



RESPONSE TO COVID-19/CORONAVIRUS – UPDATE #1

During the past few weeks, churches across Canada have responded to the COVID-19/coronavirus in a variety of ways. Some have decided to close their doors and provide alternate ways to connect. Other churches have kept their doors open and implemented significant precautions to prevent the spread of the virus. In different ways, both of these responses value the importance of community and the health of parishioners. The approaches also place significant attention on the provincial and federal guidelines as well as the ongoing impact on the faith community. This being said, at SMC we feel it is important not only to communicate what we are doing, but also how we are doing it. In this way we hope to inform our congregation about the reasons for the decisions that are made and how we intend to proceed as this crisis progresses.

On March 13, the SMC Executive Committee met. Based on input from pastoral staff as well as provincial and federal guidelines, it was decided that programming and regular Sunday morning worship services would continue. The guidelines kept changing. On March 17, SMC's Executive Committee consulted with pastoral staff and decided to cancel Sunday morning services in SMC's sanctuary until further notice. A decision was made to begin prerecording services which would be made available via the SMC website. The criteria were based on a desire to not only meet the guidelines, but to exceed them. We will resume worshipping together in person as soon as we are permitted to do so. SMC programs and meetings as well as rentals will only take place if the most up-to-date recommendations can be met. Current guidelines can be found at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19>.

The following is a list of precautionary measures SMC will continue implementing to limit the transmission of the virus.

1. As a church that has significant space available in its building, we will take advantage of social distancing at all times.
2. SMC publicly discourages people from shaking hands with each other.
3. The number of sanitizer stations available throughout the building have been increased.
4. Frequently touched surfaces will be sanitized on a regular basis.

We want to affirm and encourage those who have concerns and choose to refrain from attending programs or meetings. Likewise, individuals showing symptoms of illness are asked to stay home out of love for the greater community.

During this crisis we, as church leadership, desire to continue providing support and encouragement for our congregation. To this end, our worship services will be recorded prior to each Sunday morning and made available on SMC's website. We commit to remain in contact with the congregation through email or phone. Each week we will also send out an email asking for prayer requests and will forward them to the congregation on Sunday morning. As we pray together, we continue to be united and care for one another.



For the duration of our service suspension, we ask that you drop off your donations at the SMC office or send your contribution electronically. If you require assistance or have any questions about this, please call the SMC Administrative Assistant.

To meet or not to meet?

Sunday morning is not the only time we gather as a community. We recognize that various SMC groups and committees also have to determine whether they will meet or not. The following checklist will help you evaluate the situation and provides some continuity throughout our community of faith. Consider these points as you evaluate whether you should proceed with future meetings or events at SMC.

1. Are there significant reasons why you need to meet at this time?
2. Consult the current guidelines (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19>) and ensure you can meet them.
3. What can be done so that people feel free to make their own choice regarding attendance?
4. Consider the impact on other areas of church life. Before you reach a firm conclusion, test the idea with your group and/or a pastor.
5. Should anything change, contact the SMC office as soon as possible. Provide the details and explain the benefits of the decision.

If SMC can provide any assistance (such as praying for you, picking up your groceries or medication, or providing a ride for a doctor's appointment) or you just need to talk to someone, we invite you to call. If any questions or concerns arise, please contact Church Board Chair Reg Penner or Pastor Lee Hiebert.

Affirmed by SMC Church Board
March 19, 2020