

Returning to St. Mark's

The joyful news is that St. Mark's will soon (hopefully) be welcoming you back to in-person worship services.

While we all want to be together in person again, it's important to understand the different factors involved in that decision. When we gather, we want to do so in a manner that doesn't bring unnecessary risk to ourselves or the vulnerable in our community. We understand that choosing to gather in person has caused some to experience conflicting emotions and concerns.

The majority of people are taking the pandemic very seriously and adopting safety measures. As we begin to re-enter group gatherings, it's important to start from the idea that people are doing the best they can. Please respond in grace rather than frustration, while always keeping safety in mind.

The Re-opening Action Team has been working hard to develop a plan to make your return a safe one. The team is following the safety guidelines of the Diocese of Huron, the Ontario provincial government and the Brant County Health Unit. Not everyone at St. Mark's is going to agree on how the re-opening process should happen. As St. Mark's begins to re-open, you will notice many differences about the building as well as the services. Be aware that this plan will need to be fluid as conditions and guidelines may change.

What happens in churches is inherently social and relational. We eat together; we sing together; we embrace one another; we care for one another's children. These familiar patterns have been ingrained in us through years of meeting together and may be challenging for many to accept the changes that have been put in place for the safety of all.

Please take this time to reflect and pray on your comfort level with returning to church. Further details on the return to in-person worship plan will follow shortly – explaining how the service may look different than usual and safety measures that have been put in place. Online worship services will continue to be offered on the St. Mark's website.

It is important for us to remember that the "Church" never actually closed, just the doors to our building. At St. Mark's, we are learning to live out our calling to welcome others, celebrate God, care for each other, grow spiritually, engage the community and cherish our resources in creative ways that minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission. We've gone online, delivered weekly updates to those unable to access the computer, moved our small groups to video chats, and found new ways to love our neighbours. We are still the people of God; we – not our building – are the real church.

Blessings,
St. Mark's Re-opening Action Team