

Re-Opening of Rideau Park United Church

Here is what Council Executive, Council and our staff have been doing towards re-opening our church building.

In late June, based on current guidance from the provincial Ministry of Health and Ottawa Public Health, we developed a plan with several phases to help us manage the work and prioritize the activities to support the plan.

Phase 1 was defined as being ready to hold small gatherings for funerals or weddings. In the past months, we have held a small wedding in the Chapel and a baptism outside. We have not been requested to do any funerals in the church, but our ministers have been involved in grave-side services during this time.

Phase 2 was defined as re-opening the church for limited in-person worship. Over the summer, the province advanced in terms of opening up many different activities. They authorized places of worship to open in late June. At that time we did not feel ready, but preparations continued by committees, Council Executive and staff. Some of these preparations involved wrapping our heads around Public Health guidelines and what they would mean to our church. Council and Exec have been clear that the top priority is Safety First! We had to make sure that we could create a space for worship that would be safe for our staff, our congregation and our volunteers.

Phase 3 will come next, once we are certain that we have properly managed the transition to in-person worship. It will require developing processes for keeping the different rooms of the church as clean and virus-free as possible, to ensure the safety of staff and people using our facilities. We have just started thinking of what is involved and hope to start welcoming activity groups back into the church starting later this fall.

Council has now accepted **a plan to start welcoming people into the church for limited in-person worship**. While we continue along this path, our livestreaming of Sunday morning services remains the primary way to worship at Rideau Park. We realize that many in our congregation miss worship in the Sanctuary, so we are moving as quickly as we feel safe. We would also like to mention that Ottawa Public Health recommends that those over 70 years of age stay home.

Our plan is to have a pre-test on Labour Day Sunday for a few invited guests to ensure that we have appropriate signage in place and that all necessary processes are in place and working.

From **September 13th to October 4th**, we will welcome up to 20 people in the Sanctuary for worship. If all goes well, this number may be increased to 40 guests in the pews starting **Thanksgiving Sunday, October 11th**. We will stay at that number until Public Health increases the maximum for indoor gatherings.

To join in the **in-person worship at Rideau Park**, there are several precautions that you will have to accept: wearing masks at all times inside the building (unless you are preaching or reading scripture), maintaining a safe distance of 2 metres (6 feet) between you and people not within your bubble, and sanitizing your hands upon entry to the church.

There are also many **conditions** that you will need to respect:

1. You will need to make a reservation for your group, either using the on-line reservation system or by phoning Debi Brown or Nancy McPherson. Details are available on the church website or from the office.
2. When you make the reservation, you will be required to provide names and contact information for everyone in your group to be used for contact tracing if necessary. **It will be necessary to register for a "ticket" to attend in-person worship. To register you simply need to click on the Sunday service that you would like to attend in the Upcoming Events. You will be directed to the registration form. A confirmation email will be sent to you. Reservations can also be made by calling Nancy at 613-737-7339 or Debi at 819-684-1061.**
3. Entrance to the Sanctuary will be using the doors on Alta Vista Drive at the back of the church only. Exit from the Sanctuary will be using the doors on Cunningham Avenue by Georgina's office only.
4. When you enter the church, your name will be verified on the reservation list. Your temperature will be taken using a touch-less infrared thermometer. You will be asked standard Covid screening questions.
5. Ushers will seat you starting at the front of the church. You must remain in your bubble in your assigned seats.
6. There will be **NO** singing or humming, not even quietly.
7. There will be no Sunday School or childcare in the church. Your child must remain with you at all times. There are no toys or books available but you may bring your own toys.
8. Sunday service will be contactless. There will be no bulletins or papers and hymn books and Bibles have been removed from the pews.
9. There will be no coffee or fellowship time before or after the service. Socializing may occur outside the building while maintaining social distancing.
10. There will be offering baskets at the entrance and exit from the Sanctuary. The offering will be sealed and counted after 7 days.
11. At the end of the service, you will remain in your pew until the ushers direct you to exit. Exiting will begin from the front of the church.
12. The only bathroom available is located outside Georgina's office. There will be wipes to use to wipe down the surfaces for the next occupant.

We have been working very hard to put in place a process to safely begin in-person worship at Rideau Park. We have proceeded cautiously, to ensure the safety of our staff, congregation and volunteers, working within Public Health guidelines in a very challenging situation.

As we continue to move forward, we can use your help! Ken Tong, Vice Chair of Council, will be heading the Covid Tigers. If you have suggestions or ideas to offer or time to get involved, there are still many details to pin down as we welcome people for in-person worship and get ready for Phase 3.

We look forward to seeing the church building come to life again after such an unprecedented, prolonged absence.

Patricia Whitridge
Chair Council

A post script to yesterday's congregational email.

E-transfers: The UCW is also accepting e-transfers at ucwfinance@rideaupark.ca.

Fall Churchpost: The deadline is Friday, September 4 at 12:00 noon. Updates on in-person worship, programs and the latest in activities. We are accepting a variety of pandemic-inspired articles: tell us about movies you've seen and books that you recommend; share your tips for keeping the kids content, or your home safe during the pandemic. Please send articles to Nancy McPherson: nmcpherson@rogers.com.