

**MINUTES OF EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE OFFICIAL BOARD  
OF SYDENHAM-HERITAGE UNITED CHURCH  
On Monday, December 20, 2021 at 5pm**

Present: Andrew Advincula, Sharon Davidson, Norma Janzen, BJ Leighton, Terry Matheson, Larry Pickard, Darrell Picketts, Jacque Scatcherd, Rev. Paul Shepherd, Ron Stinson, Verna Timpener, Lorne White, Yvonne Wright

Darrell opened the meeting by thanking everyone for making the time to meet this evening.

The purpose of this meeting is to make decisions about remaining open or closing the church. These decisions are necessary given the spike of COVID cases caused provincially, nationally and globally by the Omicron Variant over the past week. In Ontario 4,000 cases were reported Sunday and 3,700 cases today.

**Open discussion followed. The following is a synopsis of the conversation**

- Science isn't yet definitive about the severity of Omicron
- No cases yet identified in Brantford, but we need to assume our local rising numbers (149 cases today) are/or will be shortly impacted by Omicron
- Concerned that if we close we will forever be recluses
- Concerned about safety and won't be attending in person worship
- Having vulnerable family members influences decisions about not attending in person worship
- An employee has expressed concerns to M&P about increased numbers and would like to work remotely
- We need to find the most caring attitude – aware for some most caring will be closing the church, for others most caring will be remaining open
- To date we have been following the guidelines set by province and Sydenham-Heritage decisions about vaccination, capacity
- Everyone is exhausted with the pandemic yet we need to remain vigilant
- We need to find hope and joy and courage which in person worship offers to some
- We need to be “fluid” knowing that whatever decision we make today may need to be revisited over the next few weeks
- With our physical spacing, masking, vaccination expectations, capacity limits as a church we are doing all we can for safety; there is personal responsibility for each person to determine their comfort level
- Since March we have offered differing worship experiences
- Initially no one in building service created and streamed completely remotely – and available later through YouTube
- Next leaders in building no congregation – live streaming and YouTube
- Have moved to in-person worship following guidelines – continued live streaming and YouTube
- Singing/responsive replies added most recently while masked and distanced
- Check in with Jim and Lyle indicate they are comfortable continuing to be in balcony to manage the technical aspect of worship in whatever form it needs to be
- Attendance has been a maximum of 30 people inclusive of leaders and those in balcony December 19<sup>th</sup>
- Service at Seasons was held in a small space, residents not masked as it is their home, and comfort level was significantly different than in our sanctuary

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**Decision**

The Board determined through consensus, that the church will remain open at this time. In person worship will continue with proof of vaccines, masking, physical distancing, contact tracing information and capacity limits. Live streaming and YouTube will continue as well. The recent decision with respect to masked singing and masked responsive responses will remain in place at this time.

The use of the building for any meetings/groups will continue to follow established guideline limits (10 at this time) with proof of vaccination, masking, distancing, contact tracing information.

The Church Secretary will be asked by the Chair of the Board on December 21<sup>st</sup> to provide written reminder/update to any renters as well as the chairs of any committees within the congregation of the current capacity limits, the church requirement of proof of vaccination, masking, and maintaining contact tracing information.

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Sharon Davidson, Co-Chairperson

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Darrell Picketts, Co-Chairperson

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Jacque Scatcherd, Secretary