

St. Matthews building re-opening postponed until at least September

Dear members and friends of St. Matthews,

On Monday, June 8th, 2020, the Ontario government issued new guidelines related to the COVID-19 Stage 2 reopening, where social gatherings of 10 people were to be permissible starting June 12, with a loophole for places of worship to open for gatherings at up to 30% capacity.

While it is now legal for churches to open for worship, the question remains: is this the right thing to do at this moment? Since the first Easter, Christians have gathered on Sundays as a community for worship, to hear the Word and celebrate the Sacraments. However, these are extraordinary times, and we must recognize that medical experts still consider church gatherings to be a very high risk for transmission of the coronavirus. Furthermore, KW is considered by some experts to still be a “hot spot not ready for re-opening.”

The St. Matthews Board met on Tuesday, June 9, 2020 to discuss the issue of re-opening. Under recommendation from our Bishop Michael Pryse, **we have decided to postpone opening our church building until mid-September at the earliest.** We will form a task force to put policies and guidelines into place, so that when we do re-open, we will be able to do so as safely as possible.

Our main concern is for the health and safety of those gathering inside our church building, and since many of our members are part of the vulnerable population, we must be particularly careful.

Many of you are wondering what worship will be like when we begin to gather physically on Sundays again. The task force will be communicating more about this in the future, but it will be a very different experience from what we are used to. For example, congregational singing will not be possible as it is a high risk for droplet transmission. Additionally, physical distancing will have to be maintained, and face masks worn.

We know that this news will be a disappointment for some of you. Gathering physically for worship can be a great source of comfort, both socially and spiritually, and it is sad that our beautiful building, now closed for three months, will remain closed for at least another three. However, our Golden Hour, social media and online and telephone gatherings continue to connect us to each other and to God, and remind us that while the building may be closed, our church is still open. Furthermore, in the next months, we will be looking into some other, smaller ways of coming together.

If you have any comments, questions or concerns, or if you want to just talk, please don't hesitate to contact us, our Administrator Leanne, or your Board of Directors. Please also communicate this information with any fellow members you know who are not online.

Thank you for your patience as we discern the best, safest way forward for our community of faith.

Yours in Christ,

Pastors Sebastian and Carey