



COVID-19 WORKING GROUP MEETING

6: 30PM, 18 AUGUST 2020

VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING

God is calling us to be an evolving community of faith inspired to embrace our future as we:

- *Deepen our commitment to each other*
- *Nurture our spiritual vitality and growth*
- *Live a life of loving influence in the world.*

Chair: Kathy Shortt

Present: Joe Gaspar, Karen Schertzberg, Barb Leask Wynne, Jennifer Allan, Carolyn Machan (for Worship & Music Comm), Bert Blackburn (for Property Comm), Franceen Wagner (for Christian Education Comm) and Richard Jackson (secretary). Heather Power sends her regrets and Gregg King joined later to give us a financial update.

1. Opening Prayer was offered by Joe Gaspar followed by Check-In
2. Devotion - Kathy Shortt read an article from the NY Times on the citizen's role in the pandemic
3. Approval of Agenda
 - Motion** to approve the agenda was moved by Karen Schertzberg and seconded by Bert Blackburn. **Carried.**
4. **Approval of Minutes** of the 28 July Working Group meeting was moved by Carolyn Machan and seconded by Franceen Wagner. **Carried.**
5. Discussion of COVID-19 Protocol Plans to be recommended to Council led by Kathy Shortt
 - a. Worship Plan
 - Joe, Jennifer, Barb and I have consulted on this Worship Plan. We have tried to keep the safety of staff, volunteers, church members, and all those we serve as a top priority. Thanks to Sarah Bruce for formatting all our content.
 - We wanted to start our meeting by finalizing these plans so they can be recommended to Council for September 1. That way these plans will be in place whether we open in September or whether we reopen later. We will go



through the Worship Plan section by section so that you can comment on each section. The Worship Plan appears as Appendix 1 below.

- The INTRODUCTION on the bottom of the first page was felt to be satisfactory.
- GENERAL INFORMATION: Bert Blackburn indicated that the Sanctuary had an approximate congregation capacity of 90 but there was a feeling that the 2 m (6 ft) social distancing would really limit us to about 40 members in 26 pews.
- BEFORE ARRIVING:
 - There was agreement that registering for worship will be necessary even with only 40 members present. There was discussion about how registration would proceed and no clear conclusion was reached but it was felt that the same members should not be present each Sunday. Joe indicated that we should postpone a decision until we decide on re-opening.
 - COVID-19 symptoms we plan to print on a foam core board and have at the entrance.
 - Barb's contact info would go on the What's Up email version of the document, but the online version would not have her contact information just the office number.
- UPON ARRIVAL AND BEFORE WORSHIP
 - Jennifer Allan and Kathy Shortt have volunteered to be at an entrance table to ensure proper screening and contact tracing. If unable to attend, another member of Council or the COVID-19 WG would be asked.
- DURING WORSHIP
 - Joe indicated that we need to ensure that the ushers adhere to social distancing throughout. It was concluded that there



was no need to remove the pew cushions because of the low risk of them being contaminated. Joe further noted that, because standing up to sing entails closing the separation distance, it will be advisable to remain seated during the service. This in turn will mean keeping to a relatively short 45-minute service. Kathy concluded that we will have to defer decisions until we have decided on the path forward for re-opening.

- AFTER WORSHIP

- No comment on the Worship Plan was offered.

- **Motion: The COVID-19 Working Group recommends that the Return to In-Person Worship Plan be submitted to Council.** Moved by Carolyn Machan and seconded by Karen Schertzberg. **Carried.**

b. Offering Counter Plan

- Thanks to Jack Reynolds and all the counters and Finance members who contributed to this plan. The Plan appears as Appendix 2 below.
- **Motion: The COVID-19 Working Group recommends the following Counter Plan to Council.** Moved by Barb Leask Wynne and seconded by Franceen Wagner. **Carried.**

c. Usher Plan

- Thanks to Mary Reynolds and Joe Gaspar who worked with me on this plan, which appears as Appendix 3 below.
- **Motion: The COVID-19 Working Group recommends the following Usher Plan to Council.** Moved by Barb Leask Wynne and seconded by Karen Schertzberg. **Carried.**

