

Dear friends in Christ Jesus, the Living Lord

Many of our members are aware that the Alberta government has made rapid, even unexpected changes to the relaunch of business and activity in the province. Whereas just last week, we were told that we should expect a strict limit on worship activities for the next 6 months, things have already changed.

We know that there are many people anxious to return to normal. We also know that there are many anxious about the consequences of this. We have been looking at how we, as a congregation, can best respond to the changing situation.

As we shared in the bulletin on Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, there are plans in place. We write to you to help clarify and outline once again the plans that we have for our relaunch of in-house worship. We know that this is a rather lengthy letter, but we want to be as clear and open as we can be.

Even as you look at the steps below, please–please–remember that there are many things that must be included in our ‘new normal’, even as a church community. We continue to work according to the guidelines provided by the government. We also seek to be caring for both the body and the soul of you, the dear people loved by God (and by us!).

***Stage 1:***

- We will offer in-person worship at **6:30 pm on Wednesday evenings, beginning June 17<sup>th</sup>**. We will continue to live stream these services as well.
- We will limit this service to a total of 50 people. Those desiring to attend must register with one of the pastors by phone or e-mail by Tuesday noon for the Wednesday evening service. The protocols for this and for all our services will be listed below.
- The guidelines from Alberta discourage singing at this time, and while we will still seek to have music, we won’t have congregational singing. We do know this will make our worship very different, but the important thing is the Word of God. Being able to gather to hear, mark, learn and take to heart that Word together with our brothers and sisters in Christ is our highest priority.

The live-streamed Sunday service at 10:15 am would continue as it is at this time. This will be offered only in the live-stream format.

***Stage 2:***

- **Beginning July 5<sup>th</sup>, we will offer in person worship on Sundays, beginning at 9:00 am.** As above, this service will be limited to 50 people. You must register with one of the pastors by Thursday noon for the Sunday service.
- Again, the live-streamed Sunday service at 10:15 am would continue as it is at this time. This will be offered only in the live-stream format, with no in person worshippers.

***Stage 3:***

- **We will expand our Sunday worship to 2 services beginning Sunday, August 9<sup>th</sup>**, with one service at 9:00 am and the other at 10:30 am. Please note that time change! This is to give us ample time for the sanitizing and preparation of a new group of congregants at the second service. The services will, at this time, be limited to 50 people, with the same rules for registration listed

- above.
- The 10:30 service will continue to be live streamed at this time.

#### ***Stage 4: - time to be determined***

As health rules change and our comfort and experience enables us to adapt to change, we will increase the numbers of worshippers in attendance at one time.

#### ***Holy Communion in our worship***

The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be part of our worship, according to our traditional schedule. We will offer Sunday Communion on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays of a month, and on the alternate Wednesdays. This portion of the service will not be live streamed, and will follow specific distancing and sanitary protocols.

Those who desire the Sacrament, and who are not able or comfortable with gathering in worship will be able to schedule communion with the pastors on a private basis.

#### ***SPECIFIC PROTOCOLS AND CAUTIONS:***

We all understand things are not going to be the way they were in the past. We are all adapting to new ways of interacting with one another. Social or physical distancing is becoming habit. Washing hands is more of a routine than ever before. We look for sanitizer when we go into buildings.

Things are going to be different in the church, too. We may not agree with all the rules, but we do want to show that we are responsible as good citizens and that we care about everyone's well-being.

There will be an ongoing educational process in all of this, but here are those protocols that will show change in the church:

#### **1. Registering for worship.**

Please remember that we need you to register by Tuesday noon for Wednesday evening service and by Thursday noon for Sunday morning services. The limit will be 50 people / service. Those who cannot be accommodated one week will be given top priority for the following week.

Before registering, we encourage you to review the Alberta Health Self-Assessment Tool. If you experience any of the symptoms mentioned in the tool, please remain home until you are symptom free. Although it is not mandatory, those who are 65 years of age or older, or who have health situations that make them susceptible to COVID 19 may wish to continue to access our online worship.

#### **2. Changes at the Church**

There are many legislated requirements that we are to follow. While they do create change, we see the opportunities to be together in the name of the Lord as our highest priority.

- We will be observing the physical distancing requirements outlined by Alberta Health Services, and will allow 2-family cohorts (a cohort consists of households that have contact with one

another regularly outside of worship, such as grandparents, parents and children). If this is your situation, please tell us who you will be sitting with when you contact us to register. We will *assign* seating, which means you may not be sitting in your preferred pew! There will be a marked distance on pews to separate cohorts or individual worshippers. Every second pew will be blocked off. Seating will be in the centre and on the pulpit side.

- Entry into the building will be through the upper main doors only. You will enter through the doors on the right. There will be an attendance and health check table between double doors and a hand sanitizing station table leading into sanctuary. Members will take their jackets/coats in with them.
- Ushers will lead worshippers to their assigned seats, by household or cohort.
- Hymnals, Bibles and communion cards have been removed from pews according to current guidelines. You may bring your own hymnal, or if you need one, please ask and we will provide one that you can take home with you and bring for worship during this time period. As books are hard to sanitize, they should not be left here nor shared among members.
- After service, worshippers will be ushered out again by household or cohort, beginning with the back left (facing forward). The offering plate will be on a table at the exit. You will follow a path that will lead you past the mailboxes, so that members can check mailboxes on their way out.
- Exit from the building will also be through the upper main doors only—the doors to your right as you exit, which will be propped open as weather permits.
- Please park in the upper parking lot. Staff parking will be open to our members, and the staff will park elsewhere.
- We ask that you always observe and maintain physical distancing of 2 meters, both inside and outside the building.
- All volunteers will wear masks. Masks are encouraged for everyone, especially if you are sitting near a senior or vulnerable person.
- Children must be with parents at all times.
- The nursery is open only for use of the washroom. If parents need to leave the sanctuary to settle a child, please use the narthex and rejoin the service as soon as you are able.

### **3. Changes in our socializing**

We are a communion of saints, which makes so much of this difficult. God calls us to be together. We desire to be together. Yet, at present we do ask the following:

- Please, no visiting in the building. You are welcome to visit outside, maintaining a 2-meter distance between cohorts.
- We do ask that you not go into the other areas of the building. The downstairs is off-limits at this time.
- We will not have food / coffee / social times organized with our worship.
- Certain habits, such as sharing the peace or greeting each other with a hug are suspended at this time.

We realize that this is a great deal of change. Yet we want to be together. We are confident that other, more positive changes, will be revealed in the near future. We appreciate your patience, your understanding and your prayers as we work to find ways of being the family we are through faith in Christ, gathering to praise Him who is our life and our salvation.