



20 March 2020

Greetings to Communities of Faith and Ministry Personnel in Living Skies, Northern Spirit, and Prairie to Pine Regional Councils,

We are writing at this time to say thank you for your leadership in this unprecedented time. We know that there is anxiety and uncertainty in all our communities and congregations.

We want to acknowledge the efforts all of you have taken to help ‘flatten the curve’ in your communities. Many events, worship services, congregational fundraisers, exposure trips, bible studies etc. have had to be cancelled or postponed. This is disappointing to those who worked so hard to make them happen and for those who were planning to attend. Ministers have been planning for Lent and Easter and are now having to shift their plans and make other options available including online options, which will take extra work and planning. Boards have had to make hard decisions about building access that affect many. Many of you are stepping up to volunteer to deliver groceries and support your neighbours in the midst of the fear and anxiety.
THANK YOU!

THANK YOU for all you are doing to keep people connected as we physically isolate ourselves but find ways to stay connected socially and spiritually as faith communities.

The staff in Living Skies, Northern Spirit, and Prairie to Pine are continuing to work either at home or in offices that have restricted access to the public. We are following General Council guidelines and have suspended all air travel for staff and all meetings will take place via zoom. Any staff that have traveled out of the country recently will be self-isolating and following the government protocols in their province. We are attempting to make sure staff are safe and that we are not putting others at risk. **Please feel free to be in touch via phone or email if you need us.**

At the four Regional Council meetings with ministry personnel held on Tuesday, some expressed discomfort or frustration with the national church for not telling congregations to close; neither General Council nor the Regional Council can mandate closure. We are **strongly recommending** that communities of faith close their buildings and cease all in person gatherings, especially because many of our members are vulnerable and the risk to their health is just not worth it.

We encourage you to find other ways to connect and stay in touch with church members to help combat isolation and loneliness, and we recognize that for many small communities church is a valuable part of people's social life as well as their spiritual connection. As ministry personnel and lay leaders, we can use resources provided by the national church and various governments to help people understand the rationale for what some may see as excessive caution and tools to help us stay connected.

The Regional Councils are also working on plans to help people stay connected and to support Communities of Faith and Ministry Personnel in whatever ways we can. We will be offering regular online gatherings for connection, resourcing, and conversation. Please stay tuned for updates in the newsletters, websites and social media.

Blessings and Strength, Your Regional Council Staff.

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