



The Diocese of Rupert's Land

The Right Reverend Geoffrey Woodcroft
Bishop of Rupert's Land

Bishop's Directive – March 16, 2020

Draw your Church together, O Lord, into one great company of disciples, together following our Lord Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving him in his mission to the world, and together witnessing to his love on every continent and island. We ask this in his name and for his sake. Amen.

Our hard line to follow -

I have issued Directives to the Diocese (March 12 and 15) and an urgent email message on March 13th to suspend all gatherings in Anglican worship spaces in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Presently, I am not in a position, nor willing, to make exceptions to these directives. Suspension of all gatherings in Anglican worship spaces applies also to non-church users of your building, including renters. I invite parishes to think creatively and imaginatively to continue to provide pastoral response and care to their parishioners and their community, and consider use of electronic communication, social media, and video-conferencing.

Flattening the Curve -

These actions – ‘Social Distancing’ stance by cancellation of all gatherings in Anglican buildings– are being taken to “flatten the curve” which, in World Health Organization and epidemiologists terms, means to ‘slow the spread of the virus’. A quick google of the term ‘flatten the curve’ will provide additional information.

When the influenza epidemic of 1918 infected a quarter of the U.S. population, killing hundreds of thousands nationally and millions across the globe, seemingly small choices made the difference between life and death.

As the disease was spreading, Wilmer Krusen, Philadelphia's health commissioner, allowed a huge parade to take place on September 28; some 200,000 people marched. In the following days and weeks, the bodies piled up in the city's morgues. By the end of the season, 12,000 residents had died.

In St. Louis, a public-health commissioner named Max Starkloff decided to shut the city down. Ignoring the objections of influential businessmen, he closed the city's schools, bars, cinemas, and sporting events. Thanks to his bold and unpopular actions, the per capita fatality rate in St. Louis was half that of Philadelphia. (In total, roughly 1,700 people died from influenza in St. Louis.

In the coming days, thousands of people across the country will face the same choices.

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Existing Food Ministries:

For those who rely on food banks, living paycheck to paycheck, our food ministries are now more important than ever. We recommend all food bank providers consult with their local Regional Health Authority and/or food providers like Winnipeg Harvest (for those in the City of Winnipeg), to obtain the latest protocol, and then adapt these protocols creatively, imaginatively to enable this ministry to continue. A major thrust will be to enable this ministry for both providers' and patrons' safety.

Responding to local health authorities:

We have been in conversation with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and other municipal Health Authorities. We may be asked to make our church buildings available for emergency or necessary services. If so required, calls will come to this office and will be re-directed accordingly.

Guaranteed Basic Income:

Please refer to the link below to Dr. Robert James, a foremost advocate in 'guaranteed basic income. https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/en/blog/news/Guaranteed_Basic_Income. As we discern God's justice in this extra-ordinary time, may this initiative be fore front in our minds to provide opportunity for a healthy populous.

An opportunity to bring out the very best in all people:

This health crisis provides a ministry of opportunity to bring out the very best in all people. We are setting up a COVID-19 tab on our website where we will post creative and imaginative initiatives being taken by parishes as a way of sharing faithful responses in this extraordinary time. Please share these initiatives with our office.

We, as the Body of Christ, are called by God to be continually proactive in all parts of life. Last Sunday's Gospel offered a choice: Jesus had the choice not to speak to the woman at the well, or to speak to the woman at the well. He chose to speak to her.

O God, it is your will to hold both heaven and earth in a single peace. Let the design of your great love shine on the waste of our wraths and sorrows, and give peace to your Church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts; through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God, bless and keep us. May your face shine upon us, and be gracious to us; may you lift up your countenance upon us, and grant us peace. Amen.



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