



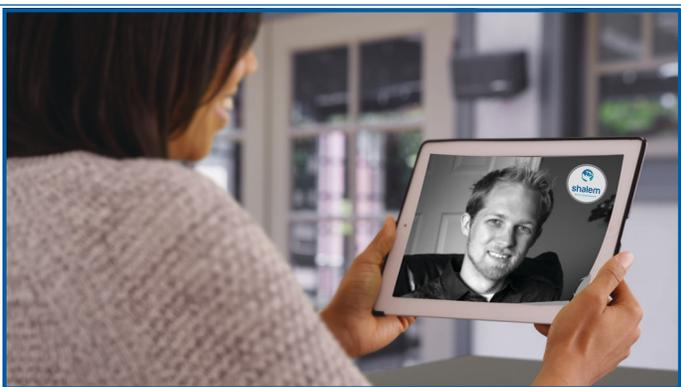
May 2020

Dear Friend of Shalem,

I have many stories and updates I want to share with you. Despite the unsettling time we find ourselves in, Shalem has much to be grateful for. Instead, **may I introduce you to a family you are connected with?** They are a family you are supporting during COVID-19.

They are the Evans family\*. Celine works in long-term care. Because of her high-risk work on the front lines of this pandemic, she is temporarily living on her own to keep her family safe. Her husband Toby is home with their 2 year-old son and 11 year-old daughter and had been laid off because of the pandemic. Toby has had long-standing issues with depression, but with counselling support from Shalem he has been making real strides. Toby has been laid off because of the pandemic and is at home with their two children. He is struggling to manage their daughter's online schooling and their son's constant high energy. Their 11 year-old has anxiety and occasionally engages in self-harm (cutting).

**The family is at the breaking point.** Celine feels caught—she feels guilty about not being there for Toby and the kids. She worries about them even as she cares for others at work. She also feels real anxiety about contracting the coronavirus.



For Toby, parenting full-time on his own is a new experience, and an even tougher adjustment because of needing to stay home and practice social distancing. He's terrified too that Celine will come down with the virus—what will happen then?

**They both describe online counselling at Shalem as a lifeline for them.** Toby is grateful that he has been able to continue with his therapist online—at a rescheduled time during his son's afternoon nap. Toby and Celine have started couple's therapy from two separate locations using Shalem's secure online video platform, and they have been encouraged at how helpful the sessions have been. And Celine has started individual therapy to help her through. She says, **"it's just so hard to have to be strong for everyone around me! And it's so helpful to come to Shalem and know that I don't have to be strong here. I can come to be supported and get the help I need."**

Toby says, "with me being laid off, our finances look impossible, even with the government help. **We would not be able to come to Shalem without them being able to lower their fees.** I'm so grateful, because without this support, I doubt very much that we would get through this. This help is such a relief."

**That's where you come in, because Toby is talking about you.** Your donations to Shalem's Counselling Assistance Fund, and your prayers, are keeping the Evans family—and many others at Shalem—together during the pandemic. **Thank you for making a positive difference in their life.**

\*names and details have been altered to protect confidentiality.

## How Are You Doing?

I expect you are being affected by the pandemic in many ways. It is affecting all of us—from social isolation to the impact on our personal finances, the major changes to our routines, and the larger unknowns about the future. This is exacerbated if you have lost loved ones during this time.

**At Shalem, we want you to know that we are praying for you. You are a valued member of our network of support.**

Did you know that early in the pandemic, Shalem was declared an “essential service”? All of our counselling work shifted online. This means that our counsellors are able to connect with anyone regardless of distance. So we want to offer this to you too: please don’t hesitate to inquire about counselling from Shalem, for support. To get started, all you need to do is call our tollfree number at 1.866.347.0041. You can find a list of our therapists at [shalemnetwork.org](http://shalemnetwork.org).

At Shalem we are grateful for our donors like you. Thanks to you, we can offer a sliding scale and turn no one away because of an inability to pay for sessions.

## Thank you for continuing to support families like the Evans.

We are deeply grateful for your continued donations, particularly during this unsettling time. Thank you for understanding that **with the impacts of COVID-19, the need for mental health support is rising exponentially**. And it will only continue to rise as healthcare and other essential workers begin to grapple with the traumas they are experiencing. We also know—because we see it at Shalem—that domestic violence is on the rise.

**Your financial support is needed now even more than ever.** If you are able, please prayerfully consider increasing your support. Your gifts and prayers honour our clients’ lives with dignity and hope. Thank you.

I wish you every good blessing from God—including health—during this COVID-19 time of challenge and trial.

Yours,



Mark Vander Vennen, MA, M.Ed., R.S.W.  
Executive Director

*P.S. I have focused only on the impact of our Counselling Centre in this note. Our other programs continue too. WrapAround Family Team meetings are happening online, helping families stay afloat. At RE-create, our drop-in art studio for marginalized youth continues on Instagram and our mentoring program has connected additional artist mentors to aspiring youth artists. Our Centre for Workplace Engagement has undertaken supportive restorative circles online. And we have been finalizing new Congregational Assistance Plan (CAP) partnerships, as churches and para-church organizations seek to support the mental health needs emerging as a result of the pandemic.*