

GUELPH UNITED MINISTRIES
TOWN HALL #2: “SERVING THE COMMUNITY”
JUNE 11, 2020
Rev. Paul Miller, Facilitator

What have your churches been doing to serve the wider community?
(Space rentals in regular type, activities involving church members in *italics.*)

DUBLIN

AA – 12 Step
Contemplation Group
Scouts, Guides, Pathfinders
Tai Chi
Other rental groups

HARCOURT

Scouts, Contemplation Groups
Parkin Dance, Tai Chi
Community Gardens
Saturday Night Suppers
Volunteering at Chalmers
Child Care Centre – renter
Youth Group – open to neighbourhood
Rainbow Chorus
Renters
Concerts – KW Symphony
Dog Trainers for autism
Active participation with Chalmers – donations, volunteering
Royal City Supper
GoGo Grandmothers (Stephen Lewis Foundation)
Money for children’s Christmas gifts
Plans for Post-Covid Community Roundtable – end of July

THREE WILLOWS

Community Supper
Community Breakfast
Food Trucks

Community Gardens

AA

New Horizon Band

Day Care

Quilters

Chalmers Food Shelf

Bookings for parties

*Willow West Backpacks**Christmas hampers – Salvation Army***TRINITY**

Harvest Market

Contact Place – Chalmers

Sunshine Club

Scouts, Guides, Yoga, badminton, volleyball

Guelph Community Singers

Optimist Club

GUM*Refugee Support Group**Property Repurposing Group***What can you still do during Covid restrictions?**

Gardening

Rent out parking lot

Outdoor activities – dog training

Winter tire changing in parking lot

Zoom coffee breaks

Drive-by events

Communion by Zoom

Socially distanced lemonade on the lawn?

Make use of the telephone

Online services

Rotate group meetings so more can have access to space – issue for whole city, not just church.

Three Willows has picnic tables from food trucks – families have been using them –

move to safe social distance to provide outdoor space.

Remember that *everybody* is in the same boat – partner with other groups on Covid response – we can't do this alone.

People from neighbourhood walking through parking lots – neighbourhood contacts – expressing interest in what's happening with the church.

The Church in Mission.

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin pointed out that the main word the church in the New Testament used to describe itself was "*ekklesia*." This was not a religious word at all. In Roman culture, it meant a gathering of the citizens of a city to do the business of the city. Newbigin notes that there were many words available to describe religious communities, but the church chose this one.

The church's mission is to participate in Jesus' mission of reconciliation, healing and hope. "As the Father has sent me," Jesus said to his disciples the first Easter night, "*so I am sending you.*" (John 20:21)

We can think of our churches as gatherings of followers of Jesus, summoned by God, to do the work of the place where our churches are located. Newbigin argues that the specifics of our mission are defined, not by the internal needs and desires of the church, but by the secular reality of the place where the church is located.

With this in mind, we discussed how Covid 19 has impacted the reality of our communities and neighbourhoods and how the church could respond.

How will we gather?

This is the first question we need to answer. We are faced with a new situation that is going to disrupt many of our ways of bringing people together. Much of our community outreach involves bringing groups into our buildings. What if that is not an option? What if our congregations can't come together for worship or meetings as they have been used to? What if we can't do many of the things we have always done, such as serving food?

What is the reality of the community in the wake of Covid 19 which we are being sent to serve?

Responses:

- A question we need to answer – work together to identify needs.
- Take into account the number of people who may not feel comfortable or safe even after reopening.
- We need to really listen – 5000 people gathered for Black Lives Matter.
- We seem to be talking more than ever to our neighbours.
- People are isolated and longing for connection.

What new Opportunities for serving the community are you discovering during this time?

- Shifting focus to smaller groups -- facilitating groups based on interests – knitting, sourdough, wine making – helping people to find and connect with one another.
- Continue Zoom events – “high tech and high touch.”
- Use technology to create intergenerational connections.
- We can include people who are farther away (woman from Texas watching Sunday worship.)
- Zoom coffee hour – in some ways, better conversation with more more people.
- Arts activities – music – online.
- Join groups like Cubs together so each building can accommodate more groups. Lack of available space will be a city-wide issue.
- People are more open to talk to their neighbours – issues like Covid and racism.
- Increase the church’s presence outside building – be open to listening to what people have to say.
- People are longing for connection – that’s an opportunity.

- Partnering with other organizations and groups in adjusting to a post-Covid world.
- Start thinking about “communities of the faithful” rather than “church” – gathering in small groups.
- Support and encourage young leaders – CCSC Board, racism rally.

Question to ponder:

How will Covid 19 change the way we think about “serving the community”?

Future Town Halls:

Worship

Challenges of Reopening.