



**Phone:** (905) 822-9834

**Email:** [office@christfirst.ca](mailto:office@christfirst.ca)

**Website:** [christfirst.ca](http://christfirst.ca)

### **Clarkson Campus**

*(Mailing address)*

1700 Mazo Crescent  
Mississauga, Ontario  
L5J 1Y8

### **Port Credit Campus**

151 Lakeshore Rd W  
Mississauga ON  
L5H 1G3

### **Ministry Team:**

The Rev. Dr. Morar Murray-Hayes  
The Rev. Scott Beckett  
Victoria Keane

### **Music Directors:**

Leanne Pillar  
Greg McCausland

### **Office Admin:**

Christine Barlow  
Janis Cowie

### **Council Chair:**

Steve Shaver

July 3, 2020

Dear Friends,

As we approach summer with the opportunity to enjoy more time outdoors, I wanted to give you an update on discussions and activities of the past number of months at Church Council.

There is no doubt that the past few months of the COVID 19 pandemic have been frightening and disruptive to the lives and livelihoods of millions. However, despite how frightening it was to be locked down by an unknown virus, Christ First has shown its resiliency. The business of church has continued. Since the church doors were closed on Friday March 13, Church Council, ministry and administrative personnel and others too numerous to list have been diligently working on many fronts. As we eagerly anticipate the day that both our economy and churches are fully reopened, we all understand many new challenges lie in wait for us. Council is dealing with these challenges as we try and come to grips with how the "new normal" will affect our community of faith.

### **Summer Services**

As has been our custom in recent years, we will again coordinate summer worship services with St. Stephen's on-the-Hill. St. Stephen's is responsible for July services commencing on July 5 and going through to July 26. The services will be broadcast via Zoom. The Zoom link will be sent out each week. Christ First's highly acclaimed on-line ministry team will be responsible for services starting August 2 and going through to August 30 inclusive. We are very fortunate to have such a talented ministry/worship team that can provide us with alternate means of worshipping. The feedback has been very complimentary.

### **Return to In-Person Services**

The Emergency Preparedness Committee has met several times over the past two months in order to start planning for not only the return to church in person but also to support some community partners who wish to start meeting again at Christ First. During the summer you may see a few children, in such outdoor camps as Pedal Heads or small groups in the building back under occupancy guidelines that we contract with these tenants.

For our services we are following the United Church outline for return to church and also all provincial and public health guidelines for opening to in-person worship again. Not only do we want to ensure the safest possible environment for our members but also from an insurance perspective we will be covered if we follow these government and health association guidelines. The summer plans for on line worship at St Stephen's on-the-Hill in July and at Christ First in August are all in place. We will therefore wait until the fall to consider changing to in-person worship and only then if guidelines permit, members are comfortable and we think it will be safe.

## **Financial Update**

Allow me to venture back to early February when Council brought forward an aggressive budget for the congregation's approval. It emphasized increased meaningful support for our many outreach programs and included substantial capital repairs deemed necessary to "spruce up" Christ First to make it more appealing for a new minister. And then the pandemic hit.

On the fiscal front, Council reacted swiftly and carefully to these unprecedented events. Each committee quickly and thoughtfully reviewed its budget to determine which expenditures were discretionary in nature and could be deferred or eliminated altogether without negatively impacting our employees and our important outreach programs. These actions were necessary and of great importance because it became immediately apparent that two major income streams, namely monthly rentals and Spring Thing, could not be counted on to defray expenses for the foreseeable future.

In order to soften the negative cash flow impact no new capital expenditures, except for those already underway, were made. The expenditures that were made were funded from pre-existing reserve funds so no stress was put upon current operating cash flow.

The result of these actions can be seen in the attached report – the Statement of Estimated Cash Flows for the fiscal period ending December 31, 2020. It is attached as Appendix 1. You will note that despite our budgeted rental revenues, Spring Thing receipts and identifiable givings being under forecast by an aggregate amount of \$83,000 our deficit to date is only \$12,000. In fact, if CF had received all its pledged givings to date we would have experienced a small operating surplus. This does illustrate the importance of meeting your givings commitments at this time. Appendix 2 gives a detailed categorical breakdown of our finances.

