

Open Letter from Steinbach and Area Pastors & Churches:

This past week our local doctors and provincial leaders pleaded with the public to follow the public health orders. As pastors and leaders of churches of Steinbach and Area we want to make it clear that we support them in this call.

Since Jesus is our Lord (King) our first allegiance belongs to Him. However, obeying governing authorities whenever the laws of the land do not cause us to disobey God is also every Christian's duty (Romans 13:1-7). We believe that Manitoba's current public health orders in no way contravene our ability to obey and worship God. They are not anti-faith; they are pro-life.

The Manitoba government has allowed faith communities to continue to meet and minister where possible. For this we are grateful. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March, we as churches have sought to follow the guidelines the province has given us and have encouraged our parishioners to do the same. As a result, we have moved our services and ministries online.

Do the current public health orders limit our freedom? Yes, but they do so for the greater good of our society (Romans 14:6). In no way are we pretending these regulations are perfect. We hurt for the many small business owners and those in our community who have lost jobs and the ability to earn a living. We also grieve with those who have lost loved ones during the pandemic. We recognize that our government leaders are having to make many difficult decisions that will help some people and bring hardship to others. We urge all citizens to pray for our government officials as they lead us through this difficult time.

We honour and appreciate the many sacrifices that our health care workers have had to make in order to look after the most vulnerable. The loving care that they are giving their patients is an inspiration to us all and we want to express our deep gratitude to them and ongoing support for them. We believe that the sacrifices asked of us at this time – mask-wearing and physical distancing, for example – pale in comparison to the sacrifice Christ made on our behalf.

On behalf of our faith communities,
Steinbach & Area Ministerial Association (SAMA)

Signatories & Churches:

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Rev. Dr. Walter Fast, Steinbach Mennonite Brethren Church (Chair)

Pastor Andrew Dyck, Stony Brook Fellowship (Vice-Chair)

Pastor Darrell Dyck, Gospel Fellowship Church (Treasurer)

Pastor Robert Balfour, Calvary Church

Pastor Dylan Barkman, Pansy Chapel

Pastor Graham Beer, Word of Life Church

Fr. Edgardo M. Deligero, Christ Our Saviour Catholic Parish (Parochial Administrator)

Pastor Mac Dumcum, Christian Fellowship Church

Paul Duval, Minister, Steinbach United Church

Pastor Stan Friesen, Steinbach Christian Mennonite Church

Pastor David Funk, Niverville Community Church

Pastor Terry Gudmundson, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Pastor Lee Hiebert, Steinbach Mennonite Church

Pastor Ernie Koop, Evangelical Fellowship Church

Pastor Garry Koop, Steinbach Evangelical Mennonite Church

Pastor Mel Letkemann, Grace Mennonite Church

Pastor Barry Plett, Blumenort Community Church

Pastor Dave Reimer, Christian Mennonite Conference

Pastor Ron Taron, Steinbach Church of God

Leadership Team, Southland Church

Pastor Don Thiessen, Ridgewood Church

Pastor Cyndy Warkentin, Saturday Night Church

Pastor Andy Woodworth, Heartland Community Church