

Pandemic Prayer – Denise Isaacs, SCIC Associate March 2020

May we who are merely inconvenienced remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working at home remember those who must choose between preserving their health or paying their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic markets remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home remember those who have no home.

As worry grips the world, let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other.

Let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to family, friends, and neighbours. *Amen*

ICPM Response to COVID 19 Virus

During the COVID-19 pandemic, with lives especially at stake amongst the vulnerable, and with restrictions to normal living, physical distancing, social isolation, and quarantine, we at ICPM face immediate and new challenges and opportunities in our work.

With the flood of rapidly evolving information and misinformation, worry about catching the illness joins with anxiety about how to best make a response. Faith Communities – churches, synagogues mosques, and temples – and social support agencies, especially those tasked to serve the urban core and people who are homeless, are creating new ways to serve.

How does one respond in the face of such urgency? Each ministry, each agency, must receive, evaluate, and apply the directions and guidance of medical professionals and government. Wash your hands, don't touch your face, physical distance, exercise, and keep busy to preserve your mental health are basic things we are told.

Inner City Pastoral Ministry remains active. The Ministry Team, along with supporting faith communities, continue support within the urban community and amongst vulnerable people. ICPM cannot offer Sunday worship, as this involves a gathering of an average of over 100 people at Bissell Centre when services are held. What ICPM is doing is to provide lunches for the many who continue to make their homes in the urban core, whether in rooming houses, assisted living, or in the camps spotted throughout the inner city. Lunch preparation has been altered as lunch support volunteers cannot access churches and commercial kitchens to prepare. Sharon Webb, the Lunch Coordinator, asks that lunches now be pre-packaged with non-perishables

such as juice packs, bottles of water, packaged cookies, power bars, cheese sticks and bags of chips, along with a fresh and tasty orange and banana.

For Palm Sunday, the Knights of Columbus, with the Catholic Women's League, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Sherwood Park arrived with 250 pre-bagged lunches. To our surprise the CWL lovingly sewed 250 cloth carry bags to hold the nutritious lunch! The extra lunches are being used at the Expo Centre, for distribution where ICPM has a booth.

Although we were unable to offer worship, Pastor Rick, in celebration of Palm Sunday, hung palms across the front of the Bissell Centre entrance, offered palms to people who came for lunch, and later made palm crosses with the people at the Expo Centre drop-in. Imagine some of these people carrying palms throughout the city as they bottle pick and make their daily rounds!

During the week Pastor Rick, Jim Gurnett - Pastoral Associate, and Michelle - Oskapewis are present at the Expo Centre, 10 AM to Noon. We can be found at the ICPM booth, offering a ministry of presence with the agencies that support the hundreds of people using the services there. We offer "give aways" at the booth – socks, underwear, snacks, toques, gloves, toiletries, and assorted useful items.

This ministry may seem a "minimal" response to the vast challenge of COVID-19. Yet, as Mother Teresa stated, "I don't do great things. I do small things with great love."

ICPM in Action

- A ministry of loving, prayerful presence in the midst of the urban core community in pandemic conditions
- Caring prayerful responses with the anxious
- Friendly casual banter, one on one relational conversations
- Practical help (socks, underwear, toques, gloves, toiletries, snacks, and assorted useful items)
- At "one" with the Expo site agencies and social support workers
- Through the week the ICPM Ministry Team keeps in touch through phone calls with people from the Community of Emmanuel and the men's and women's groups
- In the midst of pandemic, life and deaths continues. ICPM offers support for those who are ill and who grieve the loss of loved ones
- A witness of the wider faith community in difficult times and circumstance
- An opportunity with the ICPM Board and Ministry Team to minister in very different and evolving ways.

What you can do:

The demand for small things, especially underwear and socks and non-perishable snacks, is high. We connect with over 100 people each day at Expo Centre and most are looking for things they need to maintain a healthy life. Cash donations will let us purchase these practical items. Or you can purchase and contact us to arrange delivery. Please get in touch if you would like other ideas of useful items.

Call the office 780 424 7652 ... or ... Jim – Pastoral Associate 780 218 6989

May God grant us life and strengthen our resolve to end COVID-19!

God's Peace, *Pastor Rick Chapman*