Given the storm we are going through, we find ourselves in a very fortunate fiscal position. This is because Christ First, unlike many churches, is not encumbered by debt or hindered by any onerous financial obligations. It is in the enviable position of having accumulated operating cash reserves which will hopefully see us through these economically challenging times. It is a testament to CF's financial strength that we were able to complete major refurbishments of three offices to make the church more appealing and prepare for a new minister. These projects were funded from reserves established over the years for situations like this, so there was no need to dip into current operating working capital. If, however, the current situation lasts longer than anticipated and a genuine need arises for additional working capital, we will approach the Trustees about accessing the reserve funds. Initial discussions with the Chair of the Trustees have already taken place and there has been a favourable response.

## **Blue Sky vision**

The "Blue Sky Team" of the Property Planning Ministry has shared the vision for our church properties via our regular "e" communication channels. The vision for our properties was developed from the output received from the overall visioning session held in November of 2019 involving about 100 congregants.

Originally our strategy was to build a Community Hub Ministry to ensure a sustainable, mission-focused, stream of revenue from our real estate assets. COVID 19 has had a major impact on these plans. Expected revenues have plummeted and no one can accurately forecast what the "new normal" will look like. While we are far from crisis mode, the long-term sustainability of retaining ownership in two campuses may be jeopardized. Prudent financial stewardship necessitates the need to ramp up efforts in turning "Blue Sky Visions" into a tangible proposal for the congregation's consideration. In case you missed it, the vision shared over the last few weeks is available under "publications" on our web site. Here is the link: [Property Vision](#)

## **Search for a new Minister**

The Call Coordinating Committee is preparing the Community of Faith Profile documents that must be submitted to the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council to call a new minister. The Community of Faith Profile consists of the Living Faith Story, Minister's Position Description, statistical information i.e. demographics, property and financial data. Regional Council has modified its policy and now only requires the approval of the governing church council for these documents. However, we feel it is important to share these documents with you as we are all part of this journey in finding a minister who will help us carry out our vision for the future. These documents will be sent out later this summer for your information once they are approved by Council.

We will be forwarding this information to the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council in early September for approval and are hoping the Search Committee can actively begin the call process in October.

We are targeting to have a new minister in place by June 2021 when Morar's contract is due to end. However, given the unusual circumstances that the COVID pandemic may create for the Search Committee, Morar has kindly agreed to a contract extension if needed.

## **Search Committee for New Call**

Our Recruitment Committee was very busy for a few months identifying candidates to work on the Search Committee. The objective was to choose people who represented a variety of demographics and experience in church life.

The Search Committee's mandate is to search out, to identify, to interview and to recommend a candidate to be called to serve as the senior minister at Christ First.

Because of the difficulty of having a congregational meeting at this time, the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council does not require congregational approval of the Search Committee. On April 22, Council unanimously approved a Motion whereby Barb Abrams, Maia Choles, Rick Cranston, Cindy Finley, Aimee Gavin, Shelly King, Mary Dowding-Paré, Ron Kucharski and John Williams were appointed to the Search Committee.

The search will commence at such time as numerous documents and the job description have been approved by the Church Council and the Horse Shoe Falls Region and posted on ChurchHub.

We thank the Search Committee for volunteering to serve Christ First in this important capacity. If past examples are reasonable bench marks, the committee members should expect this to be a very meaningful engagement.

### **Recruitment for Committees**

We are still in search of a chair for the Welcoming and Fellowship Committee. If you are interested, please contact John Fargey. We are also looking for additional members for some committees. If there is a committee that interests you, please let John know. Our committees help us carry out the important work of the church and everyone's contribution is welcome.

### **Property**

Thanks to the Property Committee as the Minister's Office and the two music offices are now comfortable and modern in preparation for a new minister.

### **New Church Policies**

In recent weeks two new policies of great importance have been prepared and approved by Council.

First is a Privacy Policy and second is an Anti-Violence, Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy. Given the troubled times our world has been experiencing lately these are very topical policy documents. These documents are available for viewing on the Christ First website or through the Office.

### **New Logo**

The Communications Committee presented to Church Council for its approval the first logo for Christ First. The design for the logo cleverly incorporates our three pillars of spiritual engagement, community-focused and caring and connected. The overall design resembles a cloak which is embracing our members and the three pillars. Council enthusiastically approved the logo which will help position us as a modern church. The logo also appears on the revamped website which was launched at the same time. Congratulations to the Communications Committee on a great job.

We all just celebrated Canada Day, a day we reflect on how fortunate we in Canada are. As the Christ First community of faith we are indeed very fortunate. Many continue to work on our behalf. We thank them. We will come through these unsettling times! We will be together again. Happy summer.

Sincerely,



Steve Shaver, Chair of Council