March 28, 2020

Dear Faith Community Leaders;

**Re: Recommendation to Suspend All Gatherings and Encourage Members to Stay Home**

I am writing to ask you to please suspend gatherings of any size, and encourage all of your community members to stay at home at this time. This includes the suspension of all prayer meetings, weddings, funerals, and other observances. We are in a critical phase of our efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community, and we urgently need your help to do this.

COVID-19 is now spreading in our community, and is a particular concern among people who are elderly or who have underlying health conditions. The best prevention measure for everyone right now is to stay home, to only go out for basic necessities such as groceries, medications, etc., and to practice physical distancing at all times.

I appreciate that the current situation is stressful, and many people are turning to their faith for support and guidance. I am asking you to support your members in other ways such as through social media, virtual or televised services, or by telephone.

I know that my recommendations present significant challenges for your communities, and I want to assure you that I do not make them lightly. These measures are necessary to address this public health and local crisis.

Thank you for your ongoing support and cooperation in doing all that you can as faith community leaders to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Please continue to stay informed about the latest developments through our website at [www.toronto.ca/COVID19](http://www.toronto.ca/COVID19). If you have any further questions, please email us at publichealth@toronto.ca.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Finkelstein (for Dr. Eileen de Villa)
Acting Director, Communicable Disease Control, and Associate Medical Officer of Health