

## **Council News September 2020**

Greetings, everyone! It has been some time since we last spoke; June it was if I recall correctly. I hope that you all had a healthy and enjoyable summer even though the restrictions on our social interactions and flexibility to move about remain largely in place. Hopefully you were able to relax and recharge by escaping to the cottage, going on local trips or simply enjoying your patios and decks. For Nancy and myself, it was an opportunity to sort through years of accumulated stuff, explore new parts of York Region and enjoy our backyard in a way we have not in the past. We can still look forward with anticipation to resuming our travels abroad, going to concerts and gathering for festive occasions but for the present, we must remain vigilant and cautious for our own wellbeing and that of others.

You likely have heard about various churches deciding to resume in-person worship services, including Trinity Anglican. Starting September 20, Trinity Anglican is returning to live worship with one service in the Sanctuary at 9:00 am. In compliance with public health requirements and the directives of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, Trinity Anglican has implemented a number of restrictions and protective measures for its services. For example, attendance at each service is being capped at 55. Those wishing to attend a service must reserve a spot through an online booking system. Masks must be worn at all times while in the church building. Attendees must sit in marked spots in the pews and ensure that they observe 6 foot distancing from others at all times. While playing of the organ and piano is permitted, there is no choir, no congregational singing or vocalizing of responsive readings by participants. Following the service, everyone must immediately and directly exit the building with no congregating or socializing, including Coffee Time, permitted in the Narthex. Revs. Andy and Lorraine and I attend a rehearsal of Trinity's service on September 13. While it was comforting to be in the Sanctuary and worshipping as a group, it certainly was not the same uplifting, spontaneous form of worship and fellowship that we have been accustomed to.

It was within this context that AUC Council met for the first time on September 14 following its summer adjournment. Prime on our agenda was a lengthy discussion of the direction on worship and gatherings AUC should take in the time ahead while the pandemic persists. To a person, we all agreed that the online worship provided by our ministers and other contributors has been rich and rewarding. It likewise was felt that the virtual gatherings for Sunday school, coffee time, committee meetings and other church groups were meeting needs and expectations under the circumstances. Since we are not in our own building and since we would be required to follow the restrictions and precautions implemented by Trinity Anglican, Council decided that a return to live worship and gatherings at this time would not provide the worship experience we are seeking. Council therefore passed

a resolution stating that AUC will not be returning to in-person worship for the foreseeable future.

In making this decision, Council also decided that it would be appropriate to seek input from the Congregation on the way forward. A short survey is being prepared to ask what you miss about being together for worship, what is working well with online worship and what your feelings are about a return to in-person worship. Keep an eye open in the next while for a message in your email and a posting on the AUC web site about the survey. Those who we know not to have computer access will be contacted directly to ask if they wish to complete the survey. We encourage everyone to provide their input. It will help Council to make fully informed decisions about AUC's direction in the time ahead.

As part of the decision not to return to in-person worship for the time being, Council also discussed the employment status of AUC's employees. Given the continued lack of work and the decision to remain online, Council decided, on the recommendation of the Ministry & Personnel Committee, to extend the temporary layoff (now called infectious disease emergency leave by provincial labour legislation) of Margaret Heney and Cathy Hiltz to January 2, 2021. Similarly, Lisa Kyriakides' contract will not be reinstated for the time being. While these decisions are ones we do not like to make, Council felt it was the responsible course of action to take. We continue to keep Margaret, Cathy and Lisa in our thoughts and remain committed to their eventual return.

Financially, AUC's balance sheet continues to be stable and sustainable due to insurance interest transfers, federal wage subsidies, cost savings and most of all, your generous givings. Thank you for continuing to support AUC and its ministries through PAR, cash offerings, e-transfers and special donations. An expression of gratitude also goes to Stephen Crawley, the members of the Finance Committee and Carmen Harany for skillfully managing our finances and keeping us whole. Stephen will be providing an update on our financial status for the third quarter ending September 30.

Despite the stresses and strains and isolation of the last number of months, we have much to be thankful for as a church. We are blessed with a depth of talent, creativity and energy that has helped us to weather adversity both past and present. Our continued appreciation goes to Revs. Andy and Lorraine for their spiritual leadership and support, to those who offer their time and talents to provide music and read scripture for our weekly services, to Bob Kyriakides for producing Worship at Home and video announcements, to all the committee chairs and members who are the engines of our ongoing work, to the group leaders who keep us together in activities and ministries and to all of you for your faithful and loyal support of AUC.

Thank you for taking the time and interest to listen. As always, feel welcome to get in touch if you have any questions or concerns. Until the next time, stay safe, stay healthy and stay connected.