

BRIDGEWATER UNITED CHURCH COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
February 9, 2022

WELCOME:

The regular meeting of the Bridgewater United Church Council was held in the Church Sanctuary on Wednesday, February 9, 2022. Rev. Jeff Chant, serving as chair of the meeting in David Walker's absence, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

ATTENDANCE-REGRETS:

Council Members (Voting Delegates) Present:

Blake Hirtle	Treasurer
Edna Matheson	Secretary
Rev. Jeff Chant	Minister
Bev Burgess	Member at Large
Brian Buck	Trustees
Ewart Morse	Past Chair
Jack Logan	Regional Council 15 rep
Karen Crouse	Member at large
Randall Knox	Property and Grounds
Richard Greek	Finance and Stewardship
Ruth Rudderham	UCW
Sam Elsworth	Ministry and Personnel
Tracy Rafuse	Faith Formation

Committee/Ministry Members/Guests Present (Non-voting):

Corrine Zinck

Regrets:

David Walker	Chair
Elizabeth Burr ridge	Vice Chair
Marg Forbes	

It was determined that a quorum was present.

OPENING WORSHIP/PRAYER: Rev. Jeff Chant led worship on Spiritual Health and Practice and the opening prayer.

CORRESPONDING MEMBERS:

Motion: Ewart Morse/Jack Logan that those persons present who are not Council members or designates can participate in discussion but will not have a vote. **Motion Carried.**

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APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Corrine Zinck requested an addition to the agenda, the Keddy Estate.

Motion: Blake Hirtle/Randall Knox that the Agenda be approved with an addition under New Business as 12. b) Keddy Estate. **Motion Carried.**

CORRESPONDENCE: Jeff Chant summarized a letter received from members of the congregation regarding the requirement of showing proof of vaccination for worship services. Discussion included the rationale for asking for proof of vaccination and the announcement in today's media briefing of Covid restrictions being eased over the next three months. It was determined to continue to ask for proof of vaccination. Jeff Chant will reply to the letter. It was asked to include that the concerns expressed in the letter were brought up in discussion when Council decided to ask for proof of vaccination.

MINUTES – November 24, 2021

An omission in the attendance list was identified as Corrine Zinck attended the meeting.

Motion: Jack Logan/Karen Crouse to approve the Minutes of the November 24, 2021 regular Council Meeting with the noted correction. **Motion Carried.**

Minutes of the Executive meeting on January 12th have been distributed for information.

OLD BUSINESS:**Covid Restrictions**

It was announced today that easing of Covid restrictions will be in three phases. Phase 1 will begin February 14, 2021. This means that worship services can have attendees up to 50% of capacity with physical distancing (~ 80 attendees). Pre-registering for services will start for the first in-person worship service on February 20, 2022. Proof of vaccination will be required. Choir and congregation may sing with masks. Announcement of this plan will be issued from church office.

Sabbatical

Rev. Jeff Chant's sabbatical has been postponed as explained in his minister's report.

West Side United Agreement Evaluation

Council Executive extended the agreement with West Side United to March 31st to allow time for evaluation. West Side will also be evaluating the agreement.

Covenanting Service for Jeff

Jeff Chant commented positively on the covenanting service and the meaningful message by Rev. Neil McEwan.



Senior Friendly Accessibility Audit

David Walker will share the findings of the audit at the next Council meeting. The most noteworthy suggestion was to consider washroom facilities as part of/closer to the sanctuary. It was noted there has been a gift of funds to improve accessibility over the next few years.

COMMITTEE REPORTS & MOTIONS:

Financial Report - Blake Hirtle commented on the financial report regarding a deficit for 2021 and the projected budget for 2022. The biggest impact on January's expenses was the increased cost of heating oil. It was identified that the format of the 2021 financial report was appreciated and Blake acknowledged Tracy Rafuse for that format. Question was asked regarding what the projected need from Trustees might be for 2022. Jeff Chant thanked Blake for his ongoing commitment and work as Treasurer.

Bridgewater Day Care - Karen Crouse reported on the agreement between the federal and provincial governments for a national daycare program occurring over the next five years. The biggest change will be a central organization looking after payroll and major bills. There will be a reconfiguration of daycare spaces especially for three to five year old children, aiming at inclusivity. The first decrease in fees for parents/caregivers will be 25% starting April 1, 2022.

