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"Fare Thee Well"

*"Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body."*

Proverbs 16:24 NRSV

How things change in a year! Last August, I was enthusiastic to be starting my new position at Huron Shores as the Community Wellness Coordinator. I anticipated with excitement, all the innovative programs and creative projects that would be undertaken, the interesting new people I would meet and with whom I would work as we engaged the wider community and reached out to promote spiritual wellbeing while helping to overcome social isolation.

Things started off with a buzz – the Thanksgiving Weekend Gratitude Swarm, where we invited folks to express their gratitude in sidewalk chalk pictures and words while sporting 'Bee-gr8ful' stickers. Next, came a Pole Walking Clinic with instructors teaching a few dozen active seniors how to get the most from this simple, yet beneficial fitness activity. In November, the sanctuary was filled with crafty knitters and curious others who came to hear about the journey of 'The Knitting Pilgrim.' The New Year was greeted with Soup & Board Games, followed by weekly gatherings of the Cabin Fever Coffee Club. Documentary films screened partnered by the Alzheimer's Society and Grand Bend Health Centre.

Meanwhile, I worked behind the scenes getting to know the community and its organizations, forging connections with local groups, attending planning meetings and devising a way to develop the front yard of the church into a welcoming and accessible community space that would promote gathering, sharing and relaxing. I dreamt of how to use the newly renovated kitchen as a hub that would draw people together to learn and converse over meals. I contacted local arts organizations to figure out how to involve Huron Shores in opportunities for expressing creativity. Exciting things were in the works...

And then, with a sneeze....our world changed.

Overcoming social isolation became even more critical as we ALL self-isolated. Learning to connect online meant figuring out how to Zoom. The good old-fashioned phone call became an essential instrument of connectivity. Pandemic support information sessions sprung up along with new modes of communication like the Letters of Hope. Wellness initiatives morphed to include reaching out through making Elder's calls, writing a weekly congregational letter to connect, and gathering relevant local information to share in Shorelines. A few brave souls continued to meet for virtual coffee as together we suffered extended cabin fever from quarantining at home. Long term plans were put on indefinite hold.

Into this strange new world, alit an unexpected idea; an unanticipated opportunity; an un-turn-downable offer. 'Surprise!' teases the Spirit. And suddenly I'm packing my house to move to the West Coast to begin a new ministry at Chemainus United Church, and my time at Huron Shores has ended.

Although the year certainly did not unfold as I imagined, it has still been filled with learning, growing, reaching out and connecting. I appreciate having met the many caring, fun-loving and faithful folks who comprise the Huron Shores family. I delight in your enthusiasm and willingness to say 'yes!' to whatever comes along. Your adaptability and eagerness inspire me. Your innovative thinking and willingness to be involved astound me. You are a people overflowing with God's Spirit and blessed by God's grace!

Please accept my profound gratitude for the opportunity to have briefly served amongst you.

**Be well, stay well, and sadly, farewell.**

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*"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."*