREVENTION MONTH

General Safety for your Protection:

- Arrange for direct deposit of any cheques you may regularly receive by mail.
- Always be careful about providing confidential personal information, especially banking or credit card details, unless you are certain the company is legitimate. And, if you have doubts about a caller, your best defence is to simply hang up.
- When using any of your cards, protect your PIN.
- Keep a close watch on incoming bank and credit card statements.
- Give only to charities you know and trust.
- Never rush into something involving your money or property.
- Always check out offers with friends and family first.
- Always get a few estimates.
- Be wary of "something for nothing" or "get rich quick" schemes.
- Never turn over large sums of money to anybody, no matter how promising the deal looks.
- If pressured by a salesperson, refuse to be bullied and say "No Thanks" - walk away, close the door, hang up the phone, etc. - It's Your Right!
- Do not hesitate to check the credentials of a salesperson or public official.
- Only sign contracts or cheques after you've read them and you're certain it's for a legitimate reason.
- If in doubt, check with a friend, lawyer, accountant or the police.
- Report suspicious offers or activities to the police immediately.
- If you don't already own one - invest in a shredder to dispose of old documents that you no longer need.
- Protect your banking information

Garage Sale

Here is your chance to clean out your basement, garage, spare room, and attic. Britannia's annual garage sale is coming up on Saturday May 9. We need household and kitchen goods, books, toys, games and puzzles, sporting goods (except skis), small furniture and decorative, items, small appliances and electronics. All items should be in good condition, and in safe working order.

How to Wash Your Hands with Prayer and Song

If you're tired of singing "Happy Birthday" twice, here are some alternate spiritual options.

When it comes to warding off germs, you've probably heard the advice that we're supposed to wash our hands for 20 seconds, as long as it takes to sing "The ABC Song" or "Happy Birthday" twice. But it occurred to me there might be some other songs—and prayers—that would time out to 20 seconds. Try these:

The Lord's Prayer

You can say it or sing it, but I've never really timed myself before (God willing, I'm concentrating on other things). Turns out, it clocks in at a neat 20 seconds. Maybe a little longer if I go slower. Washing my hands and saying "The Lord's Prayer." Now that's a good use of time. Cleansing to body and soul.

Amazing Grace

Everybody's favourite classic. Whenever I sing it at our church soup kitchen, the guests always join in vociferously. So sing it to yourself (or aloud) when you wash your hands. "I once was lost but now am found/Was blind but now I see..." What great lyrics for any time.

The Doxology

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise Him all creatures here below, praise Him above ye heavenly hosts, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost." A perfect 20 seconds by my watch. Praising God while doing the best thing I can do for my health and the health of others.

This Little Light of Mine

Our kids used to sing it, and I still have the lyrics and the tune lodged in my head. It always feels like a happy reminder of what Jesus said to His disciples and all of us: "You are the light of the world." We are. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Holy, Holy, Holy

Another classic. And when I sing that line, "early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee," well, doesn't that make sense when you do that hand washing first thing? Remember that old line, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness?" Put them both together with a healthy habit, a prayer and a song.

I invite you to go through your own mental index of prayers and songs and start using them. Be smart, be careful, don't give into worry. Do what the medical professionals say. With prayer and song.

by [Rick Hamlin](#)

*The coronavirus's outer layer is a lipid (fatty) membrane. Careful washing with soap lifts the virus from the skin, dissolves this lipid layer, and **destroys** the virus.*

Congregation News

We celebrate the baptisms of Asal Ansari and Salar Soleimanigilakjani on February 23, 2020.

Our sympathies to the friends and family of "Betty" (Laura Elizabeth Moira) McCowan, (nee Coutts), 1931-2020.

Introverts

This is from a sheep farmer on Amherst Island

Willow the highland cow patiently waits her turn for everything. She is a true gentle giant. Her cousin Cedar, the unquestioned alpha, gets first choice of everything.

The two cows are a perfect representation of how life works for introverts and extroverts.

If our Jake is paying too much attention to Willow, Cedar will chase her off with a horn to the ribs. This is just how it is with highlands. Every herd has a dominant female; the big personality. The extrovert. At Topsy we have simple tactics like feeding their treats in different areas (we do the same thing with the guardian dogs).

Western society, like the barnyard, is not wired for introverts. Intelligent and cautiously thoughtful, introverts bring so much value to relationships, businesses, and communities. Yet, many companies miss out on the best employees because of the interview process.

Job interviews are a legal requirement in many industries (especially anything government). We are too foolish. We are too careless. We are too quick to put square pegs in round holes.

Many school systems mess it up entirely. Every child in the local elementary school is being groomed to be a leader. They are grooming Willows to become Cedars.

Do you know what the world is going to look like? Do you know what a barnyard full of Cedars would be? Total chaos! Who thought this was a good idea? Why is it that being a Willow is not good enough?

Our society is worse off because the Willows of the world flubbed their interview. Ultimately, for a farmer, the ideal is to hold within you an equal measure of both. Introverts can find ways to balance their inner Willow AND Cedar.

Your favourite band's bass player is probably an introvert, invisible to the audience because of the attention grabbing lead singer and guitarist. The introvert bassist gets to strut and fret their hour upon the stage, and are then heard no more - just the way they like it.

They hold the rhythm. They hold the thing together. They are noticed only in their absence.

The extrovert is not all they seem to be. Repeat: the extrovert is not all they seem to be. They are filled with insecurities too, they just mask the self-doubt with extra volume.

Cedar is a coward with the guardian dogs. Her big personality counting for little when it matters most. Cedar runs away.

Willow, fearless in her moment, will charge the guardian dogs, horns lowered in a threatening posture that says: "spears beat teeth bucko". Willow, with a single change of posture communicates that she is not an enemy and she is not afraid.

This is a powerful lesson. Sometimes the loudest will run the fastest. Sometimes the timid stand their ground. Both ways are valuable at different times in different circumstances.

Find ways to be both Cedar and Willow. This world needs what you have to offer.

Today is the day to stand your ground, because the ground needs holding.

News about Upcoming Events

In the next few weeks many church events will be cancelled or postponed. Please watch the church web site <https://britanniaunitedchurch.ca> for news. Reverend Jim will prepare messages and prayer material which will be available via our web page. Stay tuned.

- Church worship services, including Palm Sunday, are suspended until April 5 inclusive.
- Church related events during that time, including the Annual General Meeting scheduled for March 29, are also cancelled or postponed.
- The church will be closed during this time. The minister and office administrator will work remotely and will be available by e-mail and phone messages.
- Events organized by outside organizations may continue or be cancelled at the discretion of those organizations.
- The church will announce at the beginning of the week of April 6 whether it plans to resume or further postpone church services and events, including Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

Palm Sunday Cancelled		
Annual General Meeting Postponed		
Maundy Thursday Tentative	April 9	7:00 PM
Good Friday Tentative	April 10	10:15 AM
Easter Sunday Tentative	April 12	10:15 AM
Garage Sale Tentative	Saturday May 9	8:00 AM

A message from Reverend Jim

We know this is a difficult time for everyone, both emotionally and financially. It will be a difficult time for the church as well without the weekly offering, but our Council is putting the health of our congregation above all else. Our Council made the decision to offset any shortfall with proceeds from the Isobel Smith Fund, without using any of the principal. If you should like to make a donation during this time, you may mail a cheque to the church at 985 Pinecrest Rd., Ottawa, On. K2B 6B4. A 'donate' button has been added to the Britannia United Church facebook page for members, family and friends to make donations online. PayPal Giving Fund will provide tax receipts for the donation amount.

Newsletter Advertising

We are considering including a limited amount of paid advertising in the newsletter. The primary purpose is connecting our congregation and community to small local enterprises such as independent retailers or home based services. We propose to set prices suited to these businesses. Funds raised are primarily to offset the cost of the newsletter and are not intended to be a significant source of revenue. I would like to thank Helen Hutcheson, Melissa McEwen, and Kelvin Stanke for their advice and suggestions.

If you have comments please contact Peter Bain at newsletter@brituc.ca

Benny

A dear friend, Chris, was looking for a puppy for his wife and three boys. One day Chris, who was dealing with terminal brain cancer at the time, was introduced to Benson and he and his family soon accepted Benson, or Benny as he was known, into their family circle. Benny was a calm and gentle soul who helped everyone in the family deal with a very difficult situation. Seeing Benny draping his large body over Chris's wife's lap or lying stretched out in bed between the two parents was quite a sight.

