

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

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Dear friends in Christ:

In much of the Province of Ontario we have definitely moved into a new phase as businesses and churches have been allowed to reopen to various degrees. Restrictions in terms of numbers of people being allowed in and physical distancing are still in place because of the need to realize that the coronavirus is still out there and the desire of authorities is that we continue to be safe. However, just as our experience of grocery



shopping has changed since the start of the pandemic, so we are going to find that our experience of other retail shopping experiences has also changed. Our experience of gathering for worship will also seem foreign to us and will take some getting used to. But Christians have suffered much worse in the past.

St. Andrew's has made the decision not to open before Sunday, July 5th and then only if

infection rates continue to fall. This will be determined by statistics released by the Health Unit for Leeds, Grenville and Lanark County. To give you a feeling for what the restrictions and protocol will look like, I will attach a copy prepared for St. Andrew's by our Clerk of Session Rob Allan.

Much as we look forward to the easing of restrictions and being able to go to the barbershop and hair salon for instance, there is another side to reopening that will be painful. Not every business establishment or church will reopen in Phase 2 or 3. Others may reopen, but will eventually be forced to close their doors for good. 2020 was shaping up to be a difficult year for Canada's retail landscape before the pandemic, but as one retail analyst said to CTV News, thousands more stores and restaurants could shutter in Canada by next year, with the effects felt for years to come. Starbucks made headlines when it said that it would be closing 200 outlets in Canada. But Pier 1 Imports has announced that it will close all its stores in Canada and Carlton Cards is closing all of its stores in North America. More businesses have filed for bankruptcy protection.

“... a place to belong!”

It is doubtful if the closing of churches will make any headlines. Already in 2019 it was predicted that Canada was on track to close 9,000 churches over the next decade. COVID-19 will probably speed that up. Some churches will just move from full time to part-time ministry while others, unable to maintain aging buildings with declining congregations, will just quietly close their doors.

This may seem to be a rather depressing note, but it is not meant to be. The present crisis has caused changes in every area of life. We may wish that we were able to go back to the way things were before, but that may not be possible. It is said that there are only two things in life that are certain and they are death and taxes. I would like to add a third. Change. Change is one of the constants of life. Nothing ever remains the same. However, Jesus said we are not to fear the changes and difficulties we face in life. In speaking to his disciples of a time of grief they will face, he say: **33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”** (John 16:33) Knowing the forces that stood against his Church, Jesus said to Peter: **18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades (hell) will not overcome it.** (Matthew 16)



In the meantime, know that members of your church are working hard to meet your spiritual needs during this time and prepare for the future. Fabiola is in the office making sure that the worship services get out to you. Members of the Board of Managers are working hard to

make sure that everything is in readiness when we are able to return to worship. And your elders are working hard to hold our congregation together and provide for the future as the Lord leads. Be of good cheer!

Your servant in Christ,
Rev. Stephen Dunkin
Loch Mor
Big Rideau Lake



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