



March 13, 2020

Greetings Friends,

In light of the recent announcement of three presumptive cases of the Covid-19 virus in Manitoba, I would like to take this opportunity to update you about the response of Crescent Fort Rouge United Church to this apparent outbreak.

As of yesterday, we have begun to implement our emergency preparedness plan. The plan seeks to ensure that all folks who use our facility are safe, that the spread of illness is prevented, that communication is timely, information shared is accurate, and that strategies are in place to allow us to maintain our core operations with as little disruption as possible.

Our emergency response team—consisting of staff, members, and representatives from the Leadership Team, Standing Committees, and key ministry groups—has been deployed, and will be implementing protocols and procedures to ensure that all those who use our building are safe, that the risk to the wider community is contained, that key functions are maintained, and that our regular operations are able to continue without significant disruption.

At this time there is no plan to close our facility to outside use, shut-down the offices or cancel public worship or any other scheduled events. Obviously, circumstances may change and some decisions may be outside of our control. We will attempt to advise folks of any closings or cancellations so please continue to check email, and the church's facebook page ([www.facebook.com/cfruc](http://www.facebook.com/cfruc)) and website ([www.crescentfortrouge.ca](http://www.crescentfortrouge.ca)) for updates.

While attempting to make decisions that we believe are in the best interests of the community that we serve, we will also be following the advice of the Governments of Canada and Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg, the Prairie to Pine Region, and public health officials. This is a time when we must work together for the good of all.

As long as our facility is able to remain open, it is our intention to do all that we can to keep folks using our building safe, and to prevent the spread of illness. Hand sanitizer will be available at all entrances, and in various other locations in the building. Common areas like kitchens and bathrooms, and shared items like telephones, door handles and light switches will be more frequently cleaned and sanitized.

We encourage everyone to observe good preventative and containment strategies, such as staying home if you are sick, coughing into your sleeve or a handkerchief, practicing good hand hygiene, refraining from shaking hands when greeting people, and practicing social distancing—keeping a minimum of 1 metre away from others, and avoiding being in sustained close proximity to others.

If you consider yourself, or those with whom you have close contact to be especially vulnerable to the virus, please consider avoiding any public gathering until the outbreak has abated. Keep informed about recent developments and details about the virus by checking out the Government of Canada and Government of Manitoba websites.

We will continue to hold gatherings for public worship until such time as this is deemed ill-advised, but will make whatever changes are necessary to mitigate any health risks. We will be discontinuing pre-service coffee, and post-service refreshments. We will discourage handshaking and other touch by way of greeting, and offer alternatives. For those who would prefer not to use shared hymnbooks, the words to our hymns will be available as separate inserts in the program. We will make resources available for those who choose to worship or practice other spiritual disciplines at home.

While we encourage folks to observe social distancing measures to limit the possibility of spreading infection, we all need to do what we can to prevent social isolation. We will continue to offer pastoral care, although it may take the form of phone calls rather than visits. Members of our Pastoral Care team will continue to check in with those who are most at risk, but all of us can reach out to friends and neighbours who may be facing quarantine, or loneliness.

The creation of a new church directory allows us to share (upon request) the contact information of those who participated in this publication with one another. If you want to follow up a church friend, but don't know how to reach them, we may have their authorization to share their contact information with you.

We are asking that if you or someone you know becomes sick or is asked to self-isolate, you notify the church office so that we can offer whatever support is possible. We are also asking that you consider sharing emergency contact information with the church office so that we are able to be in touch with those who may be caring for you in a time of illness, or who should be contacted by us, were you to be taken ill at church. An information sheet will be available for you to fill out this Sunday.

In terms of plans for our ministry and other interest groups, at this point, we have issued no overall direction about small group gatherings. Instead, we are encouraging all groups whose programs are housed here to assess the risk that this outbreak poses to their participants or those with whom they will come in contact and to make decisions that are in the best interests of the community at large. Meetings of our prayer group will be temporarily suspended. We will be contacting parents directly about arrangements made for our Nursery and Sunday School. Other groups may choose to continue—at least for a time.

In order to facilitate timely communication, we ask that you advise the office of your intentions at the earliest opportunity. We will do our best to work with you to accommodate any decision to reschedule, postpone or cancel an event or gathering.

The Leadership Team has taken on the responsibility for ensuring that our operations will continue with as little disruption as possible during this outbreak. Should our staff be unable to work due to illness, quarantine or the need to self-isolate, we have made provision for their key tasks to be done remotely or by others. We have identified back-ups to provide for worship, pastoral care, and key administrative and custodial tasks. People will be cared for, the bills will be paid, and the building will be cleaned even if our regular staff are unable to fill their obligations.

We will continue to act in ways that we believe will ensure that we are able to continue our work, while safeguarding the health and well-being of all. We will endeavour to provide updates as the situation warrants, and revise our strategies as necessary.

We are confident that by working together, sharing information in a timely fashion, and seeking to do what is best for the good of all, we will be able to prevent the widescale spread of illness, and ensure the safety of those for whom we have shared responsibility.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours in Christ

Rev. Marc Whitehead