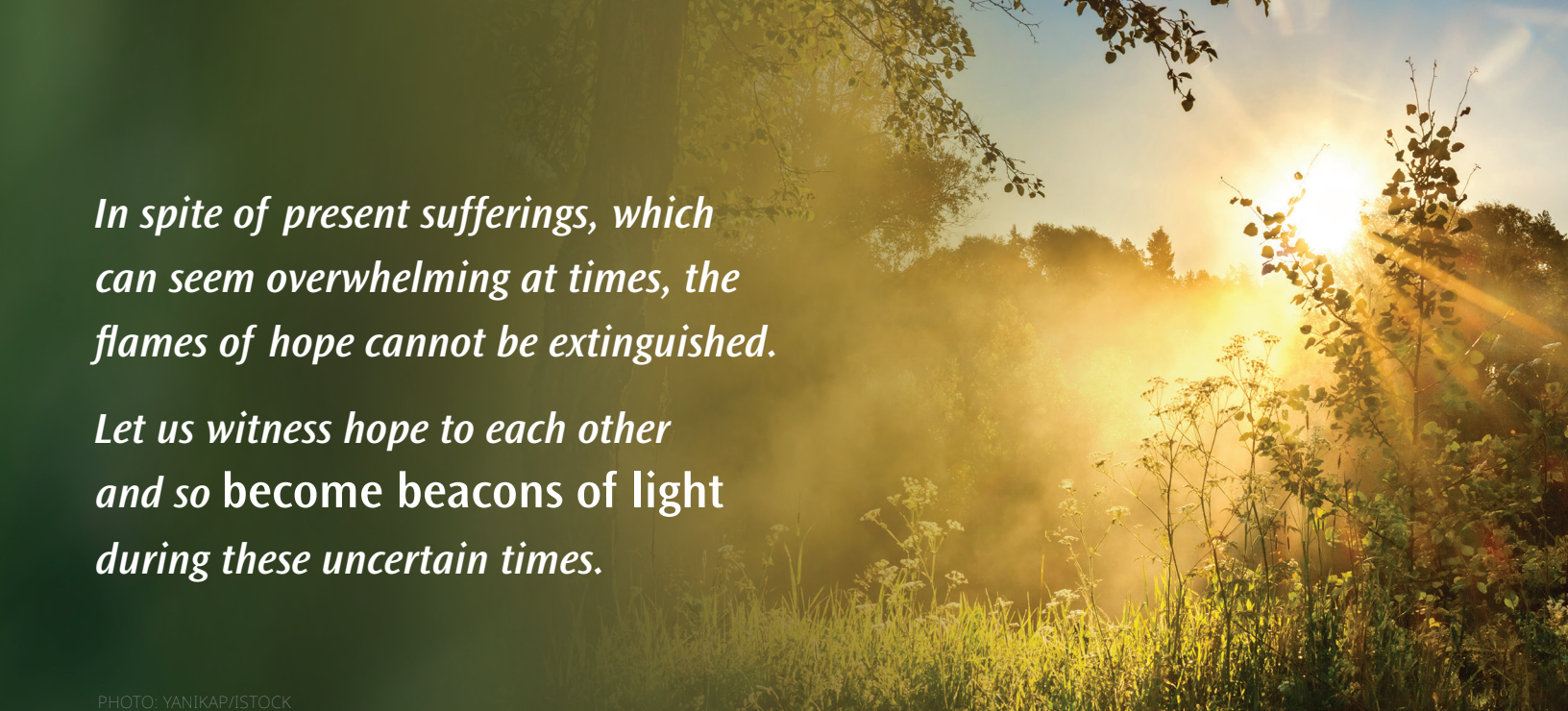




*Hope, Gratitude
and Solidarity*

*A Message to Canadians
from Religious Leaders in Canada
in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*



In spite of present sufferings, which can seem overwhelming at times, the flames of hope cannot be extinguished.

Let us witness hope to each other and so become beacons of light during these uncertain times.

PHOTO: YANIKAP/ISTOCK

Canadians are experiencing the devastating impact of COVID-19 in what has become a rapidly evolving crisis. Understandably, this crisis has brought about feelings of anxiety, apprehension and fear. Critical elements of our daily lives are being thrown into uncertainty: health, employment, financial security, recreational activities, as well as our ability to gather as worshipping communities. In view of these difficulties, we as religious leaders wish to bring forward a message of hope, gratitude and solidarity to all people who call Canada home.

