



Ste-Geneviève United Church

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Advent / Christmas 2020

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to be celebrating Christmas with you for the first time this year. Settling into a new community of faith during a pandemic is certainly unusual and a little bit strange, but despite the lack of handshakes and hugs, despite the masks and social distancing, I have felt the warmth of your welcome. Having lived in the West Island for the better part of the last decade, this does not quite feel like a new call, but rather like coming home, where I belong.

Since September, I have tried to make as many phone calls as possible each week, reaching out to members of the congregation to get to know you and offer pastoral care when needed. I feel privileged to have had so many one on one conversations with many of you and I am looking forward to more of these conversations in the months to come.

Remaining connected while remaining safe is a challenge we are all facing in 2020. Ste-Genny's United Church is multiplying the means of connection in an effort to not leave anyone behind. Even before I joined you, you were rising up to the challenge with the callers' team, Ste-Genny's connect (online fellowship every Sunday) and ORA loss and living activities migrating online. Since I have joined you, we have tried worshipping in person under COVID 19 safety protocol, as well as worshipping on zoom. We have gathered online to sing, share, and eat together on the Saturday before the first Sunday of Advent.

On Christmas Eve, we are again pushing our creativity to connect as many people as possible as safely as possible. The Christmas Eve celebration will be accessible in person and online at the same time. 25 people will be allowed to gather in the sanctuary (with masks and social distancing). Voluntas has agreed to let us use their reception hall to retransmit the service via YouTube live and allow for 25 extra people to gather. Anyone who wishes to do so can also safely connect to the celebration from the comfort of their own home via zoom (by internet or by phone) Lisa Byer-DeWever will be on zoom to welcome you into this virtual space.

Advent is often described as a season of waiting in expectation. The last 8 or 9 months might have felt like a giant Advent season... Waiting in expectation for a treatment, a vaccine, a drop in the number of COVID 19 cases, anything that might help lift the sanitary measures and allow us to gather again, to

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hug again, to cry together and let our tears mingle, to laugh out loud and sing together without fear of infected droplets.

After so many months, we know that this waiting time is not passive. It is not a pause in our lives, because life definitely continues with its shares of bad news (health concerns, death of loved ones, loss of jobs and other losses) and good news (new births, new love, new jobs, new found passions).

Advent is not a passive season either. The Gospel according to Mark, quoting Isaiah and referring to John the Baptist, reminds us that waiting in anticipation also means actively preparing for the future: "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" (Mark 1:2-3) Every year, Advent is an occasion for each Christian to prepare their hearts anew for the coming of Christ, the inbreaking of God into human reality through incarnation. This year, the season might have a different flavor. Many of our Advent traditions and cultural celebrations involve gathering in ways that are not permitted this year. In some ways, Advent this year might be eerily quiet for many of us.

Perhaps a less busy Advent is an opportunity for deeper reflection on what it means to prepare our hearts to receive Christ, to make room in our lives for God to come in; an occasion to discern, out of all the business that is lost, what was important work and what was just business out of habit. What do we want to let go of for good and what do we want to treasure even more once we can have it again?

Of course, this drastic diminution of gatherings is not all positive. For many, loneliness looms in the quiet heart of winter. If you think a loved one might be lonely or if you are lonely yourself, I urge you to reach out: call a friend or a relative, participate in a Blue Christmas service or one of ORA's COVID support circles. If you need professional psychological help, call 811 (info-social) to find professional help near you.

Just like the Advent Season, the time of waiting in expectation for the day we will be able to gather in person with more than 25 people and for activities other than worship and funerals is also a time of active preparation for Ste-Genevieve United Church. It is time to imagine and prepare for what ministry will look like after the pandemic, in a renewed space, with a new minister, and in an ever-changing world. Your input is needed to create this new vision of ministry, adapted to the new realities of Ste-Genny's, and oriented towards the future, the yet unknown ways in which God is about to break into our lives.

May Christ come to meet you where you are this Christmas and sow into your heart fruitful seeds of Good News and hope.

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Dear Ste-Genny's family,

We have been through many transitions lately with the sale of the building, the change of minister and the pandemic. This time of transition is an opportunity to revisit our common vision for Ste-Genevieve United Church and its ministry.

Prior to forming a visioning team that will draft such plans for the future, the Church Council (Board) would like to get your input about what is important to you, your family and your loved ones.

