

March 16, 2020

Dear AUC Friends,

As a response to the global pandemic of the corona virus, the decision has been made to cancel all worship services for our faith community. It falls to us, then, to respond in such a way that we retain our sense of compassion for one another and for our broader community.

And so, we appeal to you, the members of Aurora United Church, to stay resolute in looking forward to the time when COVID-19 will be no more.

As it is, we are following the directives of the Chief Medical Officer of Ontario, the Minister of Health, our local medical experts and the leadership of both the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada, with whom we have enjoyed a relationship as friends.

This is truly a remarkable, if not confusing time as we attempt to navigate our way through, keeping each other safe and healthy.

The Canadian Council of Churches urges us to reflect a compassionate, peace-seeking response to COVID-19 by:

- * **Recognizing** through prayer the human dimension of grief and suffering COVID-19 has brought to communities both near and far;
- * **Being mindful** of the needs of shut-ins and other vulnerable groups who may require additional help accessing medical services and basic amenities;
- * **Actively repudiating** the racism and xenophobia that have shaped certain reactions to COVID-19;
- * **Using this as an opportunity** to embody hospitality and kindness with creativity and hope;
- * **Giving thanks** for the many professionals who continue to risk their own health to treat the sick; be near to the dying, contain the virus, and protect their communities.

For the weeks ahead (and until further notice) the groups and ministries of AUC will not meet face to face. It is encouraged that, should anyone wish to meet, an online platform such as Zoom can be used to do so. Presently AUC Council, Board of Trustees, Finance Committee, EDGE Property Committee and Worship Committee are planning to use Zoom for their meetings. Please contact Rev. Andy if you would like to use Zoom for your group or committee.

Plans are afoot to provide online support for worship with links and directions on how to expand the worship experience—to our Region, with other congregations and with our national church.

We greatly value your continued financial support during these uncertain times. If you are currently giving via weekly envelope you are encouraged to mail your donation to the church office. Another option for giving is to donate online at the AUC website ('Give' button) through Online Donations.

We are committed to keeping you, the members of AUC apprised of all developments as they occur. Updates will be posted to the AUC website, the weekly Friday File and other regular emails.

In this Lenten time as we continue our journey to Jerusalem with Jesus, our challenges have proven to be many, however, we encourage you to fold those challenges into your experience of these Lenten days, mindful of this year's Lenten theme: *Wilderness Wandering: Caring for God's Creation*. Part of caring for God's creation of course is the care we express to one another and to those in our broader community—the care of compassion, understanding and love.

Friends, let us encourage one another in this time and remind each other that God holds us and the world, always—that nothing happens beyond the reach of God's love.

Our United Church Creed provides encouragement, solace and hope in this time:

*We are not alone, we live in God's world.
We believe in God, who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit.
We trust in God.*

*We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.
In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.*

We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

We will, no doubt, in some future time recollect that these were memorable days when the world—our 'one world' was taken to consider what it meant to be in community together.

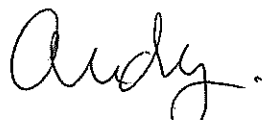
As a congregation, we know what it means to face tragedy and prevail and we will get past this global pandemic as our forebears prevailed in times past.

Resurrection lies before us now; Easter will come, as in every year. But first, we will walk the rest of the Lenten pathway together, supporting one another, as we are able.

God blesses us in these days of great challenge.



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