



Covenant Family,

Almost two weeks ago the Government of Ontario announced that, as a part of Phase 2 of reopening, churches were able to begin meeting again at 30% capacity. At the time, I shared that we were adopting a cautious approach to regathering.

Since then there have been conversations with both our deacons and our board considering what is necessary before we can regather in person and beginning to develop a plan to move towards it. We have also received more guidance from the Government of Ontario, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, and from our Be In Christ Church of Canada board.

Here is the summary of what you need to know:

1. We are not simply trying to “regather” and get back to the way things were. *Covenant has not stopped being the church during this time of COVID-19.* We are trying to discern what is next for us as Covenant Church. The pandemic coinciding with our 40th Anniversary celebrations have been inspiring because they have reminded us of what it really means to be a church with a mission in our community. We are looking towards a *relaunch* of Covenant for our place and our time. The goal is not simply to begin gathering again in our safe building where we can be comfortable. Building on the foundation of what has been, we want to:
  - Truly understand the community we are called to reach
  - Be deeply gripped by the mission to be salt and light in our world
  - Assemble a team of *active leaders*
  - Plan and prepare for relaunch
  - Then - with a strong sense of excitement, anticipation, and commitment to what God is calling us to - we will be ready to relaunch
2. In order to do this well, we need to do this together. Our anabaptist tradition is deeply rooted in everyone contributing to the life and mission of the church and community. (Take some time to watch this and think about it as a metaphor for our life together: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsTB0HnM6WM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsTB0HnM6WM).) Over the coming weeks you will hear about the many opportunities to serve

and contribute as we move toward relaunch. You may even get a phone call asking you if you are prepared to be involved.

3. We have been advised by Be In Christ Church of Canada to not resume in person gatherings before Labour Day. We are following that advice and will not be meeting in person any time before September. Whether or not we are prepared to meet in person in September will depend on circumstances at that time and how well we collectively respond to opportunities ahead of us.

Our intention is to move towards relaunch in four stages.

1. Stage 1 - Clarification of Mission and Assembling of a Team
  - A series of messages focused on clarification of our mission and message
  - Clear invitations to what it means to truly be a part of a church on mission and invitations to be a part of that journey
  - Assembling a team of leaders for various essential roles
2. Stage 2 - Planning and Preparing for Relaunch
  - Ministry teams working together to discern what is needed to effectively reimagine ministry for our new reality - including both digital/online and in person ministry
  - Acquiring and preparing equipment and supplies
  - Preparing 95 Robert St. E. to accommodate this reimagined ministry
3. Stage 3 - Practicing Relaunch
  - Training and preparation of new teams and new ways of doing ministry
  - Running live online services from 95 Robert St. with only certain people involved as they rehearse roles and make sure we are prepared to relaunch well within constraints at that time
4. Stage 4 - Relaunch
  - Engaging in our reimagined ministry and mission
  - Resuming in person Sunday gatherings within constraints at the time

If all of this seems overwhelming, be assured that your leadership teams understand that! Some of us are anxious to get back to gathering ASAP and you will read this as discouraging. We understand that. Others of us will be glad that you won't have to face the decision of whether or not to gather in person for some time. We understand that, too.

Some of us hear talk about a "relaunch" and are filled with excitement about what could be. We understand that. Others of us hear talk about a "relaunch" and feel

afraid, anxious, and sad about losing what we have had. We understand that, too. (If you are in this second category, I encourage you to check out the book *Who Stole My Church: What to Do When the Church You Love Tries to Enter the 21st Century*. It is a gentle and thoughtful book that helps to process much of what you may be feeling.)

As we continue to meet online *and* move towards a relaunch, here are four things we would like you invite you to do:

- Pray that God will help us to truly understand his love for our world and his desire to see his life and light transform it and to transform people within it.
- Pray that God will fill us with excitement, anticipation, and commitment for his mission in our community. Pray specifically for some people that don't know Jesus.
- Prayerfully ask yourself if you are prepared to be involved in this Covenant Christian Community Church relaunch.
- If you are prepared to be involved in this relaunch, watch for the ways to be involved, consider how you will be a part of it, and get on board!

In his retelling of Covenant's early days in *And Walk With Them: The History of Covenant Christian Community Church*, Glenn Robitaille says this about the days leading to the initial launch of this church:

*None of us had any illusions about the challenge that lay before us. We were fully aware of the commitment and energy that would be required to "stay the course" and fulfill our mission.*

For us to be effective as we relaunch into the next 40 years of our history, we need the same clarity and commitment. If we have that, the days ahead - whatever they will look like and whenever we get to them - are as bright as ever!

With anticipation,

Jon