



Niagara United Mennonite Church

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"Called to be Servants of Christ in Our Community"

June 11, 2020

Greetings!

This past week we received the announcement that churches will be allowed to reopen at 30% capacity starting June 12. Although, it is good news to hear, it still leaves many questions unanswered about how this should take place.

The question of how is one that staff and leadership have been thinking about already.

Among the factors we are concerned about:

- How safe is it really? Will we just get re-started, and then a spike in COVID-19 cases force us to shut down again?
- How do we control how many people enter the building, and where they move about, what they touch, as all these areas will need to be thoroughly cleaned after each event
- How many people actually feel comfortable returning despite the lingering risks?
- What is the best timing for resuming services -- summer is here; the church gets hot; will volunteers be willing to do the extra work required at a time when we usually gear down? Start soon with smaller gatherings? Wait till September?
- How can we best reach our faith community? Are we actually reaching more people with our on-line services for now than we would with gathered worship in the church? Should we consider a combination of on-line & gathered services?
- How might our worship look if it's not yet safe to sing together (some experts suggest that singing projects breath particles much further than speaking)?

And there may well be more.

In addition to speaking with staff, I have also been in contact with colleagues in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Serbia, and Germany, all places where they have been allowed to reopen and guidelines have been provided, many have chosen to remain closed for the present, as they work through the logistical challenges that confront them to provide a safe space for people to gather.

A third factor in make our decision to not to reopen immediately is encouragement from MCEC. "MCEC recommends that congregations do not immediately re-open their facilities but give themselves adequate time to do the assessment and preparations required for their context."¹

¹ <https://mcec.ca/article/10273-mcec-encourages-congregations-to-carefully-assess-their-readiness-to-reopen>

Some Take Aways: We want you to know

1. We will **not** be reopening immediately. Our desire is to reopen as soon as possible, but we want to do it in a way that is safe and positive. To reopen right now simply because we are allowed to does not seem to be the most responsible step forward.
2. Leadership has begun looking at different scenarios and options to reopen and along with plans for the fall.
3. If you have any pastoral concerns or other concerns that you would be waiting on or have been putting off, I would encourage you to seek out a staff member or somebody on leadership and bring your concerns and address it to them.
4. We need all of us working together and praying together to come up with ideas of what church can look like and how we can fulfill our mission of being Servants of Christ to our Community going forward.
5. We want to say thank you for your continued support of the ministry that God has placed upon us and we longingly look forward to the day when we can all physically meet together.
6. Lastly, I want to remind us that to be the Church means more than coming together on Sunday mornings. Church happens every day, when people choose to follow the example of Jesus.

God bless!
Thank you!

Daniel Janzen
Pastor