



April 3, 2020

Dear Faith Community Leaders

I am reaching out to you today to thank you for your efforts to date in helping Canada delay the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. Over the past few weeks, we have seen the number of COVID-19 cases increase in Canada. To reduce the spread of COVID-19 in communities across the country, governments and health officials have asked the public to practice social distancing. This means staying home, avoiding crowds and refraining from common social greetings like handshakes. This is one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness during an outbreak.

I am asking you to follow the advice of your local, provincial, and territorial public health authorities with regards to social distancing and restrictions on mass gatherings, which likely includes suspending all regular services for the time being.

Social distancing involves creating a two-metre zone of protection around ourselves—the distance that infected droplets can spread from a cough or sneeze. It is only through social distancing that we can protect our communities, including older adults and medically vulnerable Canadians, who are most at risk of severe illness.

Many community members may want to use this opportunity to host small gatherings in their homes, apartments, and multipurpose rooms. I urge you to use your leadership role to discourage these gatherings, in order to protect the safety and health of your congregants and community.

I know this is not easy. It is an uncertain and difficult time for many and people in your communities are likely turning to their faith for support. I ask that you continue to provide leadership and encourage all of your community members to stay home. I have been encouraged seeing many stories of faith leaders across Canada who have adopted innovative alternative options to reach their communities, from offering services online to using social media. I hope to see more of this as we stay the course in our collective efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19 at the community level.



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We can only respond to the challenge COVID-19 places on our country with your support and leadership.

For more information on Canada's response to COVID-19, including awareness resources and guidance documents, visit Canada.ca/coronavirus.

Thank you,

Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada



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