

SENIOR PASTOR REPORT

Beloved Blythwood Family,

It is safe to say that 2020 will be a year none of us will ever forget. I remember well being in a hotel room in Niagara Falls in March. We had heard for weeks about a virus wreaking havoc in Wuhan. Nicole and I had never seen the town so deserted. Then the basketball game I was about to watch was cancelled. Then came an email asking what my thoughts were about what we were going to do about Out of the Cold. That Sunday March 15th would turn out to be the last in-person service we would have for a while.

We missed many things of course. As I look back on the year though, I think of all the ways in which we were blessed. I think of all the firsts and all the learning that went on. All the “Who knew?!” moments. One of my favourite lines to describe last year came from our partners in mission in Bolivia, Bill and Janice Dyck. Describing their own ministry in that country, they said, “The work went on, just in different ways.”

God’s work went on in us and through us, just in different ways. How many times had we said to people “Well if you can’t make it, you can always teleconference or Skype in.” How many times had that actually happened? While we had experimented with making our services available online before (back in 2014), necessity became the mother of invention in 2020. We asked ourselves “Could a summer student internship be entirely virtual?” and found out that the answer was “Yes!” When we weren’t able to gather children together in person for summer camp, we found that we were able to put together five days of online content for the kids to watch – getting to know not only about God but about sheep farming. When we weren’t able to gather for a church picnic, a July BBQ take-out in the Friendship Room gave us the chance to get together (and Shelby Duncan was able to join us too). Cupcakes and lemonade in the parking lot gave us another chance to be together. When we were able to gather in a small number on Sunday mornings in the fall and weren’t able to sing, we found out that musicians could play along with pre-recorded vocals. We found out that a group of people humming along to a beloved hymn can be a powerful thing. We found out that we could gather around the Lord’s Table in person and via Zoom at the same time, and see new and old friends gathered with us on the big screen. Can’t have a Christmas dinner? What if we made Christmas dinner for those in the congregation who would be alone on December 25th in the middle of the second wave, and deliver it – a kind of church Door Dash?

Aside from everyone’s health and well-being, my biggest concern for us all throughout 2020 was that we stay connected with God, with each other, and with our wider community to the greatest extent that we could. I pray that you found this to be the case. We often lapse into thinking that we are in control of any given situation, or even our lives in general. If 2020 taught us anything, it is that we’re really not. To know the One who is in control changes everything. Our need for God became apparent to me in a whole new way over the course of the year.

Along with our need for each other. How amazing it was to find out that seeing a face on a screen and hearing a voice could be so good for the soul. It reminded me of 1 Corinthians 13 – right now we see one another through a screen dimly (freezingly/bufferingly), but one day face to face! How joyous will that be?



Along with our brother Erik, I want to thank the congregation for your continued financial support of God's work here at Blythwood throughout 2020. I want to thank you all for your prayers, for your notes of encouragement, for your likes and shares and comments. We found God's word going out from here in a whole new way, reaching people it had never reached before, and we are thankful for this.

I want to thank the Deacon's Board for all of their work, particularly for their efforts in reaching out to their deacon families and helping to make sure that no one is neglected. Thanks to all the committees and the people who served faithfully on them last year to ensure everything from the bills being paid to fresh flowers for recording day.

I am thankful for those who serve alongside me as Blythwood's staff. Last year brought unprecedented challenges and questions, and they all showed themselves to be imminently adaptable. Who knew that we would all need to become internet preachers? As she has started a new chapter in her ministry life, I'm thankful for Pastor Abby and five-plus years of working alongside me, particularly during the challenges of 2020. Thanks to Jennifer for continuing to be a steady presence – whether from her church office or home office – as we navigated our way through uncharted waters. Thanks to Dan for being company for me at church, our conversations, and all you do musically. Where would we be without music? Which leads me to thank our Musical Director Adolfo. As I've been pointing out to him and Dan lately, we've been making music together now for 19 years, and it is as much a blessing now as it ever was.

Finally, I am thankful for my wife Nicole. She is a true partner in ministry in every conceivable way. Her gifts, and her heart to use them in God's service inspire me daily, and I love her dearly.

We step out into the unknown every day, although there are seasons where our sense of this is a little more acute. Thankfully, we step out with our hand in the hand of the One who not only knows the way, but is the Way, the Truth, and the Life – the One in whom there is no shadow due to change. May the Spirit remind us of these truths as we travel on together.

In Christ,



Pastor David