Jeff Chant reported that negotiations with the union representing daycare staff is continuing. With the proposed changes to daycare, Bridgewater United will be transitioning from the day care being part of outreach ministry to entering an agreement with the Government of NS as a tenant.

MINISTER'S REPORT:

Stewardship Campaign - Jeff Chant described ideas and plans for the proposed stewardship campaign including education, engagement and vision. Participation on a campaign committee is being solicited.

Jeff has been working on networking with local Communities of Faith. The agreement with New West Pine has been formalized and Jeff's position has changed from supervisor to official minister. This collaborative relationship has garnered regional and national attention and the plan is to offer this to other congregations. Question was asked if the official designation of minister affects the full-time position description or if it is over and above. Practically, it is not different from the supervisory role, but does provide longer term continuity for New West Pine.

Jeff Chant and Neil McEwan have been intentionally demonstrating collaboration and working together on the following:

- Worked together on the digital services.

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- Received agreement from the Session at West Side to joint in-person worship services once a month. The invite will be extended to New West Pine.
- Will be co-leading Lenten study groups, with the in-person sessions alternating between the two churches.

Motion: Bev Burgess/Ewart Morse approve the reports as circulated.

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

Annual Congregation Meeting

Motion: Blake Hirtle/Brian Buck to hold the meeting on March 27, 2022.

Motion carried.

Keddy Estate

The Trustees have been sorting the investments and addressing restrictions on the funds. The restrictions on the Keddy Estate were placed by a previous Board, not by the family and are work intensive. If restrictions are removed, the Trustees have more options to invest for better return and to use the funds as determined by Council and Trustees.

Motion: Corrine Zinck/Bev Burgess that all restrictions be lifted from the Keddy Estate and percent allocation of the Keddy Estate interest/dividends be removed.

Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Wednesday, March 23, 2022

CLOSING MOTIONS AND CLOSING PRAYER:

Motion: Jack Logan/Ewart Morse that powers be given to the Church Council Executive to deal with all such business that may come before it until the next Council meeting. **Motion Carried.**

The meeting closed at 7:54 p.m. upon motion of Jack Logan/Ewart Morse

Rev. Jeff Chant gave the closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,



Edna Matheson, Secretary



David Walker, Chair

**Bridgewater United Church
Committee Reports for February 9, 2022**

FINANCE COMMITTEE ~ Blake Hirtle

Financial Breakdown for Bridgewater United Church
January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021

Please note when reviewing the following information, "Friend of B-United" refers to someone who has no connection to Bridgewater United Church. As well, "Other Funds" refers to designations that do not help with the basic running of the Church such as Miscellaneous, Bulletins, Broadcast, Sunday School, Memorials, Memorials to Memorial Garden, Website, Upper Room, UCW Fundraisers, Scouting Fund, Student Care Packages, Send a Kid to Camp, Mission Trip, Broadview Subscription, Memorial to Choir Fund, Disaster Relief, Faith Formation Sunday, Sherbrooke Lake Camp Upkeep, Sunday School Supplies, Bible Study, Memorial to Faith Formation, Pre-Paid Grocery Cards, HST Cheque, Computer Supplies and Shut In Christmas Gifts. These are items given, to be forwarded to cover the cost of something within Bridgewater United Church.

*Please note these funds are counted by Counters through donations through the Church Office or through our Offering Plate that are then deposited by our Counter Teams ONLY.

*Beginning January 1, 2021, 226 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 99 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during January, from a congregation totaling 385 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

January 2021

(93 persons on PAR)

Local Fund: \$14,115.50

Mission and Service Fund: \$1,080.50

Building Fund: \$457.00

Food Bank: \$356.00

Other Funds: \$1,115.88

Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$395.00

Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$40.00

Friend of B-United Other Fund: \$0.00

Friend of B-United Memorial to Memorial Fund: \$50.00

January 2021 Monthly Total: \$17,609.88

*For the month of February 2021, 229 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 100 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during February, from a congregation totalling 388 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

February 2021

(94 persons on PAR)

Local Fund: \$13,062.50

Mission and Service Fund: \$1,332.00

Building Fund: \$444.50

Food Bank: \$395.66

Other Funds: \$418.83

Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$710.00
Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$40.00

