

June 11, 2020.

The recent announcement by the Government of Ontario that churches are permitted to open their facilities — with a restriction to 30 percent of capacity — brings us hope, but also brings to mind some words in 1 Corinthians 10: 23: “‘Everything is permissible’ — but not everything is constructive.” (NIV)

We are thankful for God’s mercies during recent months, and we are conscious of the challenges that we face. We long for the restoration of face-to-face, in-person gatherings for worship, fellowship, study, and service together. We are also deeply concerned for the health and safety of all people. Caution and patience during recent months have spared many lives, and we continue to strive to be careful and vigilant.

We are reminded of the apostle Paul’s counsel, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2: 4, NIV) To that end, many interests need to be taken into careful consideration in planning and implementing the re-opening of our facilities at Parkwood Church. We are and we serve a very diverse community. Those who are elderly and those with underlying health issues are more at risk of serious illness and complications arising from the virus which continues to circulate throughout the world and within our city. Families with children are an integral part of our fellowship, and we need to support and welcome them, as we need to care for individual singles who live alone and keenly sense the isolation that physical distancing has imposed.

Many are grateful for the limited connections that online technology has enabled. We have managed each Sunday since March 22nd to broadcast worship online, and offered other special services during Lent. The session and some ministry teams have managed to meet using online conferencing software. We have had the opportunity and benefit of connecting with other Christian leaders and organizations online, and have gained from the sharing of their experience and expertise. We also recognize that some among us face barriers and cannot access or utilize the technology to connect online.

We wish at this time to advise the congregation that the suspension of in-person gatherings for worship will continue, at the very least into mid-July. We will continue to livestream worship at this time, and will plan to do so for an indefinite period even after we are able to re-open the building for public gatherings. A safe, feasible, and well-communicated plan for future in-person gatherings is to be worked out by the session in consultation with the various ministry teams at Parkwood. The announcement from the provincial government indicated that guidelines would be forthcoming. We need to receive and understand those guidelines, and adapt and implement best practices to the end that we do our best to ensure the safety and health of all who may come to use our facilities. We are reminded that “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” (1 Corinthians 14: 40, NIV) We will make an announcement as soon as is possible as to a future date for the resumption of in-person public worship.

With prayers for God’s guidance and patience, as we seek to honour Jesus Christ and to care for and serve one another and the communities to which we are called to bear witness in His name,

James T. Hurd.
Pastor.

Dennis Featherstone,
Clerk of Session.