



Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church

"One in Christ, reaching out to many"

18 March 2020

Friends

As you know, the spread of the Coronavirus continues to be a societal challenge as we all do our part to limit its impact. We are all grateful for governmental leadership, the commitment and compassion of our health care workers and the many Calgarians who are modifying their lives for the sake of the rest of us. In the midst of an extraordinary challenge we are thankful for the many people who are doing extraordinary things for us.

Faith communities are not immune to these challenges and are adapting to them as well. An issue before us is the public gathering for worship. Last night the Session unanimously agreed to suspend gathering for worship until the guidance of the province's chief medical officer assures us that it is fine to return to our practice. Additionally congregational activities that require gathering will also be suspended. We do not want those of our congregation who are most vulnerable to the virus to put themselves at risk by attending. We also want to help all our congregants adhere to the daily encouragement of our Prime Minister: "If you do not absolutely have to go out then stay at home." Over the next couple of days we will endeavour to ensure all our congregants are informed of this change. In the meantime the building will be monitored and maintained, mail will be picked up and any concerns you have will be responded to.

Gathering together for worship is a core Christian practice. It is for the praise of God, certainly, but we also know that gathering for worship is a point of comfort, encouragement and support for worshippers as well. This decision has not been made lightly. In response we will provide worship online over the internet, for which details will be forthcoming in the Friday ememo.

The Session also unanimously agreed last night to direct our staff to work from home. We are all still here for you even though we are not at the church building. Please be in touch with staff by phone or email. I am still available for pastoral care by calling me at 403.589.9081. You can also feel free to call your elder or any of our elders.

The fact that we will not be gathering physically does not mean we should cease to be in touch. Everyone is encouraged to reach out to other congregants by phone and see how they are doing. Groups can meet online. For example, tonight I will attend my third meeting in three nights using Google Meet. Tonight's meeting will focus on how we offer pastoral care to our own in need and in isolation. Just because we cannot get together in the same room for the next few weeks does not mean we can't get together in other ways.

As it is said “these are trying times”, but one thing we know: we will get past this. We also know that we are held in the palm of God’s hand. We also know that we are called as a faith community to care one for another, and that we can do. So by leaning on God and on each other the support is there for the coming weeks. Until then I look forward to our happy return to Sunday morning worship and the joy that brings us. Until then you are in all our prayers.

If you have any concerns or questions please do not hesitate to contact me. Also you are encouraged to check in with our website for up to the minute notices about congregational life: www.vapc.ca.

May you know God’s comfort and blessings in these days.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Coutts', written in a cursive style.

Rev. Peter Coutts
Minister