February 2021 Monthly Total: \$16,403.49

*For the month of March 2021, 230 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 95 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during March, from a congregation totaling 382 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

March 2021

(93 persons on PAR)
Local Fund: \$11,280.50
Mission and Service Fund: \$1,245.50
Building Fund: \$462.00
Food Bank: \$390.00
Other Funds: \$915.00
Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$341.00
Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$90.00

March 2021 Monthly Total: \$14,724.00

*For the month of April 2021, 231 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 102 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during April 2021, from a congregation totaling 380 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

April 2021

(91 persons on PAR)
Local Fund: \$14,115.50
Mission and Service Fund: \$1,836.00
Building Fund: \$941.50
Food Bank: \$340.00
Unspecified: \$37.00
Other Funds: \$1513.56
Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$330.00
Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$75.00
Friend of B-United Other Fund: \$1000.00 (Starfish Canada)

April 2021 Monthly Total: \$20,188.56

*For the month of May 2021, 235 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 89 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during May 2021, from a congregation totaling 377 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

May 2021

(89 persons on PAR)
Local Fund: \$15,319.50
Mission and Service Fund: \$1,525.00
Building Fund: \$468.50

Food Bank: \$532.00
Other Funds: \$1,122.44
Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$365.00
Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$40.00
Friend of B-United Other Fund: \$1,000.00 (Sunday School Picnic)

May 2021 Monthly Total: \$20,372.44

*For the month of June 2021, 231 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 86 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during June 2021, from a congregation totaling 383 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

June 2021

(89 persons on PAR)
Local Fund: \$12,587.50
Mission and Service Fund: \$2,014.00
Building Fund: \$446.50
Food Bank: \$517.34
Other Funds: \$3,924.97
Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$215.00
Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$65.00

June 2021 Monthly Total: \$19,770.31

*For the month of July 2021, 231 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 92 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during July 2021, from a congregation totaling 380 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

July 2021

(88 persons on PAR)
Local Fund: \$12,661.50
Mission and Service Fund: \$1,081.00
Building Fund: \$550.50
Food Bank: \$300.00
Other Funds: \$1,885.00
Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$595.00
Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$140.00
Friend of B-United Other Fund: \$50.00

July 2021 Monthly Total: \$17,263.00

*For the month of August 2021, 231 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 93 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during August 2021, from a congregation totalling 380 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

August 2021

(88 persons on PAR)
Local Fund: \$11,331.50

Mission and Service Fund: \$1,073.50
Building Fund: \$573.00
Food Bank: \$455.00
Other Funds: \$449.25
Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$865.00
Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$40.00
Friend of B-United Other Fund: \$750.00
Friend of B-United Memorial to Local Fund: \$100.00

August 2021 Monthly Total: \$15,637.25

*For the month of September 2021, 230 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 89 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during September 2021, from a congregation totalling 376 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

September 2021

(85 persons on PAR)
Local Fund: \$11,235.50
Mission and Service Fund: \$1,188.00
Building Fund: \$454.50
Food Bank: \$340.00
Other Funds: \$2,560.00
Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$400.00
Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$40.00
Friend of B-United Other Fund: \$145.00

September 2021 Monthly Total: \$16,363.00

*For the month of October 2021, 234 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 102 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during October 2021, from a congregation totalling 371 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

October 2021

(85 persons on PAR)
Local Fund: \$35,899.65
Mission and Service Fund: \$1,726.00
Building Fund: \$504.50
Food Bank: \$419.00
Other Funds: \$1,166.44
Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$520.00
Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$90.00

October 2021 Monthly Total: \$40,325.59

Note 1: In October, we received two unexpected donations totaling \$7,950.00, which helped alleviate our current deficit somewhat, but note they were a one-time gift.

Note 2: In October, we received a Memorial Donation to the Online Ministry for \$17,612.15, which is accounted for in our Local Funds total in October 2021.

*For the month of November 2021, 234 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 91 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during November 2021, from a congregation totalling 371 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

November 2021

(85 persons on PAR)

Local Fund: \$11,378.75

Mission and Service Fund: \$1,063.00

Building Fund: \$559.50

Food Bank: \$270.00

Other Funds: \$1,450.50

Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$610.00

Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$40.00

Friend of B-United Other Fund: \$25.00

November 2021 Monthly Total: \$15,396.75

*For the month of December 2021, 236 contributors to Bridgewater United Church, with 110 Contributors that gave at least \$50.00 or more during December 2021, from a congregation totalling 378 on the mailing list, and these numbers include money received in the Church Office, Sunday Offering, PAR, and Canada Helps.

