

March 13, 2020

Dear church members and faithful regular visitors:

Your wardens and clergy have been thinking how best to provide responsible spiritual care to you during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen the harrowing reports from Italy and other countries and are working and praying for a “flattening of the curve” here in Canada. However, the virus is extremely contagious and we feel we have a civic and spiritual duty to protect our church community and the wider community.

Our medical people will do their best, as they always do, but our duty as Christians is to avoid placing an unnecessary burden on the healthcare system. None of us wants to think of the terrible decisions to be made should our hospitals be overrun. Will there be enough beds and ventilators?

In the words of the Rector’s warden, Dr. Chris Muller: “The management is up to us...the lay public. Namely to remain sensible, level headed and deal with the reality of this threat.” This is a real threat and we know that faithful Christian people have already died. As we’ve seen from the Lenten sermon series on Job, suffering is real and faith isn’t a magical protection against suffering. Job teaches us that the Lord is with us in suffering and he’s redeemed suffering, but even a casual reading of the New Testament shows us that suffering will plague the world, including Christian believers, until the Lord Jesus returns in glory. So until that day, we serve him faithfully and sacrificially, and wisely.

In light of this, and after much thought, prayer, reflection and consultation, we have decided to **suspend Sunday services and other weekday gatherings** until further notice. This includes all Sunday services, Parish Council, Wednesday Bible study and the Seniors lunch.

As responsible citizens of Victoria, our duty is to practice heightened preventive measures to combat this virus. Besides medical advice from Dr. Chris Muller, the Rector has consulted a local respirologist/ICU physician and a doctor of pharmacy. All have recommended not gathering in groups until further notice. We are not alone in taking this step. Our friends at Glad Tidings Pentecostal and Central Baptist have cancelled Sunday meetings and midweek gatherings and the city-wide Good Friday service has been cancelled. These are larger gatherings than ours, but remember that we have some very vulnerable members of our flock to consider. The elderly and those with compromised immunity are at particular risk.

Until we’re able to gather again, we will miss Sunday worship. As Anglicans, it’s part of our regular spiritual discipline. However, in the meantime, please join us on our Facebook page for “live” worship starting this **Sunday at 10:00am**. We will have Morning Prayer, which is part of our Anglican heritage. This ancient service will bless you with Bible readings, sermon, hymns and prayers.

Go to **OurLord.ca** just before 10:00am this Sunday and click on the Facebook icon in the upper

right corner. Should you miss it, the service will be available after as an archived event. I invite you to follow along as you would in person: listen to the Bible readings, read along with them, join us in confession and join in prayer. We are also considering hosting other “live” Facebook events during the week. **Stay tuned to the website and social media for updates.**

We are also in the process of considering how we as a church family can provide home support (in the form of precooked frozen meals ) for those who are sick , alone and shut in. More information to follow as to how we as a church family will remain involved and in contact. You are also encouraged to phone members of the congregation for encouragement and prayer. At this strange time, we have the important calling to continue to love the Lord and love our neighbour sacrificially and faithfully.

We also ask our members to continue their financial support. The cost of ministry, facility and staff continue normally during this situation. Many have committed to pre-authorized giving, and you may want to adopt this method. Or, you may drop your cheque off to the office, or give through the website. Click on the “Giving” button on the home page: **OurLord.ca**

If you need extra prayer or support, please contact us: [office@ourlord.ca](mailto:office@ourlord.ca). The office will remain open and staff will be on site.

We value your prayers and ask you to take extra time for prayer and Bible reading this Lent. Ask the Lord to visit us in the power of the Holy Spirit, so we might be helpful witnesses during this anxious time. Ask the Lord to open hard hearts and blind eyes to the saving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And give thanks that during this pandemic, we know and trust the sovereign Lord of all creation. May others come to know him in the weeks ahead.

In His name,

Rev. Robert Szo, Rector  
Rev. Neil van Heerden, Assistant Pastor  
Mr. Duncan Polson, Associate Pastor  
Ms. Marcia Olson, People’s Warden  
Dr. Chris Muller, Rector’s Warden