



Sunday, August 30, 2020

To all members and friends of the congregation of St. George's Place du Canada,

It has been a month now since I have written a letter to the congregation. I had a wonderful vacation, spending a week camping at Lac Temiscouata, near the New Brunswick border, with a brand-new puppy, which was, needless to say, a memorable experience. All joking aside, Clive and I had a nice time, though there is, undoubtedly, a lot for a little puppy to learn wherever he hangs out. We didn't have to worry too much though about house training in our little campsite, and we both had a nice time exploring and learning to use a leash.

When I got back to work, Debbie and I immediately got to work preparing the church for a return to services in September. Our survey (thanks for answering it so quickly!) indicated to us that about 30 percent of our congregation was eager to come back to church in person, with about another third willing to come back from time to time. With that in mind, we marked out places for people to sit which are carefully measured for distancing and worked out a plan for people entering and exiting the church which would assure our safety. Between the worship committee and corporation we spelled out a plan, to include in our re-opening application, which the diocese requires, and submitted it last week. It was a carefully worked out plan, which involves congregants registering to attend and visitors being asked to provide contact information at the door. Our plan was, as you might have heard, to re-open on September 6.

Since then we have altered that plan. Because it was essential that three volunteers work as "greeters" at the door to establish an orderly entry, and since we were unable to get commitments from enough people able to work as greeters on that weekend, which is admittedly Labour day, we decided, in time to tell you this Sunday, that our opening will be postponed. We will again try to open on the 13th of September, provided that we have enough people to greet (3) and have readers (1 or 2) and an intercessor. In fact, this delay may be a happy coincidence, since this week the city tore up the sidewalk on our side of Ave. des Canadiens which, for all intents and purposes, forces us to close our main entrance for the next while. Our guess is that we will have to use the door on Stanley St. for the time being. We are making inquiries as to how long this situation will remain.

So, if you are planning to come to church in person in September, please wait till you receive information from us about our first service, which will come by email along with an information sheet. An announcement will also appear on our website on the main page. Keep in mind that parking is also quite limited around the church and you will have to walk at least a full block, as Stanley St., Ave. des Canadiens and Peel St. are all being torn up by the city. In a way, if they had to do all this work, I am glad it is happening now, as we are not open. But it does make simply getting into the church a challenge.

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That being said, next Saturday, September 5, we are organizing a *clean-up crew* to tidy up the grounds of the church for our re-opening, and are looking for people who are willing to work for a morning, to do some gardening, bag up some garbage and possibly cut the grass. Contact Tracy and Tom Davidson if you are able to help. tracy.davidson.60@gmail.com. We have a beautiful church, and that afternoon there will be a wedding, so we want to do our best for them, as well as for our re-opening. Again, distancing rules will be in place, and please wear a mask. If you forget yours, we have acquired some for the office and you will be asked to wear one. You are also asked to bring good strong gardening gloves. For more information please get in touch with our organizers.

Things continue to move forward on our development plans. Recently we had a meeting with the organizers of Refettorio and are happy to report that despite delays caused by the pandemic, they continue to be committed to the project, and to St. George's. Quo Vadis is still preparing to visit the city planning department for an important meeting at the end of September, so keep our little project in your prayers, we are hoping for a very positive outcome.

Our drop-in centre continues to work toward re-opening, but as of yet, is still only making sandwiches and taking them to the street, as was CivitasX this past Saturday. They are all getting along with a large drop in volunteers (by design) and are finding it possible to work even with social distancing rules in place. We are lucky to have such dedicated staff, and applaud the volunteers who are dedicated to the task.

We continue to plan for a Book Study in the fall, via Zoom, as a follow-up to our Conversations about Black Lives Matter last spring. We have acquired ten books called *Cracking open White Fragility Towards Transformation*, a collection of essays written for this project and collated by the Canadian Council of Churches. It is intended to be used for just such studies, and we will be reading a couple of those essays or so each time we meet. More details will be announced shortly as to dates, but if you are interested, please let Carole at the office know, and we will do our best to connect you with the book.

We continue to make plans for the fall, planning our October 11 (Thanksgiving weekend) service of thanksgiving for our 150th anniversary of our "new" building. We have a very special guest preacher Zooming in from their home, to help us celebrate the day, and are planning a couple of special projects with hymns and photos.

In the meantime, keep in touch on our Facebook page, and via our 10:30 services online. We are always looking for feedback about our services, so if you have any encouraging words, or suggestions, let Carole at the office know, and she will see that they are forwarded to the right people. And as summer comes to a close and as our children are returning to school, remember to keep each other in your prayers, because on the surface of it, we have gotten used to this unusual situation, but the anxiety of not knowing what our near future will be like remains every present and we need each other more than ever. So, keep safe, and keep looking to our future, God is present, and always gracious in His care for all this little flock.

Sincerely, and in Christ

Karen+