

Dear Siblings in Christ;

We have permission from the Diocese to return to indoor worship beginning September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Note that permission is granted based on our expressed commitment to follow the safety measures and government regulations in place. The Bishops in the Province of Ontario are continuing to monitor the situation and make decisions for the safety of the communities in their care.

Given our innate care for one another and our call to love our neighbour, it is important that we show support for the most cautious among us by adhering to the practices established. Some of these practices will feel different. We may have to let go of some expectations – like our ability to sit in ‘our pew’. We will have to get used to refraining from physical displays of affection and find alternative ways to say ‘hello’ and pass the peace. Some of our familiar traditions will be put on hold for a time as we try to keep those in attendance as safe and comfortable as possible.

We ask that you be patient and understanding as we maneuver through these changes. Remember that our goal is wider than any one person attending. Now is the time to show our kindness and love for our neighbours in the pews and to understand that much is expected from our parish leaders in these challenging moments.

### ***What to expect or welcome to church, the COVID-19 edition***

- *Before you arrive:* social distancing protocols impact how many people we can have in the church at this time. To reduce the likelihood that people may be turned away, we are asking everyone to register each week to attend worship. This can be done through this link: <https://reopen.church/r/Yu7KiBqz>. We ask those who attend as couples, to indicate 1 person on the registration link and contact the office to indicate that your partner will also be attending. This is because couples are counted differently so this step will create space for more people to register online. Registration closes Friday mornings at 9am to allow Lisa to ensure we are able to accommodate those who intend to come. In the event that we are unable to accommodate someone, they will be given first opportunity to register for the following week.
- *When you arrive:* all people must wear a clean mask for the duration of the service. Cloth masks are permitted. These are easily washed after each use – something that is beneficial for the wearer and all those they encounter. Fun designs will invoke smiles from others.
- *Socially distance:* from the time you leave your car, please stay at least 6 feet (or an adult hockey stick distance) from anyone not in your household. It is fully up to you how far you want to be from anyone in your household.
- *Front door only:* everyone must enter through the front door. The door to the hall will remain locked. When you arrive the information you provided at registration will be confirmed as we must keep records of all in attendance.
- *Wash your hands:* hand sanitiser will be available as you enter. All people are asked to use this as you enter the space to help protect any surfaces you may intentionally or unintentionally touch.

- *Getting seated:* Please follow the directions of the greeters. The leaders have spent considerable time trying to determine the best way to fit as many as possible in the church while social distancing. This means that folks may need to stay to one side of the aisle when entering or exiting to allow couples to sit together. The placement of people will also reflect this intentionality. Some of you will have to sit at the front! Please be respectful of this work remembering that our goal here is to do what we can to keep people as safe as possible and allow as many as we can to attend worship.
- *Materials:* it is a good thing we are already accustomed to the projection of worship. To reduce high contact, the books will be removed from the pews. Announcements will be sent each week to those with e-mail addresses. A small number of announcement bulletins will be available for those who need an alternative.
- *Touching:* over the years it has become the practice in schools to have a no touching policy. This helps to protect other students from unwanted encounters. During this time, we will likewise have a no touching policy, for people and, as much as is safely possible, high touch areas like the ends of pews. Some high touch temptations (like coat racks) will be removed. The more we reduce contacts, the less likely we will contact germs that may be harmful.
- *Washroom:* ideally it should only be used in the direst circumstances. We trust that those who use the washroom will practice good hand hygiene. Try singing the doxology slowly or saying the Lord's Prayer as a guide for how long to scrub your hands.
- *Being patient:*
  - For now there will be no singing. Instrumental music and/or music videos will be offered as appropriate. Folks are asked to avoid the urge to sing along. This is our opportunity to simply enjoy the music.
  - The leadership has decided to take some time to get accustomed to the new practices before we return to having Communion as this adds another layer of risk. Please be understanding as we seek to ensure that we can do this safely.
  - While we gratefully receive any and all donations, we will not be passing the offering plate as this would present a high contact situation. Instead, a box will be available at the entrance of the church for those who continue to use envelopes. Thank you to those who have already switched to pre-authorized giving which allows contributions without contact.
  - Many cherish the wonder of handshakes and hugs as we pass the peace. During this time, people will be asked to stay in their pews and pass the peace through loving expressions, waves, and peace signs.
  - As much as we may enjoy good food and fellowship, these practices are put on hold for the time being. Feel free to phone one another at any time to catch up and engage with one another.
- *Be kind, be calm, be respectful, and stay safe!* If you are not feeling well or may have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19, please stay home. There is an abundance of resources available to help you worship from home. We will happily welcome you when things have improved.

While this may feel like a long boring email, trust that all of this information is provided to allow us to worship collectively once again in a way that is as safe as possible given our current context. Also trust that resources will continue to be provided for those unable to attend at this time.

May you know God's presence however you choose to worship right now.

Blessings,

Chris.