



Urban Christian Outreach (Ottawa)

P.O. Box 77033 RPO Ottawa South

Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5N2

613-233-6633 jill@uco-ottawa.ca www.uco-ottawa.ca

Charitable Registration #13776 1938 RR0001

Update #83

May, 2020

Dear Friends-in-Christ,

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. 2 Cor 4:16-18

What a world we are living in right now, as we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic! I pray that you are well, and that despite the circumstances, you are provided for, and content in Christ. For those of us with homes, we have had to deal with many changes and challenges. For those who are homeless, living in shelters, group homes, and residences, and for the poor and marginalized, these challenges can be magnified in many ways.

The homeless who choose not to live in the shelter system for various reasons, i.e. violence, weapons, mental health issues, drugs, fear, etc., struggle to find food, and when they do, they face long line-ups. Sometimes the agencies run out of food before everyone is fed. After they pick up their lunch bag, they struggle with finding a place to sit down to eat it. There are no coffee shops open in which to take shelter. In inclement weather, some of our homeless friends have no where to go to, where they can feel safe. The seating areas in drop-in centres and soup kitchens are closed, as are libraries, food courts, malls and even the foyer in City Hall.

Those who panhandle are faced with vastly reduced offerings, as our downtown streets are much quieter. Some are afraid to accept money for fear of getting sick. When they do have cash to spend, sometimes it is useless, as many establishments aren't accepting cash. Very few of our poor friends have bank accounts or debit cards.

Navigating the systems that they once knew has been discouraging for many; numbers of those who are lonely and feeling isolated have increased. Some men have had to move into a new shelter, barracks-style, at the south end of the city, while women and children are moved into motels, due to overcrowding in shelters. Dealing with a pandemic in crowded conditions can be pretty scary; moving only adds to this stress. This isn't always a bad thing though, and we are hoping that this current situation may pave the way for changes in terms of how we house the homeless.

Cases that have come forward from our multi-agency roundtable discussions show that the incidence of spousal and child abuse is on the rise. People are hurting, and sometimes hurting people hurt other people.



During this time, we have continued to serve God's poor among us, wearing a mask from day one, and adjusting to allow for a 2 metre distance while on the sidewalks. With food safety guidelines being meticulously observed, we have been preparing care bags, delivering them throughout the city to the poor, the homeless and the marginalized in the downtown core, Centretown, Lowertown, Chinatown, Vanier, etc,

Each care bag contains the following:

- * two hearty sandwiches
- * a treat
- * a piece of fresh fruit
- * a juice box
- * a bottle of water
- * napkins
- * wet wipes in a ziplock bag
- * a face mask
- * a New Testament Bible
- * a double sided sheet of information about Covid-19, including God's words of encouragement, a phone number to call us for prayer and/or Bible study, as well as a list of places to go to get food. This list is updated regularly.

We continue to keep in touch with some via telephone, checking in on them, praying with them, and helping where we can. A few are able to join me via telephone for Sunday Church service, where they listen to the service via speakerphone. We meet daily via telephone for Bible study with one person, reading one chapter per day and reflecting upon God's Word. Currently, our classroom at the Royal is on hold.

One day, while walking downtown, I changed direction and headed to Chinatown, following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Led to a specific street, I encountered a homeless man, who is a Christian and a retired war veteran. He was discouraged by his situation. He didn't accept a care bag, as he said that he could afford to get food from a restaurant take-out, but he had a few friends nearby who were delighted to receive them. He shared that he desperately wanted to get housing, but felt that no one was willing to help him, and he wasn't able to navigate the systems in place. Keeping a safe distance, we prayed, after which I sat in my car for two hours making phone calls to various agencies, including Veterans Affairs Canada, hoping to secure housing for him. He was absolutely astonished that we would take this time to help him, saying over and over again that no one had ever made so much effort to help him. God heard our call and He answered our prayers.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.
Gal 5:25

Praise God that he goes before us, that he makes a way even when there seems to be no way. Even in the midst of this pandemic, God is near. He is in control and he loves us. When the world sees this time as one of great pain and despair, as Christians we are called to never lose hope. God is still at work; he is still in control. He is doing a new thing.

There are signs of revival among us. People who might not normally attend a church service, or those ill or shut-in, are now able to watch church services online or to listen via telephone. Those who like to sleep in can often watch a recorded service at anytime, thanks to new technology. Many of us are able to participate in Bible studies, meetings and prayer groups via Zoom, either online or by telephone. In the midst of this trial, we can rejoice at how God is at work and how he is reaching more people.



By Grace, we have an opportunity to help our families and our neighbours with grocery runs, or to check in on them, or to make plans to gather when the time comes. For some of us, it is a time to rest, to sleep, to catch up on our lives, and to accept the invitation from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to sit at his feet, and to be still; to learn from him and to be like Mary. And so we wait upon Jesus, and in the waiting, may we find him and be found faithful.

Thank you for your prayers for our precious friend and UCO long-time client who had been suffering with cancer. She peacefully went to be with the Lord in March, with her sister by her side. During her many months of trial, she was a blessing to so many people, in ways that she never knew, and she was blessed by so many, as well. It was a privilege to come alongside her, and to hold vigil by her bedside. I lost a dear friend, but am so grateful to receive a new one in her sister, whom I have come to know and love. When is it safe to do so, there will be a memorial service for her, with songs of joyful celebration for her life, and thanksgiving that she is now in Glory with Jesus. If you would like to attend, please let me know.

Thank you also, dear supporters for your continued support of our ministry work. As you may know, UCO doesn't receive any government funding, but rather we rely on the Lord to give through donors, such as yourselves. We are a small ministry, and remain homeless ourselves in order to keep our expenses as low as possible.

Your prayers and financial offerings are so appreciated, and without them, we simply could not continue to exist, and so on behalf of the Board of Directors of UCO, our volunteers and the poor and marginalized whom we are honoured to befriend, thank you so very much for your kindness and generosity.

How to Donate: I have been asked to share the ways in which one can make a donation to UCO, as the Lord leads. **Option #5 is new!**

1. **By mail**, send a cheque to:
Urban Christian Outreach (Ottawa)
P.O. Box 77033
Ottawa, ON K1S 5N2

2. **By Credit Card**: by following the links on our website at
www.uco-ottawa.ca

3. **By Credit Card** through **Canada Helps** at www.canadahelps.ca

4. By payroll deductions: through **The United Way** at
www.theunitedway.ca

5. AND A NEW WAY...effective
June 02, 2020

By **Interac Etransfer** to:
donate@urbanchristianoutreach.ca

When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them. Isaiah 41:17

Thanks be to God,
Jill

UCO's Needs:

1. Your financial offerings are much needed and appreciated, especially at this time as we feed many.
2. Tim Horton, McDonald's and grocery gift cards for distribution to the poor.
3. Your prayers