

Dear Friends,

At Slave Lake Alliance Church, we have chosen a pathway throughout this last year that would seek to protect the well-being of our congregation and the witness that we have within our larger community. Prayerfully, with intentional discernment, we have sought to follow the recommendations of our provincial health leaders by limiting in-person gatherings.

In-person services were opened with caution and limited numbers in early July 2020 and then stopped in-person weekend gatherings in December 2020 when the hospital ICU numbers were spiking. We chose to model a commitment to help lower the spread of the virus. Because numbers were down, we made preparations to re-open in early January while following safety guidelines and aligning to the size restriction of 15% capacity.

As many of you know, there are a lot of varying opinions in culture regarding COVID-19, vaccines, the seriousness of the pandemic, and government overreach. As a church, our mission is stated as this, “because we love God and care about people, we are compelled to address the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of our church and community.” When it comes to doing this during a global pandemic or contagious virus situation, there are a lot of grey areas, since we’ve never lived through something like this before. As a result, we have been praying and seeking God’s face for his wisdom and direction throughout this past year (James 1:5).

During COVID-19, there have been no restrictions on preaching the Gospel, sharing Christ, studying the Bible, praying, or proclaiming that we are followers of Jesus. We are not convinced this situation is a cause for public protest or civil disobedience. A few other church leaders have different convictions. Yet we must exercise patience and charity with one another as we make different decisions or come to different conclusions. Let’s be sure that we don’t “pass judgment on one another” (Romans 14:13), but rather “accept one another” (Romans 15:7). This attitude should characterize the conversation between Christians and between churches as they come to different conclusions, as challenging as that might be. We must “make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”

In closing, let it be said that the Church is not being singled out. We’ve been preaching and presenting the Gospel and gathering in different forms and spaces since the beginning of this pandemic. We have been attempting to live out our mission throughout the past year, and we will not always be successful in this, but we have made steps during this time to hopefully better position us for the future.

These are not simple matters. Let’s pray for an end to the virus and its effects across the globe, and as Scripture instructs us, pray for leaders in all places—that we might have wisdom and divine guidance.

We love our church!

Sincerely,

Pastor Heath and the Board of Elders of Slave Lake Alliance Church