



Friday, September 25, 2020

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

The last time I wrote to you was only three weeks ago, and it was in that letter that I outlined our plans to reopen the church for a small, quiet 9 am service of morning prayer. Since then we have had two services, one on September 13, and the other on September 20th. Both were successful, and I give thanks for everyone who helped, Tim, who worked the projector, all of the greeters who worked the door and helped people stay safe in their seats, and Carole and Kosala, who worked behind the scenes. Deborah Noonan was also instrumental in seeing the plans through and organizing everyone. I give thanks to God for all of your dedication.

Today I am writing you to tell you that yesterday, at our corporation meeting, we decided together, with unanimity, to cancel in person services again, indefinitely. We made that decision, not because our own services were unsuccessful, but rather because the increasing numbers of people with Covid-19 in Montreal will make our gathering more and more risky. We were not a large number, 19 and 20 people each time, but the risk remains real, and the increasing numbers limits the possibility that that service could grow. There is no doubt, however, that everyone's health and safety really is our first concern.

We are not, however, sad or disappointed that we had tried to open and that we had to close so soon. We did learn a great deal and discovered how flexible people who were coming turned out to be. We found good ways to put the bulletin up on the screen and found the atmosphere remarkably intimate for such a service. In many ways it was a success. We also realized that the strain on our limited resources was real, especially because the number of people who were served was relatively limited. It is, therefore, with mixed feelings that we came to this decision to stop in person services. We were especially saddened that we were unable to get to the stage where we were able to do a Eucharist together. However, we are still assured that we learned a lot, and when we come back with the opportunity to do in person services again, we will be even better prepared. We also resolved that next time, when the numbers go down again (and they will, with God's help) we will devise a service that is some sort of hybrid, where zoom and in person services can be held together, and where everyone, regardless of where they are or how vulnerable they are, can pray together.

All that being said, there are still signs of hope and plans for the future continue to be made at St. Georges. Deborah is going to do her best to design a service for families, outside, perhaps with a picnic lunch. Stay tuned for more information on that. This week we welcome Ben Stuchbery, our student intern, to his first service with us, and in a twist of his and our schedules, he will be preaching on Sunday, so we are in for a treat! And our ministry to the homeless is finding new ways to serve and to do that safely, and I am heartened that with the oncoming winter, we will be able to make a contribution to the homeless in our midst.

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Finally, I want to offer my personal thanks to everyone who contributed to the church cleanup on Saturday September 5, especially to Tom and Tracy who spearheaded the effort. The church continues to look great! We have done a couple of long delayed baptisms and will still to the two weddings that we have committed to, albeit with very small groups, and all as safely as possible. It is important for the church to look its best for those also. I continue to be enormously thankful for everyone's patience and contribution, and I look forward to Sunday and the continuing of our services on zoom, a real blessing in this difficult time.

Sincerely, and In Christ

Karen