

To: First United, Waterloo Community of Faith

Update on COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Friends,

We are all concerned about the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

At First United Church our Community of Faith's primary goal is to do what we can to keep you and your families safe.

At this time, we are not aware of any congregation members, staff or users of the building who have tested positive for COVID-19 virus. However, we are aware that we have several members and users of our building who are part of the vulnerable population.

The board of First United, Waterloo met on Friday evening (via conference call), March 13, 2020 to discuss the current situation and how to proceed over the next three weeks.

We made this decision based on how we can best protect and support those in the congregation and in our community. In addition we wanted to support the societal containment of this virus.

The decision the board reached is as follows:

Sunday Services including Sunday Café and Godly Play – CANCELLED for

- **March 15**
- **March 22**
- **March 29**

From March 13 – April 4, 2020 (Subject to Review)

All Weekday and Weekend Programming - **CANCELLED**

Noon Hour Concert – **CANCELLED until further notice**

English at First School - **CANCELLED**

Narcotics Anonymous, Fridays at First – **Open but encouraged to limit contact**

Bailey's Food, MT Space – **We will be discussing the situation with the Organizers**

Access to the building – **Limited times during the day Monday – Thursday**

We will be discussing options with Credence & Co. about rescheduling the "Conversations that Matter" on March 29th

We have come to this decision based in part on direction from the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario to cancel gatherings of 250 people or more. Even though we do not meet the 250 threshold we are cognizant that we have a number of people who attend on Sundays who are most susceptible and vulnerable to the virus. In addition, we also have a fair number of people who travel outside the country regularly. Other churches (including local United Churches) have also cancelled worship and activities for the time being.

In compliance with United Church of Canada's Emergency Plan, we as a board will continue to monitor the situation and keep you informed via the website, Facebook and email communication. We will be sending out timely communications from this point forward until the situation is under control.

We encourage First folks to reach out to one another by telephone, text, e-mail or social media to stay connected and support and encourage one another. Both Rev. Kellie and Rev. Eva are available for pastoral care. Please send an email or phone to let them know you need pastoral care.

This has not been an easy decision. The board will meet again before the end of the month to re-evaluate the situation and update you as things change.

Please do what you can to stay safe:

- Wash your hands frequently - Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds. An easy way to remember this is to sing Happy Birthday as you wash your hands. If your hands aren't visibly dirty you may use an alcohol-based hand rub which contains at least 60 to 90% alcohol. Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- Maintain social distancing - Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing. Why? When someone coughs or sneezes, they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth - Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
- Practice respiratory hygiene - Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately. Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early - Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice. Call your medical provider or the Ontario Tele-Health line (Toll-free: 1-866-797-0000) in advance. Follow the directions

of your local health authority. Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

If you have any questions or concerns with the above, please feel free to talk to any of us. Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow advice given by your healthcare provider, our national and local public health authorities on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

Yours in Faith,

Greg Case
Acting Chair, Church Board

Lynne Blake-Dickson
Board Facilitator

Rev. Kellie McComb
Minister

Rev. Eva Mezo
Minister

Links for Additional Information:

World Health Organization - <https://www.who.int/.../novel-coronavirus-2.../advice-for-public>

Health Canada -
<https://www.canada.ca/.../d.../coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

Ontario Ministry of Health -
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>

Region of Waterloo - <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/.../2019-novel-coronavirus.as...>

Ontario Tele-Health line - Toll-free: 1-866-797-0000