

ST. STEPHEN NEWS

JULY 2020

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From the Pastor at home... July 2020

Are we almost there?

This question came along at a time when I believe many of us feel like kids in the back seat of the family car, wondering that common question. Are we almost there?

Parishioner writes: As per the new usual, each Sunday morning, my wife and I gather in my office/den to worship online along with Pastor Richard. I enjoy the sermons delivered from within and around, our Church Communion. I want to know: What do we do with those unable to attend in person when all return to the building for full worship? I would like to recommend that we continue the present format of online worship, for we, the truly locked in, feel that this is a precious form of worship.

Dear Parishioner

I want you know that you, along with many others are not forgotten and will not be left behind. Church Council has from early on recognized that online worship was needed even before this pandemic brought about its implementation. It doesn't replace the in person visit that present circumstances have suspended for the time being. Many have voiced the appreciation and some of our viewers have joined watching who have been away from church for some time, some from other geographical areas. It has turned out to be a wonderful ministry addition.

There have been challenges, though. Our computer network and systems at the church were quite basic and needed updating to do the things that we required of it. Council moved forward to have an assessment completed that identified shortfalls within our existing system and offered solutions that we might move forward.

It is not an inexpensive investment for the church to make at this time, however we are moving forward with a staged approach to maintain cautious control over our spending.

The updates will allow for the provision of "live-streaming" our services when they begin again. Our website will be updated, our network will be properly backed up and secured. Numerous hardware items will be replaced (due to failing age and performance) and software will be updated (we are currently using some expired programs that cannot be updated, corrected or supported. There will be new cabling installed to provide more stable connections, as well as additions to be made to our audio-visual equipment.

The Church office is closed at this time.

All staff are currently working from home.

Please leave a phone message or send an email if you need to reach us.

From The Pastor At Home Continued

Throughout this time, videos have been predominantly captured on the camera of my laptop, edited, sound mixed and added and downloaded through a personal photo shop program that I have learned to use. It has proven to be quite labour intensive and the new system will offer considerable time savings.

The church is not merely a building, but the people and the ministry. It is hopeful that many continue to make phone calls and check on members of the community to keep the connections vibrant and alive. The on-line presence will continue and later as we are able, we will begin to gather in smaller groups when we are secure in the knowledge that safety requirements will be met.

There are some that have shared the fear that they may never return to church again; they might not live so long as to see an end to this virus. I assure you that safety protocols that will be put in place to keep everyone safe will be quite stringent; we will not risk public safety unnecessarily. You will be invited, only when it is safe to do so.

A task force was formed at the Synodical level to assist congregations in this process. They have sent a letter to the congregational leadership outlining the preliminary considerations to take into account prior to returning to in-person worship. They will be following up with a checklist of items to be completed that has been approved by Public Health and cross referenced with the recommendations made to other Synods and other church bodies.

There are many important details to consider. What this may look like may vary from week to week. We will likely initiate the return with small groups, practicing physical distance, gathering, hearing scripture, prayer, sharing communion and a blessing as we are sent. We will need to register and maintain contact information, pre-booking times of worship in compliance with public health recommendations and to avoid over crowding.

Several volunteers will be necessary to help us stay on track with new procedures, and this will help, should we have someone new or someone without church contacts return for worship. This would mean that we would have multiple services at different times of the day over a number of days in order that we all might gather. Proper sanitizing and deep cleaning of the church in between would be necessary, and we would all need to be washing hands with sanitizer and wearing our face masks as prescribed throughout the pandemic.

This is not what we would envision for a return to normalcy, however it may well be a new beginning for a time when we must provide for the safety of others during a pandemic. Presently we are looking toward a soft start in September as long as the positive trends continue. As for pastoral care visits, they continue to be dealt with on a case by case basis. Should anyone require pastor care, they are invited to call my home at 519-742-0520.

Thanks for your question! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to email or call and we can talk.

Peace and Blessings to all,
Pastor Richard



Church Council – meeting highlights from June 17th, 2020

The meeting began at 7pm with a prayer. The agenda was adopted, the minutes of the previous meeting were accepted and then council reviewed the correspondence received since the last meeting. This included a message from Bishop Price regarding the reopening of churches. (A link to this letter can be found on page 7 of this newsletter). A task force has been created by synod and more information will be made available to churches on approx. July 1st. Changes were suggested for the wording on the St. Stephen web page which have since been implemented. Council is to review the government guidelines and the recommendations from the task force prior to the next meeting.

