

Dear members and friends of St. Andrew's United Church,

The Board met by Zoom on Tuesday, 19 May 2020, and one of the agenda items was to talk about re-opening the church and hosting worship services in our sanctuary again.

By now I imagine you've heard or read that provided it can be done safely and in compliance with other directives, Dr. Henry has opened the doors to places of worship opening their doors. Dr. Henry and Premier Horgan have also said that BC is in (or is about to be in) the second phase of the Provincial Restart Plan.

That's partly what put the subject on the Board's May meeting agenda.

What informed the Board's conversation was more broadly based and included news and information from the province's Restart Plan and related directives, and Workplace BC guidelines and recommendations, along with information, guidance, and recommendations from the national church and the Pacific Mountain Regional Council. Specific sources from within PMRC included the President and Executive Minister of the PMRC, Jay Olson and Treena Duncan respectively, and our Regional Minister, Victoria Andrews.

Much of the information the Board considered from Pacific Mountain Regional Council is available on their website. There are copies of their documents and a link to a video recording of a Zoom Town Hall held on May 13. (The video recording is about one hour, 21 minutes long and is well worth watching/listening to and includes the PowerPoint slides the Region prepared for the Town Hall.) The Board also considered the information, insight and perspective shared by Living Spirit United Church in Calgary when they decided to "go public"

with their heartbreaking experience. Despite having all the appropriate protocols in place, doing all the right things, following all the rules, and having done nothing wrong, an outbreak of COVID-19 was traced back to a worship service held in their church on March 15th. Sadly, a large number of people present at that service tested positive for COVID; tragically, two members of the congregation died from the virus. There is a direct link to LSUC's story on the Chinook Winds website under news and events.

The Board decided to put together a small group of people (a small team or committee) to consider all the information and wisdom available from multiple sources and put together a plan, strategy, or list of recommendations about how to proceed to reopen the church and resume worshipping in the sanctuary for the Board to consider. We envision that the small group would include the Chair of the Board, the Chair of the Worship Committee, a member of the Trustees, the minister, and two members of the congregation. Six to eight people – large enough to represent the diversity and functions/groups of the congregation yet small enough to meet easily, we hope.

Right now there is no timeline as to when United Churches in BC, including ours, might open. Because a large part of most of our congregations are from the demographic that is most at risk for COVID-19, PMRC's Executive Minister, Treena Duncan, has said that we're still in phase/stage 1 and strongly suggests and recommends that we stay closed. That is the best way to keep the most vulnerable members of our church communities safe.

We have our work ahead of us and there is no pressure. We need to come together to make sure that our members and people affiliated with our congregation are safe. We can make a plan to come back to church safely – and when the time is right and we have the 'all clear' we will put our plan in action to do just that,

come back to church safely and welcome each other, our friends, neighbours and renters. We can do it. We can do it together.

We are also not alone, as the UCC Creed reminds us. God is with us and we have each other.

In the words of Dr. Henry: “Be kind. Be Calm. Be safe.” In the words of Jesus: “Love one another.”

Peace,

Board Chair Terry & Rev Nancy