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“Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” Proverbs 23:18 NRSV

My Lost Year...My Year of Hope

2020 was supposed to be special as it was the year that I was to be celebrating my sixtieth birthday with my family and friends.

I was in Panama in January with my husband and daughter when we first heard about a new virus in China. No big deal, we thought, like SARS and Ebola that had occurred in other far away countries. It didn't seem to be a threat as we continued our carefree vacation. Little did we know that it would be our last trip for that year – I had three others booked!

By February, the virus had invaded Italy, the site of our next trip. Luckily, we were able to cancel it in time and for a full refund.

Soon, several cruise ships were refused entry to all ports at sea and many travelers were stranded abroad as the world began to close up.

A world pandemic was declared on March 11th and Canada imposed its first lockdown.

My big day was May 9th, at the height of the first lock down. The only people I could see was my husband (who I lived with) and my ninety-year-old mother (who lived alone). I did get many nice well wishes by phone, email and snail mail.

With the coming of Spring, the weather got better, and limited interactions were allowed outside only. We entertained small groups of guests outside on our deck. My third trip to London was cancelled too.

In August, we finally hosted our daughter for a short visit. Such a treat for her to escape from Toronto. Grand Bend was proving to be very popular for many!

It began to seem that I had taken so much for granted – travel, shopping, restaurants, church, theatre and every other form of social interaction!

My last trip for October was cancelled. No surprise!

For the first weekend of November, we had unusually nice weather and Jake and I risked a weekend escape to a remote location. Very lovely spot!

In December, the numbers continued to climb. The decorations still went up as we made an effort to celebrate the season. We decided to risk having our daughter and

her boyfriend here for Christmas. We had a nice but somewhat guilt-ridden visit. New Year's Eve was "celebrated" with long-time friends via ZOOM.

Yet, despite everything that the virus took away, there was still some hope for the new year. The first vaccines were being given out to health care workers and seniors. We were still enjoying walks outside when the weather permitted. Life carried on in our small town.

It is now May 2021 and I have come to realize some things over the last year:

Grand Bend is a good place to live during a Pandemic.

I don't need all those trips to be happy.

Perfect hair and makeup are not essentials.

Cooking with my husband is more fun than cooking alone.

Nature is an amazing thing to watch from my window.

I can shop from home for most of my limited requirements.

Friends and family can be easily reached out to by video chats.

Everyday heroes really do work/walk amongst us every day.

Not all news is bad as people still do amazing things for each other.

A church is not a building but the great people that you ZOOM with!

Ruth van Leeuwen

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

