*First United Church*

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*Intentional Interim Minister: Rev. Daryl Webber*

*Ministers: All the People*

August 12, 2021

Dear First United Church Congregation,

Wow! Even though COVID-19 has shut down many churches, ours continues to be alive and thriving. Just to update you on happenings at First, please note the following items:

**Returning to First** – To begin the transition back to church, we will be hosting Susanna Suchak on August 22. People are encouraged to come back to the sanctuary. On August 29th, Reverend Webber or Reverend Vollick will be preaching. We hope to have many live components of the service at First. On the 5th of September, Lauri Ladd, Central’s Music Director and a candidate for ministry will be preaching. For September 12th, we are planning a Rally Sunday. We hope you will join us as we continue to share ministry with Central United as Reverend. Vollick will be preaching.

Our goal is to return to church safely. For now, all people attending a service are to come in via the back accessibility entrance on the west side of the church. Please remember that masks must be worn at all times while in the church. An usher will direct you to an appropriate spot when you come in the sanctuary. You will need to socially distance by sitting with your “bubble” group on a pew marked with green tape. - Offering will be collected on a plate in the SW entrance if you wish to make a donation. There will be no formal offering during our service of worship so that we don’t pass germs along with the collection plate. Singing is still one of those activities which is still not permitted under current (but ever-changing) government regulations. We will move to live music when we are able. During communion, you will pick up a sealed wafer and juice when you enter the church and have that with you until communion during the service. At the conclusion of services, we ask that you socialize outside at a safe distance. At this time, refreshments will not be offered.

For those wishing to continue to watch our service online, you may do so, but the link using a streaming service will change on a weekly basis and we apologize for this change but technologically this alternative will provide better quality sound and video.

**Shared Ministry** - During our 2020 Annual general meeting we discussed two options for moving forward at First. They were sharing resources and alternate used of space. Covid gave us a push on sharing resources, as we have been virtually sharing our services with Central since the start. At our Annual Meeting this year, we had voted in favour of continuing our work with Central and since **several committees** (Dream Worship, Dream Ministry, Joint Worship, etc.) have been formed and have tried to tease out what we are looking for in a minister as First carries on into the 2020s.  This has been happening even through the summer period. We are now discussing how and what we will share.  As we explore a ***shared ministry***, Reverend Daryl has been instrumental in outlining some key ministries that we will share. Now we need to understand approximately what proportion of time each ministry will receive. This will help us determine the staffing requirements, skill sets and roles for the resources/staff that we will hire to support those ministries. Several members from both Central and First are working hard on this effort, along with our ministers.

**Shared Resources** - In the pursuit of opportunities to **share building space**, we have been able to secure King’s Academy (a private Christian school) as tenants and it has been very beneficial for us both. King’s have gained much needed space to operate and this new and exciting arrangement has been the impetus to modify some of what you see unfolding at First (e.g., lighting, some painting and upgrades to our kitchens). The following three projects are being completed at their expense:

1) A wrought iron like fence will be installed on our lawn to prevent children from running out onto the street.

2) A 6’ fence will be installed along the parking lot at the back to help prevent balls from going down into the gully.

3) Moonlight Painters has painted the lower level hallways and classrooms (a nice white which has brightened up that space considerably).

As King’s Academy will only be using the church during the day commencing in September, the various spaces downstairs will continue to be available for other groups at night and on weekends.

One item which has been discussed for a considerable period of time is the need for a fully accessible washroom on the lower level. Stay tuned for more word on this proposed improvement.

**Lighting** – The older fluorescent (main floor - in the accessibility entrance) lighting fixtures are being replaced with more energy efficient LEDs. This work will cover our downstairs classrooms, halls, main kitchen and minister’s office. Thanks to Bill Turvey for leading the installation of those. Almost half of that cost comes back to the church as a rebate.

**Main Kitchen** –To ensure a successful Health Unit inspection (required in support of the school’s use of the kitchen), the cutlery is being placed in lidded containers, cupboards and drawers have been emptied and cleaned, silverplated articles have been uncovered (If you would like to purchase any of it please let Lori know in the office), lighting is being replaced, cupboards are being repaired and refinished, shelves are being lined and many unused items have been removed.  We are still looking for help with painting and other refinishing work in the main kitchen – work which must be completed ahead of the scheduled inspection in late August. Contact Mark or Vicki Snowsell if you are able to assist in any way.

**Our Gardens** – Our bushes had overgrown around the base of the church foundation. This had become a collecting spot for “campers” to hang out and used needles, unfortunately, have been increasingly found around the church. Sherry and Rob Johnstone have headed up this project which has included replanting smaller boxwoods around the outdoor lights, trimming up the hedgerow along the parking lot, and looking at other revitalization options such as a Memory Garden. Once additional landscaping plans are prepared, we may be asking congregants to assist by donating perennial plants or helping with various tasks intended to give the exterior of the church a fresh look. **Special thanks to Bill Beamish and Beamish Landscaping for some additional trimming and for chipping all our brush and disposing of it for us.** Thanks as well to several others (including Geoff Auckland in particular) who assisted with the vegetation removal.

**The Great Purge** – Our church has many nooks and crannies that have collected “things” over the years. Several individuals took it upon themselves to help by emptying cupboards, etc. and we are holding a rummage sale in the gym on **August 21 from 8 to noon**. If you are able to help set up tables on **Monday, August 16 at 9:30 a.m.** please meet at the church. Items will be laid out on tables the rest of the week so if you are able to lend a hand with that task, let Lori know in the office. As well, if you have items you wish to sell from your trunk (or you can set up a table in our parking lot near your car), you may do so for a small donation to the church. Many people are to be thanked for their assistance in going through the various areas (and there’s still more to do).

**Guard Rails** – The existing guard rail posts around the wooded perimeter of the main parking area were 10” X 10” wooden posts which have rotted. The rail is rusted and has many sharp edges. Royal Fence has been engaged to replace our existing rails with ones mounted on steel beams. This work is being covered with funds from our Building Preservation Fund.

Those are many of the physical changes you’ll see when you return to church. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Lori in the office and someone will get back to you. If you are able to assist financially with any of these projects, please direct your funds to the office.

As you can gather, lots has been happening at the church - even during the pandemic. We look forward to seeing you back at church. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Justin Chute, Richard Auckland, Mark Snowsell or Lori in the church office.

In Our Lord’s Service,

Justin Chute Richard Auckland Mark Snowsell

Chair, Official Board Congregation Co-chair Congregation Co-chair

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