



Sunday, November 21, 2021

To the Knox Church Family and friends,

On Thursday, November 18, the elders met for a second time this month to talk about what “opening up” means as we get through the COVID-19 pandemic. It is our desire to listen and lead faithfully and well.

As you may know, public health guidelines shift in stages, and in recent weeks, there has been yet another shift. We have read the current standards from Lambton Public Health carefully. It is now possible for churches to open to “full capacity”, with masking but reduced need for physical distancing, if vaccine passports with ID are presented, indicating two doses of an approved vaccine have been administered.

We have thought deeply and discussed this matter, and at our meeting this evening, have made a decision that will stand for the month of December. We are meeting again on December 30th to review and make plans for the first part of 2022.

It is our deep desire to choose a way that does not engage with the divisions prevalent in our community and society, and that offers equitable welcome to our church family and community. With this in mind, we present the following:

1. During the week, Monday – Saturday, vaccine passports and ID will **NOT** be necessary to access the building and participate in programs. This includes youth groups, knitters, NA, SAFE, Grief Share, elder and Board meetings. Other meetings during these days will follow this same protocol. Wearing masks that cover the nose and chin, hand washing and physical distancing will be in place.
2. On Sunday mornings, the decision has been made to ask for vaccine passports and ID for those participating in worship at 9.30 a.m. (Children under 12 are exempt). Masking and hand washing will remain, but physical distancing will be relaxed. The building will be cleaned after the service.

3. We will offer a Saturday evening worship service that will be basically the same as Sunday morning, with no requirement for vaccine passports and ID. All are welcome. Masking, hand washing and physical distancing protocols will be in place. It is our plan to offer a children's program as usual. The building will be cleaned after the service. This service will begin at 6 p.m. and is open to those vaccinated and those unvaxxed. Let us take care to not assume that all who go the Saturday service are unvaxxed; we are simply not requiring disclosure of vaccination status for anyone.
4. We continue to do contact tracing at all gatherings, and cleaning after each gathering for worship or meetings.
5. We will **NOT** require vaccine passports and ID for A Quiet Christmas on December 21st, or for Christmas Eve, at both the 4 p.m. Children's Service and the 6 p.m. Carols and Candlelight service. This will mean reduced capacity at these services. It is our hope that by offering two services we can accommodate people safely and well to celebrate this important time for our church family, community, and all who follow Jesus Christ. *There will not be a Saturday service offered on either Christmas Day or New Year's Day. We hope the reason for that will be understood by and acceptable to all; we are doing our best to remain a welcoming congregation to our community, and offer equitable worship gatherings.*
6. We appreciate the cooperation of our church family, and your ongoing support in these difficult times. We are seeking to love God and love others well in making all these decisions.
7. We will continue to livestream the Sunday morning service, and note that it is available to watch and worship at times other than 9.30 a.m. on Sunday mornings.

If you have questions or concerns; if you have input for our review meeting on December 30th, please contact any elder or myself.

As I noted before, we do not want to engage in any divisive speech or action as a church family. We are doing our best to listen to your voices and views; to abide by public health protocols, and to honour God and witness to the hope and love we find in Jesus Christ. I am deeply concerned that we remember COVID 19 is not a "shameful" disease, and we must take care to guard our minds and mouths from casting shame; and, let us not create a new caste of lepers in this time, remembering Jesus' way that is to be reflected in our own.

with deep love and fervent prayers for our church family and community,

Pastor Chris and the elders at Knox Church, Thedford

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