

Message from your Session

And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met. They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God.

Acts 2:44-47a *The Message*

...so that each person's need was met...

Greetings!

It's hard to believe that it is already August! Perhaps you, like me, are finding it difficult to mark (and celebrate) the season of summer without the usual cues. For me, summer is that quiet, lazy, restful period between the end of school in June, and the frantic back to school activity in September. But this year, school ended in March, the quiet, lazy, and restful period has been filled with questions and uncertainties, and now the summer is halfway over and it doesn't quite feel as though it has started! And already there are plans afoot for how life will look come the return to school in less than a month!

With the return to school (one of our cues for the return to 'normal life'), many of us are wondering what normal will look like with respect to the kinds of activities that usually shape our lives: regular working hours, time on weekends spent with grandchildren, weekly Sunday worship at church, gatherings of interest groups such as book clubs and crafting groups, and involvement in community organizations. And all of this with new protocols in place to ensure our communities successfully manage the very real health risks with which we are currently faced.

Where does this leave us as a worshipping community at St. Paul's? Recently, I have been reviewing the protocols set out for us by the Health Unit, as well as the guidelines

given to us by the Presbyterian Church in Canada. In the document issued to Sessions about re-opening church buildings, we are encouraged with the words of Acts 2:43-47. This passage reminds us of how the early church looked after one another in all things, ensuring that all had what they needed. In terms of congregational life, it has sometimes been difficult to know how to look after one another in light of the physical distancing restrictions that are in place. We haven't celebrated Communion together worshipped together, prayed together, celebrated together for five months. Even so, the congregation of St. Paul's has continued to look after one another – praying for one another, ensuring that people have groceries and are able to get to appointments when necessary, checking in with one another as a simple reminder that we are still a part of the body of Christ. As we move toward re-opening the church, just as all of you have been diligent in looking after one another, the Session is committed to ensuring that we continue to look after one another, protecting each other during this health crisis, managing the risks with knowledge and intention, and striving to create a situation where people will be able to return to worship as they are comfortable.

Regardless of whether we are together in body or in spirit, we are *together* in Christ!

Together with you in His Spirit, Rev. Benson

Session Update

The Session has continued to meet throughout the church shut-down period, sometimes by telephone, and several times via video conferencing. At our last meeting (July 24th), we discussed beginning the process of thinking through what our re-opening the church might look like. There are several resources we are consulting including documents issued by the Grey Bruce Health Unit, the Province of Ontario, and the Presbyterian Church in Canada. We will also be consulting with other churches to learn from each other how to phase in our re-opening with success.

It is the Session's responsibility to take all necessary steps to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 while still attending to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the congregation. This is something we want to do well!

At the moment, we have decided to aim for a **re-opening date of Sunday October 11th, Thanksgiving Sunday**. However, please remember that all of our plans are subject to change depending on how the COVID-19 virus circulates in different ways at different times. In order to re-open the church, there are a number of protocols we must consider and put into place. The Session is working hard to put together a detailed phased plan to ensure that not only do we meet provincial guidelines, but that we create an environment where people feel free to participate only to the extent of their own comfort.

Below you will see a general outline of what each phase of our reopening might consist of. Remember, this is a working plan and things may (are likely to) change!

Call for Elders

The office of ruling elder is an essential one for the work of the congregation. The Session, comprised of ruling elders, is responsible for all of the decisions that are made with respect to the life of the church. They govern the times and places of our worship and are also responsible for overseeing the work of all other committees, including the Board of Managers, Christian Education, and pastoral care. Two of our current elders will complete their active term this year. In order to ensure that the Session continues to represent the congregation well, and to offer spiritual and practical leadership to its members, we will be seeking new Session members in the Fall. More information will be forthcoming. In the meantime, please prayerfully consider whether this is an area you feel called to offer your gifts. For more information on the office of ruling elder, check out this link: <https://presbyterian.ca/elders/>



Returning to Worship at St. Paul's

Phase 1 Reopening: Return to Worship

During this phase, we will invite people back into the building as they are comfortable, and under strict physical distancing and sanitizing protocols. Some of the features of this phase will include (but aren't limited to):

- The wearing of masks when physical distancing cannot be guaranteed
- Controlled entry and exit
- Hand Sanitization upon entry and exit
- The elimination of communally touched items (bulletins, hymn books, bibles)
- Signage and markers to ensure physical distancing for seating and moving throughout the building. Some areas of the building will be closed
- Minimal lingering after the service (people are asked to leave in an orderly manner directly after the service).
- There will be no choir or congregational singing
- Children must remain with their household (no Sunday School)
- A shortened service will include bible reading, sermon and prayers, and the possibility of some instrumental music.

- We will not be serving Communion
- Increased cleaning of high touch surfaces
- The initiation of an enhanced cleaning regimen for used areas of the building.
- The removal of various items throughout the building to limit touching and to make cleaning more effective (pamphlets, books, etc.)

Subsequent phases will allow for greater movement throughout the building, the possibility of re-opening up Sunday School, the possibility of serving Communion in a highly modified manner. However, the timing of subsequent phases is highly dependent on a multitude of factors.

A detailed Re-Opening of Church plan will be made available to the congregation as soon as possible.

The Session is committed to doing this properly, attending as best we can to the unique needs of the congregation. If you have questions or concerns, please get in touch with a session member!



Board of Managers

The Board of Managers continues their hard work to ensure that the property of St. Paul's is well looked after and in good repair. If you have driven by the church, you will have noticed that the outside property and gardens are looking wonderful.

As you know, this time of quarantine has created a number of financial burdens for individuals, families, and many charitable organizations, including churches. We know that people are feeling financially vulnerable and many are experiencing the hardship of financial insecurity. If you are in need, please get in touch with an elder or Rev. Dana. If you are able, please consider how you might relieve some of the financial burden your neighbours might be facing.

The Board continues to ensure the financial responsibilities of the church are met, despite the challenge of not having weekly offerings to count on. If you are not yet on PAR, please consider signing up. The pre-authorized remittance method of making your offering is of significant benefit to the church at this time, as it ensures that there is a regular income to count on. Let us continue to look after one another and our church!

Our profound thanks to the Board of Managers for their hard work and commitment to St. Paul's!

Some Links to Check Out:

Central Grey Bruce Presbyterian Cooperative - Weekly worship services on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeQhwhT3qD1QsBKF1iLGrnw>

Presbyterian Church in Canada – a number of online worship services:

<https://presbyterian.ca/online-worship/>

Don't forget to check out St. Paul's blog:

<http://blog.stpaulswiarton.ca/ourchurch/>

If you have found another resource that has been helpful for you, please feel free to share it on the blog. Get in touch with Linda Lamont for more details.

Get in touch:

Interim Moderator: Dana Benson
226-974-1574 / dana@hollowhills.net

Elders:

Joanne Thompson: 534-0961 / bjthompson@hotmail.ca
Trevor Hathaway: 534-0422 / trevorathome@sympatico.ca
Fred Clarkson: 534-1528
Wray Lamont: 534-4565 / wraylamont47@gmail.com

Secretary, Board of Managers: Betty Munro
371-1635 / ladyslipper@gbtel.ca

Treasurer: Linda Lamont: 534-4565 / lamfor491@gmail.com

Stay tuned for more updates in due time. Until then, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always.

The Session of St. Paul's, and Rev. Dana