After Chris's death, Benny stayed on as a pillar of strength and calm for the family. Benny the therapy dog joined his last master Chris in heaven in mid-January 2020. Both are now definitely angels on high.

This is an edited Facebook post with sad news about Benny the Angel, written by a member of the first family that he lived with. Benny, you will see, spread his magic presence among three families.

Donald Cullen

About A Dog

Almost seven years ago a wonderful eight week old German Boxer came into my life. He immediately brought joy to our home. As he grew it became evident that he was not an ordinary dog. He had a sixth sense for people's needs and was quick to rush to those who were not doing well, to offer a lick, a full-body hug, or silly antics to make people laugh.

He grew and he grew and he grew. He grew to be over 100 pounds without an ounce of fat. He could run like the wind and it was a joy to see him fly down a beach or through an open field. One of his many nicknames was Horse because he was so big. He was also known as Benson, Benny, Buba, Lips and Benny BooBoo.

Benny was put on this Earth to complete three missions. He did an extraordinary job and changed the lives of many people.

His first mission was me. During the most difficult time in my life, he was my constant companion, sleeping buddy and protector, and gave me joy every day.

His second mission was to help a young teenager in great need of a service dog. He completed that mission with incredible grace, sensitivity and intelligence. He was certified as a service dog based on training at home, which is rare. So smart was he. He went to junior high school, then high school, took many flights, shopped a lot, made many friends, but was first and foremost a working dog. He took his job very seriously to the point that the now older teenager no longer needed him.

At the same time, coincidentally, the father of a family with three young boys became seriously ill and could no longer work. Thus began Bennie's third mission on this Earth. He offered company and comfort to Dad, love to his boys and wife,

and continued to do so after Dad died. This was Benny's first time living with young boys and he thrived on their boisterous enthusiasm for life.

Three days ago Benny, the giver, the provider, the protector, needed others to give, provide, and protect him when he was diagnosed with aggressive cancer. All three families came together to support him. There is an abundance of beauty in this. We worked seamlessly together as a team, keeping Benny comfortable and happy. His little tail would wag when someone walked into the room. He was never alone because so many people loved him. He was our sunshine on cloudy days.

We said goodbye to our boy last night and I know his soul has gone directly to Heaven, because who could imagine a Heaven without dogs?

This is a story about a dog, who loved unconditionally and changed the lives of so many people.

How great is that?"

Helping COVID-19 Containment

From Theresa Kavanagh's [Bay Ward Bulletin](#):

DO YOU WANT TO HELP OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 CONTAINMENT PERIOD?

Many residents have indicated that they would like to support their fellow residents who are in some way struggling because of the of the containment measures in our community. Some residents may be quarantined and need help with supplies.

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is actively working with community partners to explore options for setting up community networks to support residents affected by COVID-19.

These plans are still at their preliminary stage and will be communicated when ready. Until then, send the following information to BayWard@ottawa.ca:

- Full Name
- Telephone
- Email
- Address

We will advise you when OPH has developed their networks for volunteers.

Turning Toward the Cross

One of my favourite stories about tradition is the one where a woman is preparing a roast for a family dinner. After carefully seasoning the roast she took a sharp knife, cut the end off the roast and then placed the pieces beside each other in the roasting pan.

Her daughter was watching her as she prepared the roast, and said “Mom, why do you always cut the end off of the roast before putting it into the pan?” The woman replied, “That’s what my mother always did.”

After the meal was done and everything was put away, the woman thought about her daughter’s question. She had no idea why it was beneficial to cut the end off of the roast before cooking it. Did it help the roast to cook evenly? Did it make the meat more tender? She really didn’t know, so she decided to go to the source. She called her mom. “Mom, why did you always cut the end off of the roast before cooking it?” And the mother’s reply? “I never had a pan big enough to cook it whole.”

For her whole, entire life, the woman had been cutting the end off of a roast, without any idea why. So many of our religious traditions can be described in this way.

Growing up in the United Church, there wasn’t a focus on Lent, and I never understood the purpose of giving something up for the Lenten season. I do remember people saying that they were going to give up chocolate because they needed to lose a few pounds and it all seemed rather superficial.

When I started to study religion and the Bible, I had the opportunity to learn about the history behind Lent and fasting, and it all started to make sense to me.

The English word for Lent is a shortened form of the Old English word “lencten” which refers to the season of spring, and it may have originally been a compound of the words “longo” meaning long, and “tino” meaning day. So, the season of Lent happens when the days are lengthening in spring.

