

**The United Church of Canada
Conseil régional Nakonha:ka Regional Council
Lennoxville United Church**

Message to the Church, August 2020:

To the people of Lennoxville United Church, exiled from our church building during this time of global crisis. Greetings in the name of Christ. I know that the God of Jeremiah will continue to guide us during this time of struggle. I am with you in prayer and Spirit even as we need to be physically distant. I trust in the Spirit's ability to connect our hearts together, reminding us that we are not alone.

Closing our Church Building:

We have been exiled from our beloved building, which was considered non-essential during this time of global crisis. On March 13th, everything changed for Lennoxville United Church; we were pulled out of our normal, and were forced to find ways to adapt. We closed our building out of caution, even before the provincial government closed all religious buildings. Our Sunday Community Worship moved on to Facebook Live at 10am, and it is also available, after recording, on our new community Facebook Page and our website (Special thanks to our web-designer Bruce Durrant). Phone calls were made, *written personal reflections* were created and shared, Maryse recorded *musical reflections*, and I began a new ministry "Bible Discovery Online" live on Facebook Wednesday mornings and recording available afterwards. Our primary body of church leaders also continued to serve; moving our meetings to the online platform Zoom, our Church Council met monthly.

Lennoxville United Church Leadership Continues to Serve:

Our Church Council is dedicated to guiding our community of faith with intention and care during this global pandemic. In May, the Regional Council began to provide information to guide the re-opening of church buildings throughout the province. In June, our Church Council mandated a team to go through the guidelines and prepare a plan for Council to submit to the Regional Council for approval. Our Covid Building Response Team includes Dave Drew (B&F), Sandy Davidson (B&F), Jean Dion (B&F), Joe McKercher (B&F), Carolyn Leonard (UCW), Kristan McKercher (M&P), Doug Blair (Council Chair & Worship), Debbie Harrison (Adm. Assistant), and me (Ministry Personnel). The guidelines provided by the Regional Council gave room to make decisions based on our own context. Members of the team took on a variety of tasks to prepare the building to be opened, while making decisions based on our community's specific circumstances. Our Church Council affirmed the plan created by the Covid Building Response Team, and it was approved by the Covid Task Group at the Regional Council. We believe that our plan is cautious, we know that we can never promise 100% safety but we will remain faithful and careful as we proceed with the plan for our church building.

Our Building Plan:

I will do my best to summarize the plan for you. We are currently in the “pre-opening phase”, the building is closed to everyone, with the exception of staff. The only entrance being used is the Church street door, and there is a sanitize station with an occupancy log book just inside. Maintenance and safety checks have been done, and new cleaning protocols and procedures have been created and implemented. We are prepared to begin Phase 1, after Labour Day, on September 8th 2020. Our Phase 1 plan includes opening our Church Street entrance, the church offices, the upper Scott Hall, and the woman’s washroom. I am aware that having only one washroom open is awkward, but this is best for mitigating the risks of Covid-19. In Phase 1, the office will be officially open for regular office hours. In Phase 1, small church groups will begin to meet in the Scott Hall (limited to 15 people); this will allow our Ministry Teams to begin to meet in person once again. The sanitize station continues to stand just inside the Church Street doors with our occupancy log. To ensure full knowledge of the building’s occupancy, the lock on Church Street has been changed. We envision a progressive opening of our church building, and we plan to practice Phase 1 for a few weeks before moving into Phase 2. The United Church of Canada understands Sunday worship in the sanctuary to be resumable in Phase 2, and Council is committed to proceeding with caution and will keep you informed as we take our first steps to re-open our church building.

Continued presence:

It is understandable to be apprehensive about returning to the church at this time. We wish to express support to those who plan to stay close to home throughout this global pandemic, we hope to be able to continue to meet online even when we return to the sanctuary in smaller numbers. We will do our best to keep you informed as we move forward. Jeremiah preached that God would go with the people into exile, and that God would journey with them as they were forced to wander away from home. You are not alone in this challenge, you are not alone in this struggle. I trust that by following God into the unknown we risk the possibility of transformation, maybe even resurrection; may we listen to the whispering of the Holy Spirit to guide our every step.

Sending hope and blessings,

Rev. Linda Buchanan

On behalf of the LUC Covid Building Response Team and LUC Church Council.