December 2021

(85 persons on PAR)

Local Fund: \$16,274.50

Mission and Service Fund: \$2,466.50

Building Fund: \$614.00

Food Bank: \$550.00

Other Funds: \$3,340.99

Friend of B-United Local Fund: \$905.00

Friend of B-United Mission and Service Fund: \$40.00

Friend of B-United Food Bank: \$0.00

Friend of B-United Other Fund: \$175.11

December 2021 Monthly Total: \$24,366.10

FAITH FORMATION COMMITTEE ~ Diane Berry

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

- Angel Tree Sunday will take place on Sunday, December 5, 2021. All tags were taken off the tree. The children will gather the gifts during the church service.

- Sunday School Christmas Pageant will take place on Sunday, December 12, 2021. The pageant will replace the regular church service. Small gift bags will be given to the Sunday School children.
- The Youth Group are scheduled for a movie night and packing of the Christmas Blessing Bags on Friday, December 3, 2021. That date may change depending on the availability of the youth.
- A Lenten study (Daily Reflections) is being planned for Bridgewater United and West Side United. It will be offered to neighbouring faith communities in Lunenburg County.
- Bridgewater United has been asked to provide 120 cans of cranberry sauce for the Cranberries for Christmas Boxes for Salvation Army. Faith Formation will purchase the remaining cans needed once final donations have come in.
- The committee is looking for youth interested in a confirmation program to take place early in the new year. Please let the church office know if there is any interest.
- The next committee meeting will be held Wednesday, February 2, 2021 @ 4pm.

Thursday, January 13, 2022

- A Lenten study is continuing to be planned for during the months of March and April for both Bridgewater United, West Side United and New West Pine United. A Zoom option may be available, and books cost \$20.00.
- A small baptism took place on Sunday, January 2, 2022 for a family from Alberta. Some council members were present.
- The committee positions of chairperson (Tracy Rafuse), treasurer (Corrine Zinck) and secretary (Diane Barry) will remain the same for 2022.
- Discussion was held regarding fund designation and budget.

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

- The Lenten study will take place from March 8 to April 12 on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Tuesday evening will be in person starting at 7pm. Thursday evening will be a Zoom option starting at 7pm.
- Applications for financial assistance with sending kids to camp are now being accepted at the church office. Families can now choose any United Church based camp.
- \$500 was donated to the church benevolent fund.
- Committee members approved the 2022 budget.
- The next committee meeting will be held Wednesday, April 6, 2022 @ 4:00pm via Zoom.

MINISTER'S REPORT ~ Rev. Jeff Chant

In Person Worship

We continue to monitor the provincial Covid guidance as well as what other churches in Bridgewater are doing regarding opening or closing for worship. Currently we are limited to 50 people and have cancelled worship for the first 2 Sundays in February and will wait to hear what guidance is provided in the next press conference. I continue to be concerned about the lack of connection people are experiencing due to us not worshipping and meeting together, the effects of isolation on our members and overall interest and engagement in our community. I am hopeful we are moving towards less restrictions and able to come together more "normally" soon.

Westside United Church has agreed to join us on the 1st Sunday of each month for worship and New West Pines is also invited. This is in an effort to further deepen our relationship with them; have the congregations come together for worship and celebration as we promote more unity and collaboration. The first service will be March 6, 2022.

We will host a Maundy Thursday Service on April 14th. West Side will host a Good Friday Service and we will each have our own respective Easter Service.

Rev. Neil and I will also be co-leading a Lenten study alternating between the two church locations.

Governance

The executive is beginning to look at nominations and committees for our AGM but of urgent need are volunteers for our Ways and Means Committee, so we begin more active fundraising.

BUD Online

We continue to evaluate, change, test and offer a weekly online service that is produced by a hardworking group of volunteers. As you are aware, Rev. Neil and I have been combining efforts, so we are creating one service for both faith communities which again furthers my vision of a more unified presence in the county between churches.

I am also exploring with the national church what an online church community (beyond worship) might look like and am awaiting a decision on a grant (\$5000) which will be decided late February.

