

## **Kamloops re-United Church: Let's Catch Up!**

Zoom Gatherings on May 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 2021

Kamloops United Church Council Circle is committed to serving the KUC congregation and the wider community. The Visioning process which began in 2019 was postponed due to COVID-19, but we're ready to begin again. We would like to gather your feedback on your experiences during these challenging times, and plan for a resilient future.

### **Church in the Time of COVID**

The question is – how are we as a church community in this moment? This has been an incredible time of self-reflection. What have we learned? This could be the beginning of a beautiful conversation!

1. **Continue:** What is working well for you? What should we retain in terms of technology, services, or priorities?
2. **Stop / Re-think:** Is there anything that you have noticed or experienced which is not presently serving the KUC community?
3. **Start / Re-start:** What have we been missing? Are there technologies, services, or priorities that deserve more attention and would serve the members of KUC and the wider community? Which programs and initiatives do we want to re-start when we can gather again? How would you like to participate?

Here are the summarized responses from our initial gatherings:

#### **Continue:**

- The online live and recorded worship services have provided a faith community during COVID and in future may serve many who have difficulties attending services or may choose to experience the service at alternate times.
- The various forms of music in the Sunday services have been uplifting and are greatly appreciated.
- The technology team has done a terrific job of connecting us virtually to Sunday services and of reaching a wide community of people who are seeking spiritual connections.
- Michael's Daily Meditations were very supportive to many during COVID. Suggestions have been made to continue offering short, informal meditations, possibly with a rotating leadership role, or in alternate formats.
- The Affirming Ministry has found innovative ways of reaching the community and fostering LGBTQ2S+ allyship.
- The Truth and Reconciliation group are dedicated to raising awareness through educational resources, webinars, projects and events.
- The Pastoral Care group has provided exceptional telephone outreach during COVID, offering a sense of community and connection.
- Dan Hine's online workshops connected the KUC congregation to resources and skilled presenters who offered a broad sense of spiritual community.
- Michael and Florence have done a terrific job of identifying and applying for grants that support the work of KUC.

- The availability of webinars and forums through the Pacific Mountain Region and elsewhere have provided education on a wide range of issues and connection to an expanding community.
- The Global and Community Action group have provided Zoom Movie Nights which bring people together from varied backgrounds and communities.
- Support for AA / NA groups remains a priority.
- The pre-school continues to be a valuable way to support local families.
- The PITStop has shown tremendous resilience in their meal services during a time of increased demand.
- The Weekly Newsletters have been greatly appreciated by those who have online access.
- The efforts of the Webpage and Facebook team have helped congregants to stay current with activities, events, and people.
- Tuesday Coffee Party participants enjoy connecting with friends and sharing stories.
- The Wednesday Faith Study Zoom gatherings are valuable for deepening spiritual understanding and for strengthening relationships.
- KUC Council Circle has adapted to Zoom meetings and may continue to use this gathering format when the weather or other circumstances make in-person meetings difficult.
- The appearance of “new faces” in the workshop service has offered a sense of personal connection to more members of the congregation.
- Innovative cost recovery ideas, including the use of the kitchen space, have created opportunities to support local initiatives.
- The visibility of KUC commitments and events on the building exterior are important for sharing our values and for raising awareness of important issues (e.g. banners, Pride sidewalk, REDress Project)

### **Stop / Re-Think:**

- Some pre-COVID events and activities which involve a lot of work and many volunteers may need to be re-considered and/or re-configured. E.g. Soup n’ Sandwich, Cookie Walk, Senior’s Lunch
- The KUC webpage requires a lot of volunteer time and energy. We may need to rethink the intended purpose of the webpage, its audience, and strategies for maintaining its availability.
- Some programs with low participation levels may need support for outreach. E.g. Reconciliation group and Affirming Ministry.
- KUC Folk of Note may need improved technology if in-person practice continues to be unavailable.
- After-Church Coffee Time may be more meaningful if participants could gather in smaller groups.
- The physical spaces of KUC may need modifications for optimal experiences of the worship services and other activities.
- The online worship service experience may be improved with some technical training for congregants.

## **Start / Re-start:**

- Many are looking forward to participating in live Sunday Worship services!
- The Ministry Team would like to plan / budget for improved technologies and training for staff and congregational members alike.
- In alignment with the United Church of Canada, KUC has started planning for First Third programming for members aged 0-30 years. (New funding for an Engagement Coordinator could potentially support KUC youth programming)
- Forums or webinars on poverty and youth would support the community.
- A collaboration with Kamloops charities could enhance our local mission and service.
- Choir practices and concerts are anxiously awaited.
- When conditions improve, members are keen to re-start in-person programming including Jazz Vespers, Labyrinth Walk, Sound Meditations, Prayer Circles, and the Thrift Shop.
- There is interest in re-initiating gatherings and services such as the Wildlife Park Christmas Eve service, the Easter Sunrise service, and the inter-denominational service in Riverside Park.
- Activities worth reviving may include Folk of Note shows, Christmas concerts, and fellowship events such as Guess Who's Coming to Dinner.
- Social gatherings such the former mystery tours, picnics, and paddling excursions would reconnect a sense of community.
- Neighbourhood walking meditation groups could provide outdoor spiritual connections.
- The coffee time in the Fellowship Hall following service may not allow enough time for conversation about the service or socializing. Alternate times, places, or virtual spaces for coffee might alleviate the time pressure after the service.
- A return to worship services at Berwick Retirement Community would support seniors who have limited mobility.
- Printed copies of various forms of church news would be appreciated by those without online access.
- The new "In Memoriam" section of the website is greatly appreciated for community connections and pastoral care.
- A web-based archive of recorded KUC presentations, events, and services would create an engaging resource for the congregation and share the KUC vision of community with the world.
- The creation of new activities, events, or initiatives may be supported by an online form which would help the individual or group to begin shaping their proposal.
- Amid the complexities of online privacy, a return to Prayers for the People for specific individuals would help others to offer support.