Reports from committees were reviewed. Motions were as follows:

Property Chair, Paul Buick, verbally reported that small leaks have appeared in boiler room – approximate cost is estimated at \$1200.00. Repairs can wait until August (before heating starts). There was a motion to approve this work being done which was carried.

Kathleen met with the Friday Night Friendly Group for a tour early in June – They have requested the use of our fellowship hall for meetings on Friday evenings when the church reopens. A motion was made to allow the “Highland Road Friday Night Friendly Group” to use the fellowship hall and kitchen as a servery on Friday evenings beginning in September 2020 - pending the church reopening, provided the group works within government guidelines and provides proof of insurance. This motion was carried.

A motion was made to approve the development of a four-page website up to \$1500 as part of the technology upgrade which was carried. The Technology Upgrade Update was a large part of the evening's discussion– Please see separate submission on page 4 of July News.

A motion was made to form a small group to explore audio/visual systems. This motion was carried. The team will consist of Jim Penny, Jan Hansen and Kathleen Robert. Since the meeting this group has begun to research the systems other churches currently use to livestreaming services. This group will also obtain additional quotes the components and work required. Council will review quotes and give final approval.

A proposal was presented to change messaging on the outdoor sign to reflect the issues of our time. It was suggested to have “Black Lives Matter on one side of the sign and “Love is Love” on the other. There was a lengthy discussion. A motion was made to change the wording on the outdoor sign - on one side “Black Lives Matter” and the other side “Love is Love” which was amended to keep the existing messages on the top two lines and change bottom line to the above messages. The vote was not unanimous but was carried.

Do to the length of the meeting some on the agenda items were tabled until the next meeting. Council typically breaks for the summer months but due to the current pandemic situation council will continue to meet through the summer in 2020. The next meeting is scheduled for July 22nd at 7pm at which the prioritization of projects, action items, changes to public health guidelines and (re)clarification of council and committee roles will all be addressed.

If you have any questions or comments please send an email to ststephens@live.ca and we will make sure to address them.

Take care and Stay Safe,
Your St. Stephen Church Council

Financial Report

Dear members and friends of St. Stephen Lutheran Church,

We are very thankful for continued financial support since church services were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finances of St. Stephen Lutheran Church stabilized after the initial shock when in-person worship services were suspended in March. Income is less than anticipated at this time of year, but expenses are also somewhat less. These trends will continue being monitored and reported during the Summer which is typically a period of lower donations.

As described in the Pastor's message, the cost to update our computer network is not insignificant. A phased approach is therefore being used to implement current capabilities this year to enable live streaming of services and secure remote access to church records and accounting software. The main costs to update our computer network and website are being financed by the legacy gift from St. Philip's Evangelical Lutheran Church, which was received in December 2018.

Sincerely,

David Warnica

Treasurer, St. Stephen Lutheran Church

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH	ACTUAL	BUDGET	DIFF.	% DIFF.
FINANCIAL REPORT - MAY 2020	YTD	YTD	YTD	YTD
INCOME				
OPERATING (Budgeted)	\$50,659	\$62,514	-\$11,855	-19%
PROPERTY (Including mortgage)	20,751	25,750	-4,999	-19%
SYNOD BENEVOLENCE (Budgeted)	7,315	9,583	-2,268	-24%
BUDGETED INCOME	\$78,725	\$97,847	-\$19,122	-20%
EXPENSES				
OPERATING (Budgeted)	\$59,894	\$66,059	-\$6,165	-9%
PROPERTY (Including mortgage)	31,791	31,248	542	2%
SYNOD BENEVOLENCE (Budgeted)	6,071	9,583	-3,512	-37%
BUDGETED EXPENSES	\$97,756	\$106,891	-\$9,135	-9%
BUDGETED INCOME LESS EXPENSES	-\$19,031	-\$9,044	-\$9,987	



Marillac Place Baby Bottle Campaign update:

Thank you again to each and everyone who is supporting the success of the baby bottle campaign. I know it has been an overwhelming year and we all have so many adjustments to make both at home with our families, in our workplaces and churches.

I appreciate that you have all continued to support our most valuable fundraising campaign in this new way which this year has been a mailing and virtual campaign. I am happy to announce it has been strongly supported! We are thrilled that our donors are adapting and finding new ways to still support us in this pandemic. Currently we have raised over \$35,000 and are optimistic to reach our goal. Last year the total was close to \$65,000. We will see what the next month brings and may look at other fundraising as the year carries on.

