

Dear EMC Church Leaders,
Greetings in Christ.

The COVID-19 response here in Canada continues to evolve and we seek to stay on top of best practices. We are here responding to questions that have come to us.

Worship Services

The federal government and several provinces are now discouraging events with more than 50 people, including worship services. This affects most of our churches, who will now be looking for alternative ways to connect and provide scriptural and pastoral guidance for their members. We do need to follow these recommendations, but don't think that you need to have a full-fledged streaming option in place in four days. If this seems daunting to you, simply cancel your service and aim to have something in place for March 29.

Livestreaming of Worship Services

Livestreaming of a worship service is a way to connect and some EMC churches are considering starting to do so. Because of licensing requirements for the use of music broadcast during a service, there appear to be two options:

- You can purchase a streaming license from CCLI (with a 10 percent discount) that allows full services to be stored on social media, such as on YouTube. On the CCLI website you can pay to upgrade your license and instantly begin streaming.
- You can use your normal license and display only non-musical parts of the service (e.g., sermon only).

There are EMC churches with experience in livestreaming, or who have set this up recently. Perhaps they can provide suggestions to you for technical support. If you don't want to livestream, consider joining another EMC church online this Sunday. We're aware of livestreaming in these churches: Blumenort, Morweena, West Pointe (new), La Crete (new) Pansy (sermon only), Kleefeld (new), Morweena and Steinbach EFC (new). Does your church have livestreaming? If so, please let us know and we can invite others to join.

Funerals

This is a basic service the church provides for the congregation and community. Some families are postponing the service, which is fine for now. What is practical if it goes on for weeks or months? It's probably best to have some closure for family. Suggest a service with family and close friends only and provide live streaming for others. Many funeral homes are already set up with live streaming options.

Pastoral Care

Encourage members to treat this crisis seriously. Hear their feelings. Help them deal with various losses (of social contact, illness, work, and more). "Social distancing" slows the spread of this virus but this can also create isolation. One EMC church has divided their church directory among the leadership who are phoning each household this week. A friendly call from an elder, deacon, or pastor (asking how people are doing and sharing information) can reduce the isolation that this crisis is causing. Perhaps other volunteers in your church would serve in this way.

We will get through this and trust that God will use this global crisis to create new receptivity to the healthy, live-preserving, enduring salvation of the New Creation.

The EMC National Office