6. Discussion on Re-opening for In-Person Worship Services led by Kathy Shortt

- COVID-19 is not over. While our physical distancing and wearing of masks has flattened the curve, there are still infections and deaths. We are seeing indications of second waves in other countries and with a return to school in



September, there is a big unknown of what will happen here in Ontario with regard to a second wave. The majority of our congregation is among the most vulnerable and because of that we need to approach our decisions around a return to in-service worship with care and caution. As leaders of this faith community we have to take seriously our responsibility to prevent the risk of infection for our community.

- On the positive side, the community spread in Waterloo Region right now is low.
- Since the beginning of COVID, we have learned a lot about what it means to be church during a pandemic. Through our Zoom services we have learned that we can be church and nurture community without meeting in person. But even with these successes many long to be back in community with each other.
- In the What's Up Announcement I invited people to send me their thoughts on re-opening. I received a few comments, three of which are reproduced below. One was asking us not to stop the online services even if we decided to return to in-person worship services. Another was asking us to please keep the Zoom format with the chat feature and slides if we decide to go back to in-person worship. I am going to read a portion of another email I received:
 - *"The online services have been relatively good at maintaining the sense of community, which is so important to almost all of us in the congregation. (I say "relatively" because I don't think there is any way that Zoom interaction can fulfil all the functions of face-to-face interaction."*
 - *On the less positive side: "I do not feel that the online services -- in spite of our leaders' best intentions and techniques -- provide the sense of the sacred which is, after all, the reason why we belong to Parkminster and the United Church of Canada. I know of other*



churches who have been mounting "empty-church" services, and I think that if we cannot open the church to worshippers in September, we should open it to our clergy, to Neil and others in the music program, to the lay persons participating in that service. There is strong spiritual significance in the communion table, in the clerical robes worn by Joe and Heather, in the stirring and uplifting sounds of the organ. "

- *"The bonds of a church community are important, but if that community is to represent more than good fellowship and social justice concerns, we have to reach beyond them to at least strive for the spiritual."*
- Some of us have also reached out to other churches in the area and have learned that:
 - Trinity in Kitchener is recommending to the board on behalf of their leadership team that they continue with online worship services at least for early fall or for September-December.
 - Emmanuel's Chair says they are tentatively looking at opening for in-person services on September 13. They will be live streaming from the Sanctuary the week before as a practice run.
 - Forest Hill is not in a rush to get back into the sanctuary for worship except perhaps for a gathering of folks who don't have computers to connect online. They are looking at next steps to start renters using the facilities with protocols in place.
 - St. James Rosemount says as long as COVID numbers are low they will continue to record from the sanctuary and invite those who cannot access services to join them. They envision January 2021 as a full return. At Parkminster we have less than 10 households that cannot access our Zoom services.



- So as I turn this discussion over to you, we need to consider firstly what we will gain by re-opening for in-person worship services, secondly what are the risks of re-opening to in-person worship services given the safety protocols we have put in place and finally do the gains outweigh the risks and the efforts involved implementing our safety protocols to ensure reduced risk. Here are our options for reopening:
 - **Option A:** Do not re-open for in-person worship services, continue with online Zoom services and set a closed-until date
 - **Option B:** Do not re-open for in-person worship services, continue with online Zoom services but streamed from the Sanctuary, and set a closed-until date
 - **Option C:** Do not re-open for in-person worship services, continue with online Zoom services streamed from the Sanctuary with a small number of people attending (those who are not able to access the Zoom technology) and set a closed-until date
 - **Option D:** Re-open for in-person worship services adhering to all Public Health Guidelines as well as Parkminster COVID-19 Protocol Plans and continue with Zoom services but live streamed from the Sanctuary
- The Working Group members were consulted for their views with the discussion revolving principally around Options A and B. A complicating factor is the limitation posed by the present audio/visual equipment that will be rectified if and when we receive funding to instal the A/V equipment it will not likely occur before October and perhaps later towards Advent. There was a consensus regarding a staged return to the Church via Option A. Joe recommended that we should aim for a reopening in time for Advent, which is November 29. Because Council meets on November 17, it was therefore agreed that the Working Group would meet again in early



November with the Church's new 'closed-until after' date now revised from September 6 until November 22.

