

Your Story, Our Church!

How has Village Green blessed you during this time?

I continue each day to give God thanks and praise for many blessings. I quickly came to realize that God has been working early and all along to prepare us/me for this disruptive and painful reality and He continues working in our/my midst. Evidence of His work is unmistakable and amazing. He has been working in our lives at VG preparing our way through our physical separation and the rest of this COVID experience.

My list of blessings will no doubt miss many but I will try to capture those I noticed and am thankful for.

VG prayer team prays without ceasing.

VG pre-service prayer community transitioned seamlessly online [immediately using my new online meeting skills].

VG virtual foyer with chat forum online gathers and grew pre- and post-service. VG members lead and moderate chat discussions with thoughtful reflection on Scripture and God's goodness. Prayers, Scripture and words of greetings, fellowship, encouragement and love fill the chat forum.

Social distance does not mean distant. I met people in the online chat each week but had never greeted these people when in person sitting in the same place each week! I feel blessed to see God's people encouraging one another.

VG printed directory is getting a workout! What a blessing!

LiveStreaming Worship didn't miss a beat and worship filled my home and is now shared with my extended family. Previously, my family would not be sharing the same service – now the **life group notes** are family notes for discussion after service. Thank you for repeating the slides after the service so I make sure all the blanks are filled in! **Who knew a countdown to a service gathering could be so exciting!**

Some members of my family could not access their own church services and have become regular VG live stream service attenders and **Monday Night Bible Study** students. VG provided opportunities for worship for members of churches that lacked technology. Not all churches experienced seamless response to a new reality of physical separation.

Weekly **life group** meetings provide much needed connection; thank you leaders! The continued teaching and learning and opportunity for prayer are appreciated. Technology for virtual face-to-face meetings and phone lines to hear familiar voices are appreciated.

Our individual earthly and spiritual realities have been disrupted. Sadly, for many of us this has been a time of more than inconveniences. Crises, suffering and grief occurred and/or are ongoing. Thank you, VG, for **the early call from a church elder** to check in, pray and chat. Thank you, VG, for **the card** expressing condolences for a death of a member of my extended family.

VG communications have been helpful in leading with a culture of fostering clarity, engagement, and encouragement.

Thank you, **VG volunteers** for making much of the above possible.

VG leadership, for leading through difficult times and communicating with clarity throughout.

Matthew and worship team, for the hard work and sharing of your gifts.

VG Tech teams, for online worship, life groups, prayer team and **VG website designers and editors**

Thank you, **Pastor Jon**, for all that you have done and do in preaching, teaching, communicating and leading and all manner of pastoring.

VG members for your wonderfully timed letter, card, phone call, email and hello in the online chat.

The problem with a list is that it misses items – apologies for all items that I will recall as I ponder VG blessings. I also consider this the start of a growing list.

What has God been teaching you during this time?

Lesson 1: *A question I awoke with on “COVID Isolation Day 1” was – and I distinctly remember saying this aloud to God in a pretty perplexed attitude - “Now, what does the Great Commission look like in this mess?”*

God used the first email in my work inbox to clearly and powerfully answer my question. The Gospel and God’s people reach beyond physical separation. [Obvious answer I realize but I was quick to forget and failed to appreciate in the early mess of transitioning to online everything]

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:14-15)

I learned that feet do not have to move physically over ground.

From literally the first email on Day 1 of social distance and a new home office, God showed me how feet bring Good News despite a culture of secularism and a pandemic context. Since Day 1, I have seen God work continuously to bring the witness and hearing of the Gospel to my new online world. Obviously, God already worked in the online world, I was the one who needed to join in.

Lesson #2 – *What it means to Love Others*

For me, COVID-19 brings a whole new perspective to that part of our VG mission to “Love Others”. I see social isolation and wearing a facemask as actions and expressions of love of others. I think we respond in love by adopting measures that are designed to protect others. I think we act in unity and love of neighbour to achieve a measure of control over viral infections to protect the susceptible and the vulnerable. I think we are also called to act to assist those communities who were marginalized and suffering pre-COVID and now are experiencing new, deeper levels of suffering given the impact of this virus on healthcare as an epicentre and then with the ripple effects of policies aimed at containing the virus.

There are many more lessons but those two stand out to me
Blessed,

Kathleen Hill