BUD Network

I am expecting to hear by mid-February if we have been awarded a small grant (\$5000) or not from EDGE UCC to build out our network model. The hybrid worship and ministry approach we have taken with New West Pines has been getting attention at both the regional and national church levels. We currently have an agreement with New West Pines for the year and I am actively working to bring on additional churches. As of February 1, 2022, I am also the official minister of New West Pines.

Sabbatical

Given the number of initiatives I am working on in the church and not wanting to lose the momentum, and wanting the church to have more time to properly prepare for my sabbatical, I have decided to postpone it.

Redevelopment

The Redevelopment Committee has been meeting and is awaiting a report from the UCC – United Property Resource Corporation. The committee is currently in an information gathering phase.

Region 15

I continue to supervise, on behalf of Region 15, Caledonia and Liverpool Pastoral charges.

Finance and Stewardship

The Finance Committee has been working on 2021 Financials and the budget for 2022. I have consulted with Blake and offered some input on the budget, primarily some targets for Fundraising and expanding

our BUD Network. Tracy and I are also working on ways to reduce office costs where we are able. We are in need of a Giving Team (3 people) for leading our Stewardship Campaign which is currently being planned for Lent.

MINISTER'S REPORT ~ Rev. Neil McEwan

One of the blessings of ministry, in my experience, is that there is never a routine day. Sure there are similar tasks to perform, services to prepare, reports to write and phone calls or visits to make but there is something always new and different to experience each day.

I continue to be blessed with new opportunities and experiences within my role as Pastoral Care Minister within the team of ministry at Bridgewater United Church.

In the pre-Christmas days I checked in with several individuals and couples who had experienced recent losses or illnesses as they proceeded towards their "first Christmas" or the uncertainties of being around others due to a higher risk of virus spread. A funeral for a member of the congregation was also conducted along with weekly check-ins at the South Shore Regional Hospital. I also offered my blessing to Angela Clifton to conduct a funeral for a long time member of the congregation in January. Checking in with other members of the community in the New Year has also been a weekly task particularly with the wintry weather inspiring more to limit their adventures beyond their home, erring on the side of caution and care for their well-being.

The days of January was a time to get the Pastoral Care Team organized with a meeting time to discuss the course we completed in November, highlight their expectations and gifts within our ministry they offer to the team along with the essential requirement of confidentiality. The Pastoral Care Team is planning another gathering in February when a list of primarily shut-ins and the elderly will be created and shared among the team. The gatherings of the Pastoral Care Team will be a time of support, education and learning. The course our Team took in the fall of 2021 is being offered by the Ottawa Pastoral Care Training Team again and we encourage other members of the congregation who feel called to Pastoral Care to take the course and become part of the Team.

In late January Tracey distributed to the District Reps lists of names and contact information for individuals connected to the Bridgewater United community. Several of the roughly 47 District Reps have been replying with their responses to the check-ins. I am going through those responses and making notes and updates from the information they have shared. I appreciate the work that Tracey puts into the maintenance of this list and the distribution to the District Reps. I also am appreciative of the feedback and information that the District Reps have offered – even if their conversations were brief with each individual, family or household each response is valuable.

With the current restrictions in place by the Department of Health for the Province of Nova Scotia and within hospitals and care facilities it is not possible to make personal visits at this time.

My dedicated time for being present within the office space at Bridgewater United continues to be Tuesday mornings and early afternoon. I have enjoyed people dropping in for visits and chats (planned and unplanned) as well as the opportunity to engage with those who attend the Tuesday morning gatherings in the chapel.

A recent message from Hillside Pines (Carla Robichaud) is that they look forward to the return of worship services soon and will be distributing a worship schedule among the churches who participate. I look forward to returning again to share in a time of worship with the residents. When the schedule is completed the information will be shared.

I continue to grow and learn and experience joy in the ministry of Pastoral Care for and with Bridgewater United.

MISSION TEAM ~ Bev Burgess

The Mission Team continues to collect recyclables and have an account at Oickles Bottle Exchange. If any members have recyclables they wish to donate, please contact any member of our Team. We have given \$6,000.00 to Servants Heart Ministries from our fund raising this year to assist any of their projects that are in need. If restrictions are lifted, we hope to continue with more fund raising projects. Thank you again to the congregation for your continued support of this Mission.

