

Our Church's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Friends in Christ,

Circumstances related to COVID-19 are evolving rapidly and, with the rest of the world, we are called to be responsible in doing our part to prevent the spread of this virus. In times of crisis and social disruption, and the corresponding anxiety and uncertainty, people often turn to the resources of their faith and the church. However, in light of the mandatory closures and event cancellations recommended through our local public health officials, we will have to “be church” in a different way.

The executive of our St. Andrew's United Church Council met this morning to make some decisions related to our response to COVID-19. As a result, all worship services and meetings/gatherings will be suspended for at least two weeks and until further notice (We will re-evaluate our recommendations at the end of March).

Suspended until at least the end of March are:

- Sunday worship services
- Sunday School
- UCW group meetings
- Tuesday Choir practice
- Men's Breakfast gatherings and choir practice
- Liam's Kids Club, Bible Study, Prayer Shawl Knitting Group
- Thursday Community Kitchen
- Seniors' Outreach Gatherings (including the one planned for March 25th)
- Church Council and Team meetings (in case of urgent business, the need for a meeting will be determined by the Chair)
- Use of church by outside groups such as Guides/Brownies

During this time, Karen and Charlene may spend some time in the office but are also encouraged to work from home. Generally, there will be someone in the office in the mornings, from about 9:00 am to 12 noon. If you have questions/needs/concerns you can leave a message on the voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible, or you can call Rev. Charlene at home (506) 773-5709 or Karen at home (506) 773-7718.

I would remind you that, even though we are not gathering for worship or meetings, the church continues to have expenses which need to be met. It is at times like this that the benefits of PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance) become clear. If you regularly support the ministry and work of our church through **church offering** envelopes, you are encouraged to continue doing so in one of the following ways:

- Call the church office, and if there is someone in the office, you may come and drop your offering envelope in the mailbox, ring the bell to alert the person in the office that your envelope is there, and someone will come down to retrieve your envelope from the box. (We are discouraging face to face visits at this time)
- Mail your offering envelope to the church
- Hold your offering envelopes until such time as church services resume

One of the concerns we have at this time is around keeping connected as a church family in ways that provide **spiritual nurture, pastoral care, and support**.

Thus, we will be posting on our web page each week, a bulletin which you can follow to provide opportunity for Sunday worship in the confines of your own home. Also, Rev. Charlene will post a message or sermon for your reading.

In addition, The United Church of Canada will be providing links to some worship resources. Beginning Sunday, March 22, 2020, Moderator Richard Bott will be offering an online worship service each Sunday for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak. This will be a video-recorded service you can join on The United Church of Canada website or Facebook page. The recorded version of this is what will be shared on Sundays. <https://zoom.us/j/592865212>

Below are a few select livestreams from various regions that you may want to join in:

- [Rising Spirit](#) (Bashaw-Ponoka, AB, United Churches)
- [Forest Hill United Church](#) (Toronto)
- [Hillhurst United Church](#) (Calgary)
- [Rideau Park United Church](#) (Ottawa)
- [Trinity United Church](#) (Prince George, BC)
- [Timothy Eaton Memorial](#) (Toronto)
- [West Vancouver United](#) (Vancouver)

Pastoral Care will be done largely by telephone. Visits to the Miramichi Senior Citizens' Home, Losier Hall, and even pastoral care visits to the hospital have been suspended at this time. If you are in a situation that requires immediate pastoral care, please call Rev. Charlene or the Church Office.

The Pastoral Care and Outreach Team will be setting up pastoral care call-in lists where contact will be made by telephone to members of the congregation to give updates, check that members are doing well, and offer the church's assistance if needed. Please feel free, at any time, to call Rev. Charlene if you have a need that the church can meet.

With respect to **funerals**, the guideline is that a service be postponed to a later date, or if a service is to happen immediately, it be restricted to immediate family. Also any visitation/wake is discouraged.

We know that this is a difficult time for all. But let us hold each other in love and prayer, with grace, and generosity. May we take heart in remembering that God is with us; we are not alone. Thanks be to God!

Rev. Charlene,

On behalf of the Church Council Executive,
St. Andrew's United Church, 188 Wellington Street