

As you've likely already been made aware, St. Catharines United Mennonite Church has made the decision to cancel Sunday Services for March 15, 22, and 29.

This was a decision made in collaboration with church leadership, and was not taken lightly. It follows a growing number of recommendations related to Coronavirus / COVID-19 that have been released in the past 48 hours.

We recognize, and will continue to reiterate that the risk of infection remains low in this region.

Along with similar actions taken by many other churches, schools, and organizations, it is a preventative measure, made in an effort to limit the rate of spread in days and weeks to come, especially among the most vulnerable and acutely impacted members of society.

We continue to encourage you to remain calm, stay informed, heed the advice of public health professionals, check in on one another, and take all recommended precautions during this time.

Details about impact on weekday programs and activities are still being discussed. These will be relayed to those affected, as decisions are made. Our staff team will continue to be at work, and as pastor, I will continue to be available to offer support – though what that looks like will be dependent on how things unfold, as the situation continues to develop.

I will say that, since the very start, people have been discussing and debating the severity and seriousness of the outbreak, and the various steps and missteps that have been taken in response. I recognize that much discussion and debate will likewise be had over decisions such as these that are now being made by churches.

My encouragement would be this: there are enough things that threaten to divide the church in this present moment in history – let this not be one of them. This is a time when, perhaps more than ever in recent memory, we need one another, and we need the church. Which is precisely why it is such a hard and heart-breaking decision to have to make.

Provided I can sort out the technical details, I will record and upload to our website the messages that I have prepared for these days. I will continue to make available my weekly written meditations on the Psalms, and post a longer reflection on our website about what it might mean to be the body of Christ in a time like this – a question that I worry is at risk of being lost in all of the practical considerations bearing down on Christians right now.

Regardless of whether or not you see this as being a crisis right now, there are many people in our community, and our wider community, are experiencing it as such. People are grappling with disruptions to their lives. People are dealing with disappointments, as result of changed plans. People are out of the classroom, and out of work. People are travelling, and uncertain as to how and whether they will now be able to come home. And so may we look to Christ and support one another, as best we are able in this time. - NS