Please answer the questions in the boxes below and mail back to us: return address label provided; wait for a phone call from your telephone committee member, or send your answers by email directly to joelleleduc@stegennys.org. Your answers will be noted and recorded without your name attached to them.

1) What are your fears for the future of Ste-Genevieve United Church and its community?

2) What are your hopes and dreams for the future of Ste-Genevieve United Church and its community?

3) What needs is Ste-Genevieve United church meeting for you right now?

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4) What needs were met prior to the sale of the building and the pandemic are not being met anymore?

5) What needs do you wish Ste-Genevieve United Church could meet for you, your family, or your friends?

Let us put everything on the table. Do not limit your answers to what you think is possible or not. Dare to speak up and dare to dream.

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To register for these ORA – Loss and Living Programs

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/o/ora-loss-amp-living-program-17666753622>

Website: www.oramontreal.org

Email: info@ora-mtl.org

Phone Ste Genevieve United Church: 514-626-4795



About this Event

Many grief support organizations offer 4 – 8 week programs throughout the community. However due to demand, the waiting lists are often long and lengthy. After several inquiries from widows who were finding it difficult to find support, **ORA's widows' support circle** was launched about a year ago, summer 2019.

Though we work in 4 – 8 week sessions, we are open-ended when it comes to how long you feel the need to participate. We do consider '**the first year phenomenon**' when it comes to grieving the loss of a partner. We gear our programs keeping this cycle in mind for it is important to recognize and honour the passing of those special moments, such as holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries, and other important life events that are especially difficult to honour in the first year.

We offer conversation around loss and grief, and provide direction with healthy coping skills that can help you weather the storm.

Expressing needs with compassion and empathy is especially important during bereavement.



About this Event

Compassionate Communications Workshops

Heather, a Certified Nonviolent Communication Trainer will be leading a **five-week series** educating about **effective ways** on how to use the practice and power of **empathy** as a source of caring communication.

The practice demonstrates how offering empathy can connect, communicate and help us move forward in a positive life-affirming way.

Have your needs heard with Compassionate Communication.

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About this Event

Introduction to Meditation and Writing

For the first time in generations we are grieving collectively, and at the same time bereft of so many of the rituals and social practices that have supported people in the past as they have grieved their losses.

When we ignore or repress such fundamental emotions as grief, anger, and despair, we do so at a terrible risk to our mental and physical wellbeing. This break with our daily routines also offers us an **opportunity to try something new**. Meditation and journal writing are two tried and true practices that are known to alleviate stress.

These practices can encourage and support us as we keep company with our deepest selves. The practice itself requires very little: **a pen and paper and a quiet place to sit**.

In this six-week course, Kathryn will teach the basic ten step **IRest yoga nidra protocol**, a body-centred form of meditation, as well as provide suggestions on how to initiate a journal writing practice.

Each segment will be divided equally between meditation and journaling, with intention of providing the basics for a daily practice of self-reflection and renewal.

BOOK STUDY

STARTING NOVEMBER 21, 2020

"It's Okay that You're Not OK"
By Megan Devine



ORA



About this Event

Book Study

Join **Dr. Vivianne LaRiviere** for an 8-week journey into the extraordinary chapters of this well reviewed book.

Dealing with grief through a fresh lens, author **Megan Devine** is transparent and vulnerable in her discussion, while offering up a

"new model for grief." (Title of Chapter 5).

Highlighted is the importance of being seen and acknowledged in our grieving process. Please join us. Our collective wisdom can all help us through our various journeys of grief.



About this Event

Blue Christmas - Join us in a safe, meditative space to express grief, loss and hope. Zoom Service. Go to Eventbrite to register and receive the Zoom Connect information.

December 16 2020 7:30pm – 9:00pm

A collaboration of the West Island United Churches & ORA Loss & Living Program.



About this Event

Covid Support Circle - Moving Forward with Hope These are trying times. We are experiencing loss and grief in all kinds of ways. It's taking its toll on a lot of folks – fear, anxiety, worry. It's good to name it. And to be heard. You are not alone. We create space for conversation around loss and grief, and all of the stuff that comes with that. We are

here to listen, and to offer up ways to help you cope. Drop in. Bring a cuppa. Let's be together. Let's talk. We are here to listen. We are here for you. Facilitated by Dr. Vivianne LaRiviere

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