When Jesus was crucified, he was in Jerusalem for the festival of Passover, which happens in the spring. So, each year, the date for Easter is determined to be the first Sunday after the first full moon that follows the first day of spring.

The season of Lent lasts for 40 days, and it represents the time that Jesus spent, fasting and praying in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry.

The number 40 appears many times in the Bible, and rather than being literal it likely indicated a long period of time. Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai with God. Elijah spent 40 days and nights walking to Mount Horeb. The great flood that Noah endured also lasted 40 days and nights. The Hebrew people wandered 40 years in the desert while travelling to the Promised Land; Jonah gave the people of Nineveh 40 days to repent and return to God; and Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, fasting and praying.

All of these stories speak about preparing for a new beginning, through prayer, fasting, and confession. There is an intentional letting go of things that stand in the way of a right relationship with God, and the embracing of forgiveness, grace, and a new way of living.

In Psalm 32, the author speaks about confession as a way of clearing the heart and mind. He warns that repressing and holding onto our guilt and shame causes it to fester inside and it can come out in bitterness, anger, and pride. He says that refusing to acknowledge his mistakes made him feel like God's hand was heavy on his shoulder. But the simple act of confession relieved his burden, and released his guilt.

Author Alan Brehm believes that confession is an important part of learning to trust in God. He states that "As long as we hold back, as long as we refuse to acknowledge who we really are and what we've done, there must be some doubt in our minds about whether God really accepts us. But when we stop fooling ourselves and let go the burden, we find God's love embracing us, God's grace abounding, God's mercy healing us. When we make ourselves vulnerable by approaching God (in the spirit of) confession... and experience not condemnation or rejection but acceptance and love and forgiveness, we walk away from that experience with a stronger sense of trust in the one who has embraced us."

So Lent is a time when we turn away from our past mistakes, turn away from the burden of guilt we have carried far too long, turn away from our fears and shame...and turn towards the unconditional love that is symbolized by the cross.

Lent is also a time when we consider our relationship with the things of this world that would stand in the way of a God-centred life. When Christ was baptised, he was reminded that he was God's beloved son; anointed to be the Messiah. In the wilderness, where everything is stripped away, in prayer and in fasting, Jesus seeks to clarify who he is and what kind of Messiah he will be.

The temptations he faced are three of the great temptations of this world: material wealth, religious influence, and political power. Jesus resists each of these temptations in the wilderness, but each one becomes part of his teaching about the kingdom.

Jesus does speak about the importance of money – as an opportunity to care for the poor. He demonstrates how influential religion can be – when he kneels at the feet of his friends to wash their feet, and acknowledges the power of politics – with its ability to transform the lives of the abused and oppressed through the inclusive nature of God's love.

So what is the difference? Matthew personifies temptation in the form of Satan. We might frame it as arrogance, greed or pride. The psalmist believed that his life took a turn for the worst when he turned away from God. Jesus demonstrates that the very things that can lead us away from God, can be transformed by the power of God's love, and used to build a life and a world that is congruent with God's word.

Val and I have been watching a series on Netflix called Greenleaf. It is about a family in the US that runs a church.

The family has a profound faith, but we are shown how money, power and politics have taken control of their lives and we see how they have twisted the word of God in order to support an affluent lifestyle and maintain their power in the community.

Eventually they fall, and they begin to lose everything that they value, but it is in the fall that they reconnect with their faith in God and they begin to reclaim with they have lost; transforming it into a place where God's voice is heard and God's presence is felt once again.

As we turn toward the cross in this season of Lent, how will you prepare to celebrate the message of Easter once again?

The early Christians would fast, from food and festivities so that they could focus on prayer and acts of kindness.

In recent years, as the season of Lent has seen a renewal of importance in mainline churches, the observance of fasting has also been re-examined. People are asking the question "Why?" and searching for meaningful answers, and ways to exercise self-denial that truly honours the life of Christ.

For many, the fast will be centred on time, as they give up personal activities in order to focus on helping others. Some will still give up chocolate, but instead of focusing on their waistline, they will focus on the meaning of sacrifice and donate the money they would have spent, to a special cause.

There are many ways to observe the season of Lent; what's important is that the way we choose, honours God as we turn towards the cross.