

January 14, 2021

Dear people of ACPC,

I met with ACPC Council on the evening of January 12, 2021 and am writing to provide you with a summary of our discussions. I attended at the invitation of both the Rector and Chair of the Council, because the closure of the churches in December has caused anger and hurt. Even so, we all want to find a way forward together and so we met to begin to heal those wounds through reflection and listening.

Each church described how the original reopening had gone in the fall. I was delighted to hear that each parish had similar positive experiences. Your leadership had assembled teams to set up the new seating arrangements and cleaning protocols, and they put in place the other routines which are (sadly) required these days to keep people safe. Those who have returned to worship have taken the new measures in stride and have really enjoyed being together again. All parishes have at least a few parishioners who have decided that they cannot return to worship at this time and their decisions are respected.

Due to the second wave which accelerated in mid-November and led to exposure notifications in Pictou County in early December, the churches closed again over Christmas which caused a lot of understandable pain and anger and sorrow. St. James and St. Bees resumed worship last Sunday and we heard how joyful people were to gather again. Christ Church looks forward to worshipping together this Sunday. I hope that the resilience and good sense that you showed in the first reopening will carry you forward into 2021.

We spent a long time talking about the communication process among the members of ACPC Council. Good communication is at the heart of being a Church that governs itself through Councils. I have asked the members of Council to share the responsibility for ensuring that effective processes are adopted for making decisions going forward. For instance, if a conversation becomes too complex for email, someone will ask that a quick meeting or telephone conversation be arranged. If someone's voice is missing, anyone can flag that and follow up to see if they have input. If a statement is surprising or confusing, anyone can (and should) ask for clarification or bring forward other information. I have confidence that Council as a whole has learned from the experience of the last couple of months and will handle difficult decisions in a better way, should they come up again. (Routine ones seem not to be a problem!)

As we can reasonably expect a few more months of restrictions on public gatherings, it is appropriate to take stock and consider how to include all the members of the parishes in the life of the parish. Each of the parishes of ACPC has its own unique spirit and it is important that your ministry plans reflect your local gifts and callings. In particular, Council is aware that there are parishioners who are not on the internet, which makes communication and inclusion more difficult. We did not have time to address this, but it was raised as something that does need to be addressed. I expect that this will be considered by each of the Parish Councils in the future.

There are financial challenges in all three parishes at this time. The treasurers will be meeting shortly to look at the budget for ACPC and see what options there are to meet those challenges.

I hope that this letter provides you all with some reassurance that your leadership group – the Rector and wardens and other members of ACPC Council – have learned from the pain that all of you have shared in this last year and are determined to work together effectively. Difficult times are times of spiritual growth and I know that God is most active in our lives when they are hardest. I will continue to pray for you all and to support your leadership team in the months ahead.

Yours in Christ



Archdeacon Sue Channen