

SCHMIEDELEUT I KONFERENZ DER HUTTERISCHEN GEMEINDEN
Acadia-Gemeinde • Box 1160 • Carberry, Manitoba • R0K 0H0

March 18, 2020

To all Hutterite communities,

Greetings of love and peace in these uncertain, anxious times. Dear brothers and sisters, after consultation with many brothers and sisters and members of the Hutterian Safety Committee (HSC), it has been determined that we must address the seriousness of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). This virus has made a global impact and is now making its way through North America. Considering the gravity of the situation, it is prudent to follow the guidelines and recommendations put forward by the medical professionals to reduce the risk of spreading the Coronavirus within our communities and the broader community around us.

It is gratifying to see the leadership shown by numerous communities to ensure the spread of the virus is contained or slowed. By avoiding unnecessary exposure, or by choosing to self-isolate recent travellers, they are faithfully guarding others against this contagion. Let us give thanks to God for their prudence and self-sacrifice.

Here are some further practical guidelines:

- All non-essential inter-community travel should cease;
- Travelling outside our communities should be restricted to what is essential;
- Large gatherings should be avoided wherever possible; this may even mean *Lehr und Gebet* in some cases. Let us remember that when we cannot gather for public worship, the task of personal prayer and supplication to God becomes increasingly important;
- Skills that are essential in a pandemic, such as physical distancing and washing with soap and water, must be taught to our children and encouraged by all.

It is anticipated that weddings, baptism, and funerals will be impacted. We must respect and adhere to federal and provincial/state guidelines that prohibit gatherings larger than 50 people; further restrictions will likely come in this highly fluid and quickly-changing situation. If it comes to the point where our community schools and dining halls must close, fathers and mothers should prepare to take on the responsibility of full-day supervision of both preschool and school-aged children. Governments are providing guidelines and these should be respected without reservation. As our inter-Leut committee concerned with safety in our communities, it is anticipated that the HSC will take the lead in guiding our church through this ordeal. Further information can also be found at <https://www.hutteritehealth.com/covid19>.

It is our Christian duty to accept these challenges with grace and love, especially for the sake of our vulnerable members: the elderly, the very young, and those with suppressed immune systems. This is a time of stress and anxiety as we struggle to cope with this unknown disease. Members will need comfort, prayers, effective communication, and calm leadership to help them navigate the days ahead. During this time, make a special effort to reach out to the elderly and

sick as they may feel overwhelmed or abandoned. Further to that, communities are encouraged to reach out beyond their own borders to help those around them. This should, however, be done in consultation with local health officials so as not to inflict well-intended harm. This, too, is our Christian responsibility.

Although we have not experienced such a pandemic in recent memory, outbreaks of infectious diseases are not unknown in Hutterite history. In fact, many instances are recorded in our chronicles. One of the more recent instances took place in the early North American era, when “no less than 36” children succumbed to dysentery in Nebraska when our foreparents migrated from Russia. (*Chronicle II*, 747.) It is difficult to imagine what a devastating loss this must have been, to lose so many children in a new country with no permanent home. We, in contrast, have the advantage of established communities where we can care for our ill and protect the vulnerable. We have much for which we must be grateful, not the least of which are advances in medicine and technology. Let us pray that God will sustain us all, especially front-line workers and those caring for the sick.

Finally, beloved brothers and sisters, let us be cautious, take every precaution necessary, and support each other as needs arise. Protecting ourselves and others will require attentiveness and flexibility. We cannot tell how long this reality will be part of our lives, but together we will be able to endure. And if all this passes without serious consequences, let us give thanks to God. If there are serious consequences, we can still thank God for he promises to be with us through it all. Paul says to the church in Philippi that he was able to find contentment in any situation—whether good or bad—because he knows that God is with him (Phil 4:11-12). Let us seek to discover Paul’s secret in our time of distress.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our great physician,


Arnold Hofer

Wir heben unsere Augen auf zu den Bergen
von welchen unsere Hilfe kommt.

Unsere Hilfe kommt von dem HERRN,
der Himmel und Erde gemacht hat.

Er wird unseren Fuß nicht gleiten lassen;
und der uns behütet schläft nicht.

**Siehe, der Hüter Israels schläft
noch schlummert nicht.**

- Psalm 121,1-4