UCW ~ Ruth Rudderham

On the last weekend of January UCW held a successful "Baked Bean and Ham" take-out dinner. Because of stormy weather on the planned Saturday of the event we had to move it ahead to the next day but all went well. With appreciation to everyone who supported us we have realized a profit of \$1350.00 and this will enable us to move into the months ahead with funds for our programs.

From: Jesse Robson <jesse.thistle.robson@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, December 9, 2021 1:41 PM

To: Bridgewater United Church

Cc: Jeffrey Chant; hannah_swartz@outlook.com

Subject: Letter to the Church Council

To the members of the Bridgewater United Church Council:

We were very disappointed to learn of Bridgewater United's decision to exclude people who are not able, or choose not to show a vaccine passport, from onsite worship. We are writing because part of what it means to us to be members of a welcoming, Affirming congregation is to point out deviations from the spirit of this pledge, in an effort to support it.

There are several reasons why we disagree with your decision:

1) Exclusion of vulnerable people

Throughout this pandemic, the media and our governments have portrayed people who are not being vaccinated against COVID-19 in a stereotyped fashion that is not representative of people we know who have chosen not to receive the vaccine. We wish to challenge this representation, pointing out that many people with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and reactions to a first dose of the vaccine have been advised by their doctors not to receive the vaccine, yet are unable to get a medical exemption because the criteria for receiving one are extremely narrow. We also wish to point out that many indigenous people are choosing not to receive the vaccine, for a number of reasons, some of which are that they use traditional rather than Western medicines, that they are tired of white people asserting power over their bodies and/or their health choices, and that they are tired of having the Canadian government force them to do things that they are not comfortable with.

We read that you feel B-United's online ministry provides a suitable substitute for people who are not able to show proof of vaccination and wish to receive the Church's message. We do not feel this provides an appropriate substitute. Many people who are unable to show proof of vaccination are suddenly living in significant isolation, during a time when there is an enormous increase in mental illness and instability (financial, family, social, etc.) Just as many churchgoers breathed a sigh of relief when we were allowed to return to regular worship with members of our community, these individuals deserve to experience the comfort and relief that comes with being included, supported, and welcomed within spaces and communities of worship that our government has deemed essential to public health.

We additionally feel that there is a very big difference between someone's own feelings of discomfort preventing them from joining a worship service, and someone being told that they are not welcome to attend (with the associated implication that they are a bad person who is rashly and intentionally endangering others). It is very important to us to be part of a spiritual community from which no one is intentionally excluded.

2) Numerous protections for vulnerable people who are afraid to attend church for fear of contracting COVID-19

We appreciate that your decision to exclude people who do not show proof of vaccination from onsite worship may have come about in response to fears expressed by members of the

congregation who are afraid to attend onsite worship due to the possibility of contracting COVID-19. We wish to point out that despite instituting a requirement for all adults to show proof of vaccination upon entry to the church, the church community also includes a number children under the age of twelve who are presumably all unvaccinated at this point, and just as likely to carry COVID-19 (if not more) as any adult. Adding a small number of unvaccinated or partially vaccinated adults to this number would likely pose an insignificant increase in risk to vulnerable or fearful individuals within the congregation. Secondly, we would like to point out that the Church has many measures in place to prevent transmission of COVID-19 onsite, including requirements for masks, hand sanitization, seat sanitization, social distancing, and the addition of online services for those who *choose* not to attend onsite worship.

3) Our own sense of belonging within the B-United Community

One of the main reasons we attend B-United rather than another religious community is the Church's desire to be A Place Where Everyone Belongs. We do not feel comfortable being part of a group that intentionally excludes people because of their circumstances or their health choices, or feel spiritually supported within such as community to pursue our strong desire to show love, kindness, and welcome to all, particularly those experiencing adversity such as discrimination and isolation.

As a society, we seem to learn over and over, always too late, that it is not appropriate to discriminate against people we fear (e.g. people with HIV, spirited women, members of other religions, people of colour). We implore you to reconsider your decision to exclude people from onsite worship on the basis of their vaccination status, reaffirming Bridgewater United as A Place Where Everyone Belongs.

We look forward to receiving your response, and would appreciate it if you would please share our concerns with the appropriate personnel within the United Church of Canada and Regional Council 15.

Sincerely,

Jesse Robson and family; Hannah Duifhuis and family