



## BISHOP'S OFFICE

### DIOCESE OF CALEDONIA

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## COVID-19 UPDATE #2

18 March 2020

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Psalm 23 (KJV)*

Dear Friends in Christ:

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is appointed for this Sunday in the Revised Common Lectionary. It gives me pause and encouragement. Pause, as I am keenly aware that our Lenten journey this year has reminded us in a dramatic way of the uncertainty and frailty of life. Encouragement, as God is ever with us, and that His love surrounds us.

It is with great sadness and disappointment that I **suspend all worship services and programs in the Diocese until further notice, effective Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>.**

Also, please know that beginning Wednesday, March 18 the Synod Office itself will be closed to all visitors. We will still be working in the office, so we will be able to speak with you and meet with you via ZOOM.

About other matters let me say this:

### **Other Parish Activities**

The suspension of all other parish activity includes: all classes, all meetings, most weddings, and all outreach programs including community meals and

**Thrift Shops.** If you have a question about a parish activity, please be in touch. We are taking this step to decrease the possibility of one of our parishes contributing to the spread of COVID-19. It's just not worth the risk at this point, even if our events are under the 50-person threshold that the BC Health Minister has specified for now. This does not appear to be pastoral as we stop being the church together, but for everyone's safety we are now called to be church at home.

### **Weddings**

To accommodate those who have already made arrangements to be married and to go forward in a more limited way.

### **Funerals**

This essential component of our ministry deserves some special attention at this time. We want to remain available and present to provide comfort and care to the bereaved. Funerals and memorials, therefore, will be addressed on an ad hoc basis. One suggestion has been to only have graveside services.

### **Parish Offices**

I strongly recommend that you close church offices to visitors in order to protect the health of those who may from time to time need to work in your office space. If people go to the office space rather than work exclusively from home, you must sanitize the space, wash hands (before entering the office, during the day, and at the end of the day), maintain the 2-metre distancing norm between people and engage in all the other practices to safeguard health.

### **User Groups**

User Groups fall under the same direction above for "Other Parish Activities," that is, their activity is on pause.

### **Tenants including Day Care Centres**

For all tenants we recommend, parish officers, that you be in touch with them and communicate along the lines listed below:

- Like you, the Diocese has been monitoring the rapidly evolving situation in relation to the Covid-19 virus and considering how we can best protect our people and communities.
- We expect all users of our premises to comply with directives from government health authorities.
- You will no doubt be aware that BC schools have now been closed, and public gatherings strongly discouraged, to the extent they have not been expressly prohibited.

- We have required our own user groups to temporarily suspend public gatherings in an attempt to help prevent and contain the Covid-19 virus.
- To the extent work can take place remotely or be paused for the time being, we are recommending that this be done.
- We are strongly encouraging you to do the same. If you decide to do otherwise, the Diocese will ask you to provide an acknowledgement confirming that, in making that decision, you have elected to decline the invitation of the Diocese to voluntarily suspend your operations at this time.

### **Financial matters**

Financial matters will be a challenge for the whole church now during this difficult time. I ask that Finance committees, wardens and treasurers do a review of how the closure might affect them and asking them to be in touch with me so we can together find ways to support one another over the next few months. At every level of the church, funds will be needed to maintain the staff, ministries and building and it will be helpful to know what we need to prepare for going forward.

[CanadaHelps.org](https://CanadaHelps.org) is a donation site that we have used in the past. The Diocese is updating its information and encourages all parishes to do the same. Direct Deposit is an option through the Diocese. For more information contact Audrey.

Clergy and Diocesan staff will continue to be paid as they continue to work just in different ways. We will continue to deal with mail, and frequently check the phone for messages and emails remotely.

### **What We Are Working On**

**Virtual Worship and Meetings:** For those parishes that are not able to create their own virtual worship, our Cathedral will be offering worship that will be accessible to the entire diocese. More details to follow. Additionally, I am offering Compline at 9PT on our Facebook page and a download version of the service is available on the diocesan website. If you need access to Zoom for Bible Studies and Church Committee meetings, please contact me.

Friends, these are not easy decisions, but they are taken as a tangible sign of how we show love for our neighbours. Please remember to check-in on the marginalized in your communities and to pray always for goodness and mercy to follow us!

Over the next few days and weeks, please pray for everyone affected by this crisis. The Church of England has some helpful resources as we pray together. <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-liturgy-and-prayer-resources>

Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy  
in this time of uncertainty and distress.  
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may rejoice in your comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

May the God of mercy transform you by his grace, and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Yours in Christ,



The Right Reverend David TJ Lehmann,  
Bishop