

Dear ELCIC Congregational Treasurers and Leaders,

Over the last few weeks we have seen things change significantly on a daily basis, impacting our everyday lives, both within and outside of our congregations. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has created a lot of uncertainty. These are unprecedented times.

The difficult decisions we have been faced with lately to suspend worship and gatherings reflect a deep concern for the wider community, especially those most vulnerable. And, it is unknown how long this period of social distancing, and for some social isolation, will continue.

We understand that for most congregations, the suspension of regular worship services eliminates a major source of income: Sunday offerings. While some worshippers will make catch-up donations once services resume, there are bills to pay in the meantime.

Many congregational expenses are fixed; there are few good ways of reducing costs. Across the church our pastors are committed to maintaining ministry while public gatherings are suspended. The effort to find and implement alternatives is at least as time-consuming as conducting regular Sunday worship services and conducting home visits.

The solution is to provide alternative ways of making gifts to the church. If you haven't already done so, we encourage you to tell your members and supporters about other ways they can keep giving to God's mission through the church. We have enclosed a sample letter you can adapt for your own use. It was created by André Brideau, treasurer of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Bridgewater, NS. André has graciously allowed us to share it with you for you to customize as appropriate and use it if you wish.

We have also included some information on implementing the giving methods André outlines in his letter as well as some other options that you may wish to consider.

If you need any assistance with these options or have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact your Synod or the ELCIC National Office. The coming days, weeks and months are uncharted territory, but as our Bishops shared in their March 13, 2020 letter to the church, "through these challenges, we hope and pray that each of our communities will continue to be faithful and public witnesses to the grace and love of God through Christ."

We pray for our leaders and members, and all those affected by COVID-19, those who are infected, those who are quarantined, those who are grieving the death of loved ones, those experiencing racism and prejudice, and all who continue to care for the sick and vulnerable.

Blessings on your ministry during this time.

Gene Blishen, Treasurer
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada National Office

Jerry Nieman, Treasurer
British Columbia Synod

Paul Ellison, Treasurer
Synod of Alberta and the Territories

Monica Johnson, Finance Manager
Saskatchewan Synod

Neil Miller, Treasurer
Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod

Keith Myra, Treasurer
Eastern Synod