



CHRIST CHURCH, DARTMOUTH

A People United in Justice and Love

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November 19, 2021
Season of Pentecost

A Pastoral Letter to the Parishioners of Christ Church

“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.” Psalm 150:6

Dear Friends in Christ,

I write to you following some of the visioning sessions we have completed this past year. During our discernment process, the nature of our worship experience was very much on the minds of many parishioners. Through active listening and conversation, our parish came to embrace the value of a dynamic worship experience. Our visioning found that people are looking for a different church experience than what we currently provide. Our new Mission Statement reads in part:

Worship and Community: In the Anglican tradition, we are bound by unity and diversity as a center of worship and activity for all. Our ways of praising God and Jesus Christ are varied, dynamic, and experiences rooted in excellence to inspire, engage, and enrich our spiritual lives.

You may be aware that the Anglican Church of Canada has always embraced vibrant worship. In some ways, Anglicans are known for the “breadth and depth” of their worship. Anglicans often accommodate different experiences of God on a Sunday morning. Historically Sunday morning gatherings changed with the *Book of Alternative Services* (BAS) in 1985, over 35 years old. In many ways, contemporary worship should be flexible, and one of the ways to enhance the worship experience is through an examination of our church’s physical space. Throughout our 204-year history, the structure of our building has changed. From boxed pews to the movement of benches to the placement of the baptismal font, change is not new. I believe that it is time that we examine our space for new possibilities.

With the support of the parish wardens and our Visioning Ministry Group, we will be making some interim changes to our worship space. During the season of Advent, we will reconfigure some of our pews. In consultation with our Property Committee, altar guild, and our music program, the following will be implemented on November 28th.

- A portion of the pews at the front of the church will reoriented, either facing each other or placed at an angle. (Please see appendix to this letter for a sample layout).
- The portable altar will move closer to the people.

Our new configuration is being done with our pews and not chairs. This is because we do not have chairs. If we experience positive feedback and with more consultation a change might include the use of chairs.

Why are we doing this? Simply put, it is so we can be closer together so that we can practice hospitality. It's so we can be creative with our liturgy and with our music. This may seem like a contradiction during COVID times, but we will not lose nor gain seating, nor will it affect any COVID-19 protocols. Theologically, contemporary worship seeks to draw the minister and the people closer together as the faithful community. Think of it this way: when you sit down for a family meal, are you spaced out in your home? Does one person sit in the kitchen and another in the living room? Most likely, you gather around the family table.

As I write this, I know that for some, this temporary change will be upsetting. I know that for many, space is sacred. I want you to know that the visioning committee, parish wardens, parish council members, Rev. Bonnie, and I are here to listen to you and support you. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have questions or concerns. This change is not directed towards the 8:00 am or the 10:00 am services. The modifications will be examined from the point of all parishioners. Altering the current layout will most likely enhance our 10:00 am service, but there is also the opportunity for our quiet, reflective 8:00 am service to be enriched as well.

Throughout Advent, we will journey together as we await the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. As we wait with great expectation, we do so through dynamic and lifegiving worship.

If you would like to write to our Visioning Committee on how you feel this project is going, please connect with me, a warden, or John MacDonald, Chair of our Vision Ministry Committee, or send your feedback once you've experienced worship to christchurch@christchurchdartmouth.com

Always faithfully in Christ,



The Rev. Dr. Kyle Wagner
Rector, Christ Church, Dartmouth
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APPENDIX: Sample Layout during the Season of Advent

