



Date: Mar 17, 2020

Subject: Enhanced Measures to Protect Against COVID-19 (in Ontario)

Dear Beloved in Christ,

Responding to further enhanced Measures about COVID-19 and always caring for the safety of our congregations, we, the Bishop and representative priests of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver, and Western Canada, met by conference call late evening of Monday March 16, 2020 to further discuss the situation. We decided that for the well-being of our congregations, for the well-being of society at large, and in the spirit of obedience of authority, as commanded in scripture, it is most prudent to cancel all services and liturgies in Ontario Coptic Orthodox Churches until further notice. This is following the request of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David Williams in a statement issued on Monday March 16, 2020 at 8:19 P.M. (https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2020/03/enhanced-measures-to-protect-ontarians-from-covid-19.html?utm_source=ondemand&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=p).

We are in the process of appealing to the Ontario Ministry of Health and the Toronto Public Health Unit for special permission to pray liturgies, even if we must limit the number of congregants. We will make every effort to update you as quickly as possible.

Still in effect, churches in other provinces of the dioceses are required to abide by the Provincial health standards where maximum occupancy is capped to a certain number. We ask the churches to plan accordingly to help best serve its congregation, and the congregation to co-operate.

We trust that nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. Reminded by the lenten season that Christ fasted for us forty days and forty nights. We trust that all these measures present themselves as opportunities to strengthen our spiritual discipline of fasting and prayer.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Dioceses of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada