

SCHMIEDELEUT I KONFERENZ DER HUTTERISCHEN GEMEINDEN  
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September 7, 2020

**Dear Hutterite Communities in Manitoba; *Lieben Brüder und Schwestern,***

Let it be our prayer that, in these troubled times, the peace of God may enfold us, the love of God uphold us, and the wisdom of God control us. This letter is a brief reminder of our calling and an *Aufmunterung* to faithfulness. We hope its words will fall on open hearts that are quick to repent, slow to anger, and eager to love.

As the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world, it was easy for us to disregard the disruption until it reached our doorstep. Since March 2020, however, the situation here in Manitoba has changed considerably. Multiple communities have had to deal with outbreaks, causing illness and even death. For the most part, however, people appear to be recovering for which we rightly thank God.

On August 28, many of us participated in a Zoom meeting with Health Minister Cameron Friesen and Minister Eileen Clarke, MLA for the Agassiz constituency. Minister Friesen was eager to convey an urgent message to all Manitoba Hutterites. His message was very blunt: "Too many Hutterites have not been doing their part and this has to change."

As said numerous times before, the Hutterian Safety Council is working on our behalf to guide us and to advocate for us. When there are concerns about their work, address them directly and appropriately in a brotherly way, avoiding rants on social media and WhatsApp groups. With the school year before us, we will likely experience more changes and challenges. Be strong and bear them well with patience and forbearance. Our love and mutual concern will make this difficult situation much better and bearable for all. We must remain vigilant in controlling our words **and** preventing the spread of the virus.

As followers of Jesus, we are faithful when we are a light to the world. Jesus said, "*Euer Licht [soll] vor allen Menschen leuchten. Dann werden sie eure guten Taten sehen und euren Vater im Himmel preisen* (Mt 5:16). Unfortunately, in the past week shameful behaviour has come to light instead. Dear brothers and sisters, the health and well-being (*Heil und Seligkeit*) of our community life is dependant on our faithful practice of Mt 18:15-20 where Jesus instructs us on how to deal with conflict and sin. To this we must add Paul's instruction to the church in Ephesus to "speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15).

Many of our time-honoured traditions like *Lehr und Gebet*, and communal meals have been altered or even suspended as we contend with the virus and implement Public Health Orders. When our loved ones pass away, we are unable to gather as before to mourn and support each other. Joyful celebrations like *Hulbas und Huchzeitn* must be significantly limited to be safe. We are in a season of uncertainty, change, and for many, a time of anxiety. This is our little cross to bear. Are we bearing it well? In all this, let us not despair! The teacher in Ecclesiastes reminds us that God will make "everything beautiful in its time" (3:11). Let us, therefore, exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in all we do (Gal 5:22-23).

May God be with us and keep us safe.

*Eure Mithelfer in Christus,*

Arnold R. Hofer

Samuel Waldner

Josh Hofer

*PS: Lieben Brüder und Schwester, als Nachfolger Jesu ist es auch passend, dass wir großmütig mit anderen mitteilen. Diese Erntezeit ist eine Zeit, in der wir die Gaben der Schöpfung hundert- und tausendfach ernten und genießen. Lasst uns unsere Dankbarkeit zu Gott zum Ausdruck bringen, indem wir mit denen teilen, die in größerer Not sind, als wir. Mit diesen Worten suchte der Apostel Paulus die Unterstützung der Korinther für seiner Arbeit: „Wer da kärglich sät, der wird auch kärglich ernten; und wer da sät im Segen, der wird auch ernten im Segen. Ein jeglicher nach seiner Willkür, nicht mit Unwillen oder aus Zwang; denn einen fröhlichen Geber hat Gott lieb. Gott aber kann machen, dass allerlei Gnade unter euch reichlich sei, daß ihr in allen Dingen volle Genüge habt und reich seid zu allerlei guten Werken“ (2 Kor 9:6-8).*

*Mit Gottes Liebe vor Augen, schickt bitte eure Spenden für die Arbeit der Kirche an Providence Christian Services, zuhänden von Arnold Hofer, an die obige Adresse.*