



The Lutheran Urban Ministry  
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## April 2021 News from your Ministry Manager

**The pandemic** has impacted the lives of everyone in Manitoba and especially for those who had struggles in life before Covid-19. Now the looming worries of variants force all of us to remain vigilant in mask wearing and social distancing. The vaccine rollout is a bright spot of hope.

It's been over 12 months since the Urban was forced to pivot to new ways of reaching out to marginalized and struggling individuals and families in the West End.

Since mid-March 2020 - four times per week at the Urban - over 900 bagged lunches are distributed monthly from the side door. Meal teams make this possible by filling in so many of these weekly calendar dates and we are so grateful.

**Spiritual care** at the Urban right now is limited. However, this limitation is greater because many people who attend the Urban don't have computers or phones and access to internet to Zoom into a worship service. Also, conversation outside is time limited during bagged meal distribution because of line-ups.

**One example** is this past Wednesday mid-afternoon. The doorbell rang by a man in spiritual distress who asked to speak to a pastor because he wanted confession. Church of the Cross is presently closed and I was alone downstairs at the Urban. I put my jacket on and we talked outside for about 15 minutes. He doesn't have a phone, is homeless, and has lost his friends and his family. I did my best to listen and provide some spiritual care, counsel, reassurance and encouragement in the parking lot. The evening supper lunch bags had already arrived but in his despair he refused the offer of a supper to take with him.

Present fellowship limitations at the Urban make requests like "Rhonda, can I talk to you for a minute?" not as possible, and won't be optimum again until it is safe for our Urban community to gather downstairs once again.

### **Pandemic Notes:**

**Until Further Notice:** the Urban is continuing the suspension of all regular programming (sit-down community meals, coffee hours, sharing circles, men's group, worship services, etc.) in the lower level of Lutheran Church of the Cross, due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

*Struggling and vulnerable single people and families (in the same numbers as pre-pandemic times when we were open downstairs) are continuing to come to the Urban - but for now bagged lunches 4x/week are distributed outside (Wednesday men's lunch, Wednesday & Thursday supper times and Sunday lunch). Our meal teams are happy to help us in this way and we are so very grateful for this. Our website calendar shows available dates for meal teams. Fellowship is happening briefly in the parking lot as long as weather permits! Worship services and sharing circles will resume when the pandemic is over.*

- Mid-week and Sunday devotionals are emailed to me from Pastor Barry Bence, printed and tucked into lunch bags.
- We have changed our pre-pandemic emergency food bags to an equitable "one food item" (if enough in our pantry) per person (two items if a family) once or twice each week during the distribution of bagged lunches. Gloves, socks, seasonal jackets etc. (and bi-weekly bread/pastries) are also distributed outside.
- Masks and 2 m social distancing are mandatory on the church sidewalk and parking lot. The line sometimes overflows to the city sidewalk if necessary. The Urban provides a disposable mask if needed.

**The Lutheran Urban Ministry has so much gratitude** for our volunteers and the meal teams; for the pantry donations, for the prayers; and for all those who donate financial support toward our operating expenses.

**Our website:** [www.theurban.ca](http://www.theurban.ca). Please keep our vulnerable Lutheran Urban Ministry community in your prayers.

Please contact me: [rhonda@theurban.ca](mailto:rhonda@theurban.ca) for additional information, or to have your meal team added to the calendar.

Kind regards,

Rhonda Gorham, Ministry Manager, Lutheran Urban Ministry

We welcome all because God welcomes all, regardless of age, ability, health, ethnicity, gender identity, language, sexual orientation, life circumstances, marital status, race, or anything else which sometimes divides us. We welcome diversity and uniqueness. Our unity is in Christ, whose grace is freely given to all. All are welcome. The Lutheran Urban Ministry Corp. is a member of Reconciling Works – Lutherans for Full Participation [www.reconcilingworks.org](http://www.reconcilingworks.org)