

Rideau Park Congregational Check-in – A Summary

In June 2021, at Council's request, a short survey was made available to the congregation. People who do not have access to the Internet were called and their opinion requested. The objectives were twofold – to reach out to the congregation and see how they are doing after more than a year of Covid and to gather information around re-opening to help guide Council and staff when making decisions.

Sixty-five people completed the short questionnaire on Survey Monkey and about a dozen more through phone calls. **Thank you for participating!** The information gathered was not intended to be statistical in nature, rather it was designed to give us an idea of how everyone was feeling about a specific set of topics related to Covid and re-opening Rideau Park.

The survey had four questions and here is what we learned from the responses we received.

1. What have you enjoyed most about our virtual community?

The response most often mentioned was the ability to connect, check-in with others, and maintain a sense of community virtually. The next most frequent response was the ability to watch Sunday services online. A number of people also mentioned meditation, Georgina's Zoom chats, virtual knitting and UCW meetings. Some people enjoyed the services from home. Of course, others did not like or did not participate in the virtual opportunities offered. Although mentioned only in a few responses, members of the congregation also appreciated newsletters, the congregational meeting, virtual Sunday school, and seeing people in the taped music segments who have since passed away.

2. What are you most looking forward to when we re-open?

Two answers were very popular: seeing friends/socializing/coffee time/seeing children and in-person worship/reverence of Sanctuary/sense of community at worship. Others mentioned in-person special events or meetings, such as meditation, bazaar, dinners, concerts, etc. We have several members of our choir looking forward to that activity re-starting.

3. When we start to re-open, what activities would you be comfortable resuming in-person? Under what conditions would you return to church in-person?

Once we are opening, most respondents are ready for all or most church activities to resume: Sunday services, Sunday school, choir, handbells, knitting, coffee hour... A smaller group of respondents would like to start with Sunday service and small groups. In terms of what needs to be in place for people to return in-person, there were two groups: those who are waiting for vaccinations for themselves, for kids, or for everyone and those who are satisfied with following Public Health measures such as distancing, sanitizing hands, masks, limited capacity, and no singing.

4. After this year, we need a celebration to mark our reopening! What do you think this celebration could look like?

The most popular response was some kind of outdoor social event with food, possibly like the September welcoming event/picnic/BBQ or simply cake. Another group would like a musical concert to mark the re-opening, such as singing, choir, or handbells. Other ideas included a service of giving thanks, appreciation to those who kept activities going or a community outreach event. Some felt that returning to church was celebration enough! A few mentioned waiting until all restrictions are lifted, then having an outdoor social with masks and distancing.

Overall, there was a thread of optimism in the responses: people are looking forward to gathering together in our sanctuary, safely. There were also undertones of concern that we not move too quickly, follow all Public Health guidelines and respect the fact that everyone has different concerns as we move forward. Our members feel the need to reconnect and get back the strong sense of faith community that we enjoy at Rideau Park.