

Session Notes – May, 2020

Session spent an hour in free discussion around what we should be doing at this point in the pandemic. Everyone spoke. We pray for wisdom and trust that the Holy Spirit leads as we make decisions as a group of elders meeting as Session.

Some over-arching principles:

- we will continue to follow the instructions of the civil authorities
- in our denomination, each church Session makes its own decisions, although there is much helpful information available from Presbytery and the PCC office
- we will make decisions based on considering the risk not to just the average congregant but to those most vulnerable
- it is likely that many restrictions will remain for some time, perhaps until a vaccine or cure is found – thus, we will not return to the same thing we left
- we will continue to work towards keeping everyone connected with RPC

Despite entering 'Stage 2' of the pandemic response in BC (a welcome step!), Session is not in a hurry to return to congregational worship in the sanctuary.

- many of those who cannot participate in virtual worship would be high-risk were we to resume gathering, so unfortunately they would be ill-advised to attend a live service
- it's not simple to limit to 50 people when our average attendance is 150
- how satisfying would in-person worship be?
 - o we'd all be sitting 6 feet apart – picture 2 in a pew every other row
 - o we couldn't sing or pass the peace
 - o fellowship would be lame under distancing requirements

For the next few months, we will continue with virtual worship, streaming the service followed by a Zoom fellowship time. Some congregations are having worship via Zoom, but this is even more of a technical barrier and would mean less ability to enhance the worship experience including no words for music or prayers on the screen, so it's not something we're considering.

But although our new pattern of activities will not change for a while, Session will be active:

- we'll monitor civil and denominational guidelines to be compliant with what must happen and knowledgeable about what might be possible
- we'll start planning now for a return to gathering in some form, when the time is right

Treasurer Larry Eastwood and the Board are monitoring our financial situation. Both givings and expenses are down, givings more, and of course rental income is gone. It is not clear that we would be eligible for government funding, and there is a concern for what strings might be attached were we to go there. Larry considers that we have enough in the bank that our viability is not threatened at this point.

Sunday, June 7, will be another COVID first for us: virtual communion. Please check your email next week for how this will work or contact your elder or Victor. Christ's presence, power, and grace are not diminished by the mechanics of how we celebrate the sacrament.

This Sunday is our 60th Anniversary, as well as Pentecost, the birthday of the Church Universal. Let us take time to think about what our founders' vision was in 1960, and what our vision should be for the future ahead, giving all thanks and glory to our good Father.

Your Session.