



11223 - 51 AVENUE, EDMONTON, ALBERTA T6H 0L5

**March 20, 2020**

**A pastoral letter in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Grace and peace to you all from God our strength and hope,

As each day brings us new changes and adaptations to our lives as our community, nation and world attempts to combat the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is very easy to feel overwhelmed. Let's remember to take time to breathe, to rest, to pray, to connect with others in safe ways, and to find hope in the simple joys of each new day.

If you need information on pandemic please visit: [www.alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca) or [www.canada.ca](http://www.canada.ca) and follow the links "Responding to COVID-19".

**Changes to HSLC worship services, programs, and gatherings**

We feel it is both responsible and necessary that our congregation ***suspends all public worship services, programs, and social gatherings effective immediately***. All rental groups at HSLC have also suspended their operations at this time. If you are unsure, please check our website, or secondarily call or email the office.

We understand how difficult some of these unprecedented decisions may feel. While it difficult for some to imagine how we will be the church here and now, we will continue to proclaim together that we still belong to each other and we still belong to God.

For this time, our ***church office will remain staffed Monday – Friday, 10:00am – 12:00pm***. Outside of this time, staff will work from home to connect with our congregation and offer pastoral care to those in need.

**Church Services Streaming and Online**

While our church building may be physically closed - our congregation will continue to gather in new and hopeful ways together. Over the coming week we will be working to build our capacity as a congregation to stream worship services, bible studies, prayer gatherings, youth group, and Sunday school online. We will be utilizing streaming services that are easily accessible, making it possible for anyone to join in with an internet capable device (*smart phone, tablet, laptop, computer*). Please see our website (<https://www.holyspiritlutheran.ca>) for the current schedule. You can be prepared to stay connected by subscribing to Holy Spirit's [www.Youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) channel (search for Holy Spirit Lutheran Church and hit "subscribe.") We will also use the online meeting app [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us) There is no cost to you for these.

## **Alternate Ways to Give**

As is being regularly reported, there are going to be economic effects to the closure and shut down of many places that rely on the public to gather. The church will also be affected, as our in-person gatherings will be suspended. ***It is important to prayerfully consider ways you can continue to give and support the church*** during this time. You may wish to consider giving your regular offering online through **Canada Helps**: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/holy-spirit-lutheran-church/> or signing up for Preauthorized remittance (PAR.) Checks may also be mailed to the church (*please do not leave any cash in our mailbox - consider sending post-dated cheques if possible*).

As well it will be important for us to remember those in need and ***continue to support the Parish Pantry and Edmonton Food Bank programs***. Many churches will be making plans to collect extra food and supplies to be passed on to members and our surrounding community. If you would like to donate items they will be accepted during office hours (*please do not leave items at our church doors*).

Thank you! These commitments will make a significant difference in the weeks and months to come.

## **Community Care Plans**

We are working to put an ***HSLC Support Team*** in place who will be reaching out to all HSLC members and friends as an extension of the pastoral office. ***You can join the work of this care team by reaching out to our pastoral team***. The team will be working to help out those in need, delivering supplies to those who are isolated, creating social connections, and relaying pastoral concerns.

Finally, we offer this prayer for our use at this time:

*O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. From Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care Prayer for: time of conflict, crisis, disaster*

In all of this, we ask for your prayers and invite your input as to what is helpful for you and your families. We are on a steep learning curve together. We appreciate any help you are able to offer, especially in the area of technology.

Yours in Christ,

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