

Update for Tuesday, March 17: As you are likely already aware, as of March 14th, St. Catharines United Mennonite Church made the decision to cancel services through to and including March 29.

This decision was made in consultation with church leadership, and was in response to a growing number of recommendations and measures taken in response to Coronavirus/COVID-19.

Since then, the decision was made to cancel all events, activities, and programs that were set to take place during that period. We also ask that non-essential entry to the church building not take place at this time.

As of the time of writing, risk in our region continues to remain low. We continue to encourage you to remain calm, be finding ways to take care of yourselves and checking in on one another – especially those who might have smaller support networks. Be heeding the advice of public health officials, complying with measures put in place, and taking standard precautions as they relate to hygiene.

These moves are not indicative of the current level of risk, and should not be cause for alarm. Along with other measures being taken right now, they are preventative – put in place to limit future spread.

Communications: As new measures are implemented, new considerations may need to be made, as they relate to our practices as a church community. We will be limiting communication to only what is essential, and to updates provided through Eileen Goodyear (Office Administrator), Kevin Ens (Board Chair), Nick Schuurman (Pastor). Weekly bulletins will continue to go out by email on Fridays, but will be adapted to include updates, resources, and readings which can be used for personal devotion, in place of canceled services.

Church Office: Our staff team has been encouraged to work from home, as they are able, during this time. This includes Eileen, our Office Administrator, who will be shifting the bulk of her responsibilities off-site, with the exception of Tuesdays, when she plans to be in. She will continue to have access to the church voicemail and email account, both of which she will be checking and responding to regularly.

Pastoral Care: Pastor Nick will continue to be available to support with situations requiring pastoral care. In alignment with the intent of social distancing, his in-person interactions will be limited, and in those cases, completed with utmost care. As always, he is available by email. In the event that he cannot be reached by phone at the office, please call his cell phone, as listed in the directory. He has unlimited minutes, so please do not hesitate to reach out, if there is any need.

Along with many of you, we are concerned about our members in long term care facilities at this time, as they are unable to receive visitors, including family members and spiritual caregivers, at this time. In coordination with our Spiritual Care Team, Pastor Nick will be compiling a phone list, to be checking in with them. He is also in active contact with the chaplains there, who continue to provide spiritual support through this time.

Spiritual Engagement: As with many at this time, we are grateful for the means of communication and connection that we have access to at this time. Pastor Nick will be uploading recordings of his messages each Saturday, for you to listen to on Sundays. His weekly meditations on the Psalms will continue to be available, through subscription by email at our website. We are working to make other creative, digital options available at this time, and find ways to share hard copy versions with those in our community who are less connected.

Nick Schuurman, Pastor, St. Catharines United Mennonite Church