



St. Mary's Pastoral Charge

The United Church of Canada

189 Hwy. 347 Aspen NS B0H 1E0

22 March 2020

Dear Friends,

I recognize the many concerns that have risen, and the many emotions you may be feeling, since the announcement by the World Health Organization that the novel coronavirus COVID-19 has reached a pandemic state, and the declaration of a State of Emergency by the Province of Nova Scotia.

It is natural, normal and okay to have mixed emotions and heightened anxiety. But we must not panic. We will be okay. This too shall pass. God is with us and we are not alone.

Please know that I am holding you all in loving thought and prayer.

Be informed, take all precautions to keep yourself and others safe and healthy, but also be aware of misinformation and “hyping” of fears on both traditional and social media. Limit the amount of time you spend with these and refer to <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/> or call 1-833-784-4397 for accurate information and up to date advice. For help with physical or mental health concerns call 811 or the Mental Health Crisis Line toll-free at 1-888-429-8167.

As a church, we are following all directives of the provincial government. All of our church buildings are closed, all programs suspended and in person pastoral visiting will be limited to emergencies, with social distancing maintained.

However, this does not mean our ministry has ceased to function. If you have pastoral concerns, or need assistance in any way, please call or reach out through email or messenger. Also, everyone is encouraged to reach out to your neighbors. I will be checking in with everyone by phone in the coming days.

We will continue to explore new ways of worshipping together as a community of faith, including online resources which can be viewed, listened to, read, printed and shared.

The expenses of the church will continue, so we ask as much as you are able, to continue to support the work of Christ through your offering. Electronically is the safest way. If you are not on our monthly PAR service (Pre Authorized Remittance) and wish to be, please let us know. You can also give electronically through Canada Helps at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/>. St. John's in Sherbrooke can receive email transfers at united.stjohns@gmail.com. If you wish to have offerings picked up, please call. You also may choose to mail your donation.

May we be in prayer for each other, the world around us, all who are affected, and for those providing care or leadership.

Let me close with this prayer which I have been sharing, offered by The Right Rev. Dr. Richard Bott,
Moderator of The United Church of Canada:

When we aren't sure, God, help us to be calm; when information comes from all sides, correct and not, help us discern; when fear makes it hard to breathe, and anxiety seems to be the portion of the day, slow us down; help us to reach out with our hearts, when we can't touch with our hands; help us to be socially connected, when we have to be socially distant; help us to love as perfectly as we can, knowing that "perfect love casts out all fear".
Amen.

In Christ's Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derek Elsworth". The signature is stylized with a large initial 'D' and a long horizontal stroke.

Derek Elsworth

Minister