

RICHMOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Deep with God, Wide with the World

Session Notes August 24, 2021

Apologies for being a week late, I was enjoying some time on Vancouver Island and didn't get these notes ready for last Sunday. We weren't originally going to meet in August, as we'd met in July and typically things are quieter over the summer. Typically. But the pandemic is still raising new issues which can't wait for our ecclesiastical rhythms.

Perhaps a bit ironically, we had just resumed hybrid in-person/zoom meetings in July, only to revert to an all-zoom meeting in August. However, virtual meetings will remain an option for us, particularly for ad hoc meetings or when a number of us are away, much as online church is continuing and will be enhanced even as we transition back to in-person gatherings.

The primary driver for August's meeting was developing protocols around vaccination. Session has decided to ask that singers not return to choir participation until they are fully immunised. This recognises the higher risks of singing, especially singing in a choir setting. Our choristers have been consulted and are in agreement with this policy. For now, this is our only change in protocols. The province has adopted proof-of-vaccination for many indoor public venues and events, but for now, religious worship is exempt.



Regarding return to gathered worship, it has been gradual as we expected, and feedback has been positive. We have had around 50 or so attending in person, with more of course still online. We respect everyone's decision on this and will continue to offer the flexibility of hybrid worship. We received a \$1,000.00 grant from the national church for additional technology for live streaming.

Doing a live stream well requires more and better equipment than pre-recording.

RPC will be continuing onto year two of the Missional Certificate Program offered out of St. Andrew's Hall. A small group of elders, church leaders, and Victor will be attending 3 Saturday workshops. This year's focus, building on the foundations laid last year, is actually launching a project. This will mean talking with the community to understand needs that we could meet, then engaging you in the congregation to plan a ministry and put it into action.

Returning to live gatherings has proven to have its own strangeness. The lockdowns in March 2020 meant the quick adjustment of everyone to the then-unfamiliar world of virtual gathering. Now, we are used to the online way of doing things and even appreciate that it has some advantages. Going back to in-person worship with a lingering overhang of some restrictions and the mixed situation of vaccines and a fourth wave makes this transition not nearly so clear-cut.



God continues at work, pandemic or no, but we know lockdowns and other restrictions have raised barriers to congregational ministries. Now, we need to intentionally re-engage. There is a risk that the many months of virtual church have turned us from doers into watchers. But we can't go wide with the world if we remain spectators. Our decisions as to when and how we return to church life with a physical presence need to be made with thought and prayer, but also a sense of urgency: God and the world are counting on us.

Faithfully,
Graeme Stager, Clerk of Session