

My Dear Friends,

At a meeting of Council and Staff held after church on Sunday, it was decided that **Charleswood United Church will suspend all gatherings, meetings, and activities of any size, including worship, for three weeks effective immediately and through April 6, 2020.**

This most extreme and thorough response to the public health crisis created by the Corona Virus is not undertaken lightly but seeks to work in concert with the best advice being made available to Canadians by medical professionals and our elected leaders. We encourage you to share in the practice of social distancing and, when appropriate, self-isolation.

*'Not gathering'* is not the same thing as *'closed'*. Ministry continues and I am available by phone and email as usual. Laura and I will work together on communicating with you through email, our website, and social media. The office staff will be working so long as their well-being is not compromised (please do not drop-in to visit). As the crisis ebbs we hope we will begin to plan for re-scheduled events even before the suspension is lifted. One exception for the moment is that Community Ventures, the adult day program that meets in our basement during the week, will continue as we work together for the best interests of that vulnerable community.

This is an unprecedented moment and, as such, is a cause of fear and anxiety. However, as people of faith we have been through deep shadows and difficult hours before, individually and as a community. We know that hope does not disappoint. Ironically this is unfolding during Lent, the season of the church in which we recall that though the cross is strong, the empty tomb is stronger. Love conquers all.

Please be patient, kind, and understanding with your self and with your neighbour. Reach out through safe and appropriate means to those who are struggling. And above all, remember that we are One in Spirit no matter if we are gathering in the same room on Sunday mornings or not.

Grace and peace,

Michael

P.S. To listen to last Sunday's sermon addressing this moment we find ourselves in please click on "Essential Gatherings" at <https://charleswoodunited.org/media/sermons/>