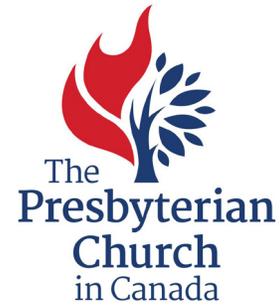




Anglican Church
of Canada



Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Canada



The
Presbyterian
Church
in Canada

March 20, 2020

The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, M.P. P.C.
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
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Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We are at the beginning of a long-feared global pandemic with COVID19. Thank you for the leadership you are giving to keeping the nation calm while implementing the difficult and necessary measures to address containment. Your personal example of self-isolation was an important sign for us all. Thank you too for including non-profits and charities in your measures to assist with a wage subsidy for small businesses.

The far-reaching impact of the illness and the radical social distancing necessary to slow down and contain this virus is already having a significant impact on the Canadian economy.

We write to you as faith leaders to ask you to consider the impact on the entire religious sector of Canadian life. Churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious community hubs are an essential part of social networks that meet the needs of the elderly, lonely, sick and marginalized across Canada. We have networks not only of buildings, but of communities of people who check-in on; care for; and provide spiritual hope and encouragement to anyone in need in good times and in bad. Our communities are now at risk. We are facing unprecedented change in both our ability to function as communities and in the resources to continue needed programs.

We will adapt to the closure of our gathered activities for we are communities who reach out in a variety of modalities. Many communities voluntarily enacted social distancing measures before being requested. The creativity of our clergy and people is surfacing to provide connection across technological platforms and ordinary simple notes and phone calls.

However, our capacity to function has always rested on voluntary donations including a significant proportion that comes to our communities via weekly worship opportunities. Although we have strongly encouraged the use of pre-authorized giving, many people stay committed to in person donations in light of their fixed incomes, precarious employment or personal preference. Without these resources our capacity to offer the community programs that are reaching those most at risk and provide pastoral care to the shut-in elderly will be deeply compromised.

CARDUS, a faith based think-tank, has noted in its research that for every dollar of income to the religious sector, \$4.77 is given back into the community in common good services. That will disappear even as the social needs for cohesion, hope and care grow in the coming months.

We urge that part of the money dedicated to COVID19 economic relief and stimulus be available to faith communities and non-profit charities. We would be pleased to share in an online consultation to discuss this further.

Our communities are resilient and committed. With or without support we will continue to offer our best efforts. However we are at risk, from COVID19 and from a collapse of capacity. We are committed to the common good of the whole community, not just our own people, and to supporting government measures to ensure the best outcomes for the whole of society. Help us help our villages, towns and cities in this crisis.

Sincerely,



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