Stay safe and stay well.

Blessings, Kelly Walberg

Fundraising & Office Coordinator

*If you still wish to make an online donation please visit www.marillacplace.ca/donate or mailing cheques to:
109 Young Street Kitchener, ON N2H 4Z2*

Prayer Group

From Carolyn Wilker:

"I've felt the need to start a prayer group for St. Stephen's during this covid time. We'll meet Monday evenings each week, beginning at 7:00 p.m. and wrapping up by 7:30 p.m. at the latest. Please sign in 10 minutes early (6:50) to make sure you're online before we begin.

We'll do a check-in first to see how folks are getting along, and then pray together for whatever requests you bring.

The church has an account for online rooms that are secure. For those who do not have a computer connection who would like to join in, you have the option of phoning in (meaning you are heard but not seen)."

Please see directions below to join the prayer group.

If you would like to join virtually on a computer, tablet or smartphone and have not used 'Gotomeeting' before please go to:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/782782021> and install the app. Please contact the office if you have any questions regarding this process.

Then after 6:45pm Monday evenings click the link below to join the call. (link will be the same for every Monday evening)

<https://www.gotomeet.me/StStephen1>

If you prefer - you can also dial in using your phone.

Canada: +1 (647) 497-9373 Access Code: 782-782-021

MY PERSPECTIVE – BY LORI HANSEN

You listen. You Learn. You act.

These words stuck out for me as I listened to the St. Peter's broadcast today.

Council debated what our role should be in this Pride month, when protests are being organized in our city for Black Lives Matter. We considered what we have done as a church, and what we should do moving forward.

I thought I could share what one of our groups has been doing. It has helped me, at least with the first two steps.

The women's book and prayer group reads a lot of books. I joined during my year off, when I had lots of time to read books, and I still try and keep up. Many of the books have allowed us to listen to voices of the marginalized, and I think we have learned from them.

I would like to specifically share one example of what I learned from reading "The Hate you Give" by Angie Thomas. Its jacket says it's about a 16 year old caught between two worlds – the poor black neighbourhood where she lives, and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. She witnesses a police shooting of her childhood best friend, at the hands of a police officer.

While fictional, it felt authentic. The author is a young black woman, barely out of her teens herself. I was given a look into world far from my own. I learned about how hard it is to pull oneself out of poverty, how one could be drawn into the drug trade and a gang, and the difficulty of pulling back from that world. I learned about "Black Jesus". I learned about the dilemma of wanting what is best for your family and your community and how hard it can be to do both at the same time. I saw how unfair it was that one interaction with the police could be so tragic and affect so many people. It was an education.

I have seen many suggestions that a first step on our journey to a more just society is to read. There are many booklists out there. If you are interested you can find them. Many people are, if the bestseller lists are any indication.

I am on my own personal journey of listening, learning, and acting. I am sure many others at St. Stephen are as well. Even in this time of physical distancing, I wonder if we can do more of all three of them, together.

June Excerpts from ELCIC News:

A letter from Lutheran, Anglican leaders for National Indigenous Peoples Day - June 21, 2020

Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald, Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Anglican Church of Canada, and National Bishop Susan Johnson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, issue a statement for National Indigenous Peoples Day.

"The Government of Canada describes this as A DAY FOR ALL TO RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE THE UNIQUE HERITAGE, DIVERSE CULTURES AND OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS OF FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS PEOPLES. We give thanks for these heritages, cultures and contributions. We honour Stewards of the Land and Defenders of the Water," the leaders say in the letter. As well, "this is a day to re-affirm our churches' commitments to ending racism: discrimination and racism against Indigenous Peoples, anti-Black racism and all other forms of racism in Canada."

[Read the full letter here.](#)

Letter from Bishop Pryse regarding the reopening of our congregations [Read the full letter here.](#)

June is Pride month

The month of June is designated as Pride month. While Pride 2020 celebrations and events will look a little different than previous years because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, we give thanks to [Reconciling Works](#) for allowing us to share the following prayer:

PRIDE PRAYER 6/2020

Creator God, we marvel in awe of the expansiveness of your creation. Each of our beloved LGBTQ2SIA+, Black, Indigenous, and other persons of color siblings are beautifully and wonderfully made, all in your image. Teach us to love people just as they are, and embrace their identity fully as you have embraced us. In your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Prayer adapted with permission from:

#RKWSPRIDE
#BLACKLIVESMATTER

Reconciling Works
LUTHERANS FOR FULL PARTICIPATION