- **Motion:** The COVID-19 Working Group recommends the Church remain closed until after November 22. We will continue with online Zoom services and incorporate elements of the Sanctuary into the service. Moved by Carolyn Machan and seconded by Franceen Wagner. Carried.

7. Finance Update:

- a. Gregg King reported that we are close to our budget as of July 31 with a deficit of \$28,000 versus a budget deficit of \$33,000, however Government payments of \$41,500 that cover 75% of our salary expenses (80% of total Church expenses) have created a surplus of approximately \$13,000. This Government payment scheme is to end at the end of December and it is not clear what will replace it however we understand that the qualifications will change.

8. Discussion on Renters

- a. Bert Blackburn led the discussion concerning reopening to the renters, which include
 - The Sustainable Market: it was decided that they could enter the building and log in when necessary. Their work is based in the Parking Lot of the Church. They wish to continue with their rental and are supplying an important need during the pandemic.
 - KW Karate: we decided that they can begin to re-use the building in September when it must return indoors
 - The Downs Syndrome Cooking Class: this group wishes to return in the Fall
 - The Boy Scouts and Girl Guides: both groups will remain outside for the foreseeable future
 - The Gay Men's Social Group would like to return only when Church reopens
 - The Cooking Circle does not appear to be interested in returning at the moment



- Stagecoach: an after-school group that meets on Saturdays for several hours and thus needs access to the toilets. It was decided that they would not return until October
- All parents waiting to pick up their children must remain outside the Church
- **Motion: The Covid 19 Working Group recommends to Council the following restrictions on the use of the Church by our renters:**
 - The Sustainable Market may enter the building and continue with their rental
 - KW Karate may return in September
 - The Scouts and Guides will stay outside for the foreseeable future
 - All parents waiting to pick up their children must remain outside the Church
 - Council must approve the protocols developed by each of these groups that they submit (to the Property Committee)
- Moved by Carolyn Machan and seconded by Karen Scherzberg. **Carried.**

9. Discussion on Re-opening of Church Office:

- a. Karen Schertzberg has spoken with Melanie Chisholm concerning the reopening of the Church office. Melanie is content working from home and wishes to wait to return to her office until the alterations have been completed.
- b. The Working Group decided that the office would not reopen before November 22
- c. Melanie is concerned about people entering her office and wishes to know who has entered it (Bud and Marilyn have a list of those with keys).
- d. The use of the Zehrs grocery cards was raised and Karen will enquire
 - **Motion: The Covid 19 Working Group recommends that the Church Office shall remain closed until at least November 22.** Moved by Karen Scherzberg and seconded by Carolyn Machan. **Carried.**
 - **Action: Karen Scherzberg is to enquire into the use of the Zehr's card and the protocol for its use.**



10. Discussion on Re-opening of Church Building for Church Groups and Activities: committees, walking group, prayer shawl knitting group, games group etc.

a. Kathy received an email from Bob Hudgins and Virginia McQuay:

- *"We write as two of the long-term members of Parkminster's "Cast in Bronze" handbell choir that began in 2000. We are still enthusiastic to continue the practice, provided that it can be modified to suit the constraints imposed by the current Covid-19 pandemic. As our conductor Neil Murray has pointed out, our own particular enthusiasm is not unique. Almost every regular member of the handbell choir (at least 11 out of 12 heard from to date) seems keen to resume practices at Parkminster under such constraints. We will leave the details of how and where practices can begin to Neil and Joe Sheldon who have put forward a tentative design for this activity. The purpose of this letter is to reassure you that the handbell group would be pleased to offer its musical support to services through pre-recorded videos in the certain absence of voice choirs until the contagion from the pandemic virus is under control. Such videos could be used either for Zoom format or for live worship."*

b. Discussion of this message indicated that the bell choir may return to the Church to practice (the double classroom) but would abide by the Church's protocol. The bell choir will need to submit a protocol plan to Council.

