

Dear Southridge Family,

As the concern around COVID19 intensifies, we want to update you on how we're monitoring and responding to this situation as a faith community, seeking to navigate appropriate precautions and considering how we can best participate in caring for one another, our community, and our global sisters and brothers.

We are committed to taking direction from Niagara Public Health. They inform us that currently there are no known cases of COVID19 in Niagara, and therefore they are not recommending the need for any changes to large group gatherings, including worship services & church activities, at this time.

We are seeking to be diligent in our knowledge and preparations by monitoring the situation via reputable health organizations and adhering to their recommended safety protocols. As such, we wanted to mention the following points:

- We will continue to maintain our high standard of facility cleanliness and maintenance, with a priority on disinfecting high-traffic areas.
- While it is consistently recommended that hand-washing with soap and water is the best defense, we do have alcohol-based hand-sanitizer available at each location for your convenience as well.
- All of the food preparation in our facilities for official programs (Shelter, Jam Co, Harvest & Collective Kitchens) happens in regularly inspected kitchens and is overseen by certified safe food handlers.
- Effective immediately, Shelter staff and volunteers will be implementing a screening tool to ensure the safety of the Shelter community.
- We would never want your experience of community gatherings at Southridge to compromise your comfort levels. Please do your best to use alternative ways of greeting each other whenever we gather (e.g. elbow or fist bumps, a wave, a hand on your heart, etc.)
- We are continuously monitoring this situation and are committed to not compromising anyone's safety. We will take the appropriate steps should the conditions in Niagara change to the point where additional action steps need to be taken.

In efforts to ensure the ongoing health and safety of all, we encourage everyone to continue with recommended health protocols, not just at Southridge, but in our daily lives: regular and thorough hand-washing, covering your cough with your elbow (not your hand), sneezing into tissues, avoiding touching your face, avoiding close contact with those who are sick, and staying at home if you are feeling unwell (regardless of specific symptoms).

As we seek to respond to this situation as Jesus would, a few things we want to remember:

- While we seek to be informed and prepared, we don't want to be instruments of chaos, panic, rumour, stigma, or racism.
- We will continue to be thankful for our current health, while upholding those who are vulnerable or suffering in prayer.
- We want to be advocating for the comfort and safety of all, even when that means extending grace to those whose comfort levels are different than our own.
- We will love others by prioritizing these precautions, even though our personal health risk may be low, recognizing that others may be at a higher risk than we are.

Globally, this situation is continually changing and we ask for your understanding as we navigate those changes real time. Should Niagara Public Health or the Public Health Agency of Canada change the status of large group gatherings in Niagara, should we find ourselves in a quarantine situation, or should there be specific new safety instructions that are put in place, please be assured that we will communicate those changes to you immediately. We are well equipped to make the majority of our Sunday service resources available online so that if we reach a point where we can't meet all together, we can still share some experience of communal worship together.

***In light of these risks, unfortunately the Shelter Muskoka Retreat on March 13-15 will be cancelled. We recognize that this is very disappointing, but Southridge values the safety and security of all our residents, volunteers and staff, and does not feel that it would be wise to travel to Muskoka as a group this weekend. The event will not be rescheduled for this year due to circumstances beyond our control. Refunds will be available at the front desk of the Shelter and further questions regarding the retreat can be directed to Erica Singer, at esinger@southridgechurch.ca.**

Thank you for understanding as we stay on top of this evolving situation. If you have any questions specific to Southridge's policies, please contact Alicia Ha, Ministry Services Director, at aha@southridgechurch.ca.

Thank you,

Southridge Community Church

