



Greetings to you, family and friends, on this St. Patrick's Day:

These last days have been ones many of us never dreamed we would experience, no doubt leaving some of us with more questions than answers. Who knew but God? As a society (and arguably as a modern global village), we are in uncharted territory. Perhaps more than ever we realize that decisions made thousands of kilometers away are affecting us personally. We need to come to terms with the reality that what, just a few days ago, was "normal" and "obvious," no longer is, not to mention that we find ourselves simply guessing at what might await us tomorrow.

As of this letter, the provinces of B.C., Alberta and Ontario have declared a State of Emergency. Most European nations have closed their borders and international travel is being largely restricted. If the Corona-virus (Covid-19) is the new enemy, uncertainty is its partner in crime. In many respects, these are unprecedented times. But these are not times in which we need to fear that God's arm can no longer reach us.

Many of us are having to make decisions these days we never thought we would need to make, not just in terms of our personal journeys and health, but also in terms of the life and health of the church family we call home and which gives belonging.

In the province in which we live (Alberta), our government is encouraging *"All events that expect more than 250 attendees to be cancelled, and events with more than 50 attendees should be cancelled if they include international participants, critical infrastructure staff, seniors or other high risk populations...places of worship are no longer exempt from restrictions on mass gatherings."* Many public facilities besides schools and universities (like Martha's Table, libraries, fitness centers) along with restaurants, theatres, dental and chiropractic offices (amongst numerous others) are closing for the foreseeable future. This will not affect all of us, but some will feel the effects rather drastically through loss of income and

perhaps most importantly the loss of feeling in control and so let us pray for each other.

In light of this new reality, the Leadership Team here at Camrose Church of God is wrestling with the question, "How can we best serve our congregation if we can't gather as a community? How can we best serve our faith community remotely?" The Leadership Team is meeting on Thursday to start working through some of these questions. Your prayers would be valued.

In view of all of this, allow me to give us the following encouragement:

Please keep current and abide by the most recent government guidelines with regard to doing your part to "flatten the curve," that is, of stopping the Corona-virus from spreading. (The Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the US is indicating an 8-week cycle on this virus...that very likely may become the timeline we are looking at in terms of recently announced restrictions).

Last Sunday gathering was canceled, but as said already: ***No-one can cancel church! Church is the people of God, engaged in the worship of God, sharing in the word of God. This means that church services can take many different forms.*** Making such a decision was not an easy one but foresaw what our provincial government was recommending as of now. But even more importantly this decision falls in line with our calling as followers of Christ to love our neighbours, and particularly the most vulnerable amongst us. It is perhaps in a time such as this that we are called to make our love of God shine even brighter. Let us be encouraged to share with others that the reason for this decision is not self-protection, but rather love. Choices like this are not made to minimize our own risk, but to protect others from risk. For the next number of weeks, knowing that more cancellations may be necessary, we want you to, check with our provincial health authorities for more information. The link below may be of help to you:

Alberta: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca>

But also check our website and your email. We also want to get creative to maintain clear communication with you our church family members using whatever media we have available. This may mean moving to a more on-line presence by way of broadcasting messages or creating and emailing weekly Bible study guides to your members. Let's see what we can come

up with. In the meantime, do what you can to promote a shared journey in these days.

Finally, as children of God let us be of good courage in these uncertain times. With some of the irrational and fear driven reactions you may have witnessed yourself or heard about, what is needed most these days is grounded, faith-filled, level-headed people who model for others a hope and steadfastness that is anchored in Jesus. Let us to our best to model and communicate such qualities.

You may find the following words from C.S. Lewis (written some 72 years ago) of encouragement. As you read, simply replace "atomic bomb" with "Coronavirus."

"In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb. "How are we to live in an atomic age?" I am tempted to reply: "Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents.

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.

This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds." ("On Living in an Atomic Age" (1948) in [Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays](#))

Praying for all,

The Leadership Team

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