c. The other groups mentioned would be expected to provide their own masks and use the sanitizing liquids etc supplied by the Church

d. Council will have to approve any group using the Church's facilities

- **Motion: The Covid 19 Working Group recommends to Council that the Bell Choir return to practice using the double classroom pending their approval by Council.** Moved by Barb Leask Wynne and seconded by Franceen Wagner. **Carried.**

e. Regarding the other Committees and groups it was decided that some could meet at various homes, e.g., prayer shawl, while others would need an approved protocol to



permit their return to Church facilities. Joe noted that the Church Zoom account is available for use by these committees.

- **Motion:** The Covid 19 Working Group recommends to Council that no social groups meet at the Church's facilities until after November 22 and that the Working Group will develop a committee protocol for approval by Council at its September 1 meeting and that committees will be allowed to meet in Church as stipulated by the protocol otherwise they will use the Zoom account. Moved by Bert Blackburn and seconded by Barb Leask Wynn.
Carried.

11. A closing prayer was offered by Joe

NEXT MEETING: November 10, 2020

KATHY SHORTT (CHAIR)

RICHARD JACKSON (SECRETARY)

APPENDICES:

1. Parkminster's In-Person Worship Plan
2. Offering Counter Plan
3. Usher Plan



APPENDIX 1

Parkminster's In-Person Worship Plan

Your Parkminster Faith Community Leaders have created a return to in-person worship plan that takes seriously our responsibility for preventing the risk of infection as we look forward to being in community together and returning to in-person worship on Sunday mornings.

As we look forward to this return with excitement it's important to understand that the experience of Sunday morning worship will be quite different from what we've previously known. It's important that we let go of any expectation that we'll be going back to the way things were pre-COVID. This will help us appreciate the new experience of Sunday morning for what it is and also keep us from slipping into routine church behaviours that could put you or someone else at risk. With that said, we look forward to being in community together.

General Information

All rooms will be limited to 30% capacity and these numbers will be posted outside the rooms.

Please cough or sneeze into your elbow when necessary to limit possible contamination of surfaces.

Some areas of the church will be out of bounds. These areas will be clearly marked.

Please use the designated washrooms and sanitize your hands before entering and upon exiting the washroom.

Parkminster has a cleaning plan in place for reducing contamination of the building and after each use, high-touch surfaces will be cleaned with a disinfectant.

Please bow or nod instead of using the traditional hand shake or hugs.

Worship services will continue to be offered over the internet via ZOOM and Facebook.

Before Arriving

Register for worship. To ensure we're able to honour public health guidelines in regards to keeping attendance to 30% capacity we're asking people to register for worship. This will prevent us from having to turn people away at the door.



If you have any of these symptoms, please get tested for COVID-19, self-isolate and stay at home (fever above 38°C, a new cough or worsening cough, headache, sore throat, runny nose, fatigue, muscle pain, diarrhea, loss of sense of taste, loss of smell, and purple markings on the fingers and toes).

Upon Arrival and Before Worship

Please use the designated entrance doors. The doors will be propped open to reduce contact.

Hand Sanitizer and masks (if you've forgotten) will be available at the entrance. Please sanitize as you enter the building.

When entering the church, there will be a system in place for contact tracing. Public Health requires the name, phone number and email of people who were in the building. This information will be kept for 30 days and if not needed, it will be shredded.

Be aware of physically distancing from people outside your social circle. Two meters is the required space between individuals. This social distancing space must be adhered to in the parking lot and in all areas of the building.

Please bow or nod instead of using the traditional hand shake or hugs.

Take all coats etc. with you to the Sanctuary as the coat racks will be out of bounds.

