



Parish Update #23 – Re-Opening Plans (September)

September 10, 2021

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

It has been a long 18 months since the pandemic began in March of 2020. We have been under various kinds of limitations and restrictions ever since. It has been a challenge for our parish life. Now things are about to change and we're cautiously optimistic! However the pandemic is not over and a 4th wave in Nova Scotia is still possible as other parts of our world know. So, it's with joy and hope and a bit of trepidation that we move forward now.

The following plan is for the time being, until we see what happens in the early fall in terms of numbers; both case wise for the province and attendance wise for the parish. This **Sunday, Sept 12** will be the last Sunday for required registration to attend church. As of **Sunday, Sept. 19**, we will be open for anyone to attend without registration. We will continue to hold one service on a Sunday at 10:00 a.m. for the time being. Due to the demographics of our congregation and the age and ventilation capacity of our church building, I am strongly recommending that we continue to wear masks for the time being in order to protect each other. We will return to the practise of coming to the altar to receive our communion but will continue to receive the host only.

With this return to open attendance, we will discontinue the recorded zoom worship produced from our homes which regularly aired by 8:00 a.m. each Sunday morning. We will however, continue to record the 10:00 a.m. worship and post it to our parish web-site and to YouTube by mid-afternoon each Sunday for those who cannot be at the morning worship and those who have been following us from further away. We will continue to try to improve the video and sound quality of that recording so that it can become a permanent web presence for the parish.

As most of you will know, the province is planning to implement a **required proof of vaccination** document on Oct. 4 which will need to be shown to enter any non-essential event or facility in the province. It is not clear yet whether this will include places of worship but I believe that it will, as we were placed in the category of non-essential services for both lock-downs. I remind you of this now as our Parish Council will need to make a decision about this at its Sept. 21 meeting. I will update you further about this and other reopening issues after that meeting.

In other news:

Meditation and Lectionary Lunch are planning to resume! The meditation group will meet at the parking lot in Victoria Park on Friday, Sept 17 at 11:00 (weather permitting) for a walking meditation to begin our fall season. On Friday, Sept. 24, both groups will convene at the hall. Meditation will meet in the back choir room at 11:00 and Lectionary will meet in the parlour at noon. For the time being, in these smaller spaces, we encourage you to wear a mask. Welcome back! New attendees are always welcome.

Gala Dinner: The Gala Dinner and Service (slated for Oct. 17) has been cancelled with regret due to the ongoing uncertainty of gathering in large numbers and the short amount of lead time between the re-opening and the scheduled event. As a result, there will be morning worship in the parish on that day rather than the afternoon and evening event. I'm happy to say that our new Diocesan Bishop the Right Rev. Sandra Fyfe will still be with us that morning. So, even though it will not be like the planned celebration of our 200th anniversary or of the end of Covid-19, it will be a time of welcoming Bishop Sandra and of giving thanks for the gifts received from God throughout our parish's life.

Our **Pastoral Ministry Committee** has reconvened and is hard at working revamping our outreach into the community. One thing they want you to know is that they are planning full participation in the Christmas Index program again this year. A list of needed foods and other items for our 30 sponsored families is being prepared and will be available to you soon. As it was last year, donated items will be received in the Link area every Tuesday afternoon beginning on Oct. 12. Items can also be brought to church and deposited in the red grocery cart which you will begin to see around that time. In connection with Christmas Index, the committee is also requesting donations of large totes or storage boxes for the safe storage of food in the church basement. If you have any that you no longer require, we'd be happy to take them off your hands!

I need to share with you the fact that our **parish offerings** have tapered off significantly in 2021. The Finance Committee has learned that we are now approximately \$7000 behind on the budget for the year to date. Fortunately, we have also incurred less expense for salaries due to the receipt of outstanding Federal government CEWS benefits owing to us from 2020. This has helped to balance out our deficit somewhat. But I alert you to this reality as it could be a troubling trend going forward. I realize that church has probably not been 'top of mind' amongst all of the other concerns of this last year and a half. Not being able to gather freely has greatly reduced the immediacy of our community of faith for many of us. I want you all to know that this is understood and that we all feel it to some degree. I believe we are about to enter a rebuilding phase in our life together – not just in terms of our finances but with our ministries, our volunteer pool, our staffing and in every other way. And so many questions

remain: How important is our faith family to our lives? What will be our relationship to it going forward? And how will each of us be part of the rebuilding – perhaps of not exactly what we had before but of something else that God is leading us toward? Each one of us has some thinking and praying to do.

I hold you all and our life together in my prayers during this time. And I hold on to the promise from the letter to the Hebrews: *“Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.”*

Hebrews 13:8

Peace,

Rev. Lori