

Rideau Park United Church  
**Congregational Email – September 9, 2021**

When Kate Bowler found out she was living with cancer, she wrote *Everything Happens for a Reason (and other lies I've loved)*, a book about the kinds of theology that either help or hinder our spiritual survival through difficult times. One quote I love is her prayer "God, I am walking to the edge of the cliff. Build me a bridge so that I can get to the other side."

Both from the experience of cancer, and from the pandemic, this quote speaks to me of that longing for divine rescue – or at least a clear path forward. As a congregation, we are probably praying that prayer right now – wondering whether there is bridge between being closed and being open, and longing for a clear map to get us there.

Ontario's provincial guidelines leave us with some questions as a place of worship. We are excluded from the requirement to show proof of vaccination for worship, but our building functions for many other activities. At a meeting this week, Council Executive clarified a few of our understandings:

- 1) For **funerals and weddings**: as many as can safely distance within the sanctuary can attend, the number determined by the ushers and worship team to be 75-90, depending whether people are seated in household "bubbles" or as individuals. Masks, registration and physical distancing are mandatory.
- 2) At this time we are not holding **indoor or outdoor receptions** following weddings or funerals. According to Phase 3 guidelines, eating and drinking would require removing masks, so only people in the same household or social bubble should be gathered where refreshments are served.
- 3) Re-opening: every group that wishes to meet at the church must **write a plan for their group** to meet, demonstrating that health requirements will be followed.
- 4) For Sunday worship, funerals and weddings, we are **not required** to check vaccination status, and at this time will not do so. We strongly encourage everyone to be fully vaccinated, as it is our Christian responsibility to care for others, and we feel that is best accomplished by providing those who cannot be vaccinated with the protection of a highly immunized community. If you have concerns or feedback about this, we welcome your input.
- 5) For groups meeting at the church, the building functions like a community hall, which **does require** proof of vaccination. When vaccine passports are available, groups using the church will be asked to comply with the provincial guidelines.

We know that there are often different interpretations of the guidelines, and we also know that they can change without a lot of notice. We are trying to stay on top of each announcement and to implement the guidelines as quickly as possible. We are also open to discussing them with you. If you know of a good bridge to take us to the other side – let us know!

**September Events:**

**Meditation online** continues on Thursdays at 10:00 am, contact Steve Clifton for the zoom information. **Healing Pathway** practitioners are available for healing prayers over the phone, and also host a YouTube **Healing Circle session** Sundays at 11:15 am on our Rideau Park YouTube channel.

**Celebration of Life Service for Liz Waldron:** Friends are invited to attend the service **on Saturday, September 18 at 2:00 pm.** at Rideau Park. **Please register in advance** if you plan to attend in person as there is limited space. The service will also be livestreamed.

**Sunday, September 19, 10:00 am worship** – **Our guest speaker** is King Julez/Julian Munro, Chair of the national Affirm Council, and a candidate for ministry who lives their Christian faith as part of the queer/drag community.

**Saturday, September 25, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm:** The **RPUC Mini-Bazaar** is an outdoor event featuring sales of crafts, books, general store and boutique items. Check the website or the weekly email for more information.

**Sunday, September 26, 10:00 am worship** – **Orange Shirt Sunday** with guest speaker Albert South Wind Dumont, Algonquin elder.

**Sunday School** is restarting and staying online for now. As children under 12 cannot yet be vaccinated and as many protocols for in-person gatherings are still required, we are staying online so that everyone will feel safe and included. Zoom meetings will be starting on **Sunday, September 26**. We are aiming for four separate groups to join in with, just as we had last fall and winter: Ages 3, 4 & 5; Grades 1,2,3, Grades 4,5,6 and our Youth Class. More information on how to connect will be coming soon. We are **looking for volunteers to help with teaching online**, especially in the Grades 1,2,3 age group. There are lots of curriculum options and we will offer support to our volunteers as needed. If you would like to know more, please get in touch with Steve at [sclifton@rideaupark.ca](mailto:sclifton@rideaupark.ca).