

Wednesday, March 11, 2010

A CALL FOR COMPASSION AND COMMUNITY

A Statement from The Canadian Council of Churches on COVID-19

Today the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak (the new coronavirus) to be a **global pandemic**. In this situation as in others, The Canadian Council of Churches seeks to respond to Christ's call for both **compassion** and **community**.

We appeal to our member churches and other faith communities across Canada to respond to COVID-19 with an abundance of love and precaution, and to **follow best practices** as recommended by both [federal](#) and provincial medical authorities.

COMPASSION

The best preventative plans and precautions are motivated not by fear or hostility but by **love toward others in our community**, particularly vulnerable groups like the at-risk elderly and immune-compromised.

We urge our member churches to reflect a compassionate, peace-seeking response to COVID-19 by:

- **Recognizing** through prayer the human dimension of grief and suffering COVID-19 has brought to communities both near and far;
- **Being mindful** of the needs of shut-ins and other vulnerable groups who may require additional help accessing medical services and basic amenities;
- **Actively repudiating** the racism and xenophobia that has shaped certain reactions to COVID-19;
- **Using this as an opportunity** to embody hospitality and kindness with creativity and hope;
- **Giving thanks** for the many professionals who continue to risk their own health to treat the sick, be near to the dying, contain the virus, and protect their communities.

COMMUNITY

With compassion as a central value, we urge our member churches and all Canadians to reinforce a safe community response by following the guidance of Canada's public health agencies.

The Canadian Council of Churches is committed to:

- **Promptly alerting our members** and supporters to any steps we take that may affect them via our [news page](#), social media channels, and (when applicable) email correspondence;
- **Supporting messages** that encourage individuals to **stay home when sick** to avoid exposing others to sicknesses like COVID-19;
- **Encouraging members** of the Council to develop **contingency options** for spring meetings and other gatherings should further travel restrictions take effect.

Given the transmission and mortality rates of COVID-19, **we also urge member churches and their leaders** to help minimize the spread of sickness in their communities by:

- **Exemplifying good basic hygiene**—washing hands often, coughing or sneezing into sleeves, adopting social distancing measures, and refraining from touching eyes, mouth, and face;
- **Planning ahead** and implementing all applicable [federal](#) and provincial recommendations around crowds, mass gatherings, and event planning;
- **Leveraging any and all resources**, such as livestreamed services and digital worship materials, so members of faith communities may continue to be nourished in their faith even from a distance;
- **Providing accessible, reliable, and up-to-date communications** regarding how COVID-19 might affect church practice in local contexts as well as ensuring community members know where these communications can be found.

Responding to COVID-19 out of both compassion and a concern for community, our prayer as The Canadian Council of Churches is that communities across Canada will respond with love and precaution.

In Christ's love,



Rev. Stephen Kendall

President,

The Canadian Council of Churches