Only one family group at a time in the elevator.

Ushers will direct people to their seats. People will be seated from the front to the back to reduce walking past other people. It is likely you will be seated somewhere other than your regular spot (if you have one).

Children will sit with their family social circle. There will be no in-person Christian Education at this time. The family worship space will be closed.

Wear a mask. Masks are mandatory as per the Region of Waterloo Public Health bylaw. If you think or have been told that you are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons please contact Barb Leask Wynne.

Arrive early enough to allow yourself to go through a couple of procedures as you enter the building.

During Worship



There will be no communion, congregational singing, group responses, passing of the peace, collection plate or microphone at this time as they are high-risk activities.

All items will be removed from the pews (hymn books, pew bibles etc.) as these items are difficult to disinfect.

There will be no bulletins or handouts to distribute.

The sharing of joys and concerns in the sanctuary will be transmitted to the Ministers electronically or collected before the service by a designated person who will then share this information during the service.

There will be no candlelighter and lay reader contributions will be pretaped.

Musical solos may be offered with appropriate precautions and distancing but no choral pieces will be performed at this time.

Only the Ministers will be on the chancel using their headset microphones. The exception to this might be a soloist who will have an exclusive microphone. In this case the ministers would step down from the chancel.

Each minister will have their own place from which to speak set six feet apart.

An offering plate will be placed at the back of the sanctuary.

After Worship

Ushers will direct the exit protocol starting from the back in order to ensure social distancing.

Only one family group will be allowed at a time in the elevator.

You are asked to exit the building after the service concludes. Our Ministers will not be shaking hands. Neither will there be a coffee hour. These are both high risk activities.

Please use the designated exit doors. The doors will be propped open to reduce contact.



APPENDIX 2

Offering Counter Plan

1. Counters take the offering to the Family Room (or to the Chapel if the Family Room isn't available). Almost all of our counters work with a family member, so distancing is not an issue. For those who are not, the Family Room provides sufficient space to do the distance necessary.
2. The counters will manually record offerings using the revised count sheet for recording the offering amounts. A supply of the forms, bags used for deposits, and hand sanitizer will be left in the Family Room.
3. The count sheet, envelopes and money are placed in the deposit bag and placed in the safe in the office. Jack Reynolds or Bud Adams will be available each Sunday to open the office door for the counters to do that.
4. Counters don't need to stamp the back of the cheques or complete the credit union deposit form as was done in the past.
5. Jack will pick up the bag from the safe at mid-week, stamp the cheques, complete the deposit slip and take it to the credit union, and deliver the envelopes to Barb Leask Wynne.
6. Using the information on the envelopes, Barb does the input into Quickbooks. When not available, Jack Reynolds will do that.
7. Gregg King reconciles the bank account monthly, which ensures that our records tally with bank records.



APPENDIX 3

Usher Plan

1. Ushers will be required to wear masks as per the Waterloo Regional Public Health bylaw.
2. Signs will be placed at the elevator indicating that only one family group at a time is allowed in the elevator. Hand sanitizer will be placed outside the elevator doors.
3. Please bow or nod instead of using the traditional hand shake.
4. There will be no bulletins or handouts to distribute.
5. The ushers will maintain a distance of two meters when directing people to their seats. Floor stickers will be in place to assist with proper social distancing.
6. Seating in the sanctuary will be designated with two meters separating each group of people who are in the same bubble. Some pews will be blocked off to allow for social distancing.
7. People will be seated from the front to the back to reduce walking past other people and people will likely be seated somewhere other than their regular spot (If they have one).
8. Children will sit with their family social circle. There will be no in-person Christian Education at this time. The family worship space will be closed.
9. There will be no communion.
10. There will be no passing of the collection plate. The collection plate will be placed at the back of the sanctuary. The offering will remain at the back of the sanctuary for the blessing to reduce touching of the collection plates before they go to the counters.
11. Ushers will direct the exit protocol starting from the back in order to ensure social distancing.