A Message of Hope

We draw hope from a variety of sources: from our religious beliefs, the love of our families, the relationships with friends and the work we do. Each of these, and others as well, provides rays of hope to our daily lives. Likewise, hope provides courage to face the burdens we bear and the ability to look onwards toward the dawning of a new day. In spite of present sufferings, which can seem overwhelming at times, the flames of hope cannot be extinguished. Love, which gives life its fullest meaning, continues to seek out the common good in spite of individual difficulties. Acts of kindness

can bring us closer in spirit, despite the requirements of physical distancing. Let us witness hope to each other and so become beacons of light during these uncertain times.

Canada has gone through several difficult and painful experiences in its history. When current and former generations have responded to these challenges, many were empowered by unwavering hope as well as human and spiritual resilience. For religious believers, this hope takes on a special

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and unique dimension. It assures us of the caring embrace of the Creator, a sacred relationship sustained by prayer, and which flows into our human relationships whereby we care for one another and bear each other's burden. Yet, hope brings for everyone a promise of renewal, even in the midst of human suffering. Hope assures us that this affliction too shall pass.



PHOTO: LISEGAGNE/ISTOCK

As religious leaders, we raise our collective voices to highlight the necessity for greater attention to the needs of the homeless, the incarcerated, the elderly and those already suffering from social isolation.

A Message of Gratitude

During this time of crisis, we as religious leaders wish to offer words of appreciation and gratitude. Health care professionals are providing unfailing and dedicated service under stressful and difficult circumstances. They provide for us a powerful witness of care, expertise and service in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.



PHOTO: FOROUZANI/UPSTOCK

There is also the increased risk of exposure to infection along with other hardships being experienced by so many others. For instance, while the rest of society rightly heeds the precautions of physical distancing, many remain at work in grocery stores, pharmacies and factories. Students, the middle-aged, and those close to retirement are fulfilling a variety of essential front-line jobs in the supply chain, ensuring

that stores remain open, shelves remain stocked, and goods are delivered so that others can have food, medicines and other essentials for their families and communities. We express a deep appreciation and gratitude for these workers.

A Message of Solidarity

We urge all people in Canada to listen and follow attentively the directions of our public health officials and government leaders. We, as religious leaders, pledge to lead by example. We all must act together in confronting this virus. While everyone is vulnerable during this crisis, let us not forget those in our society who, prior to COVID-19, were already vulnerable to health and social ailments. As religious leaders, we raise our collective voices to highlight the necessity for greater attention to the needs of



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This is a time for human solidarity. *We all need to pull together.*

neighbour. This includes care and solidarity for the global community who face this crisis with far fewer resources than those accessible to Canada. This is a time for us to draw closer to God.

Religion and spirituality can indeed contribute to building people up, to providing a sense of meaning, inner strength, new horizons and openness of hearts. As religious leaders, we wish to emphasize, especially in times like these, the power and importance of prayer. We earnestly pray for healing, for the continued efforts to relieve human suffering, and for perseverance throughout these challenging times. As history records these moments for our country's future,

the homeless, the incarcerated, the elderly and those already suffering from social isolation. We remember too those people, especially women and children who face abuse and violence, who are not safe at home and may suffer additional abuse and violence as stress increases. We must never overlook or exclude these groups from our planning, preparedness and response to this pandemic. We are particularly mindful of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, including isolated Northern communities, who were already facing pre-existing challenges and for whom the COVID-19 outbreak could prove singularly devastating. Likewise, we need to remember the needs and vulnerabilities of the many refugees and migrant workers who have come to Canada seeking safety and security.

Charitable organizations in Canada will face greater challenges during this time of crisis and will need greater assistance from governments so as to continue their vital work. This is a time for human solidarity. We all need to pull together. It is essential to carry out the practical requirements to limit the spread of this virus. It is also important to maintain a posture of attentive caring towards our

PHOTO: KIEERPIX/SHUTTERSTOCK



let us pray that, in the face of COVID-19, we respond with an abundance of hope, gratitude and solidarity, trusting in the loving and ever merciful God, the source of all hope. ☕

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*Hope, Gratitude
and Solidarity*

Religious Leaders

Rev. Kenesha Blake-Newell

Rev. Kenesha Blake-Newell
Itinerant Elder (Grant AME)
African Methodist Episcopal Church

Farhan Iqbal

Farhan Iqbal
Missionary
Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada

Rev. Shane B. Janzen

Rev. Shane B. Janzen
Archbishop
The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada

The Most Rev. Linda Nicholls

The Most Rev. Linda Nicholls
Archbishop and Primate
The Anglican Church of Canada

Rev. Fr. John Benjamin Vic Paradero, OMHS

Rev. Fr. Jose Mark John Jamili, OMHS

Rev. Fr. John Benjamin Vic Paradero, OMHS
Rev. Fr. Jose Mark John Jamili, OMHS
Apostolic Catholic Church of Canada

Rev. Wesley E. Mills

Rev. Wesley E. Mills
President
Apostolic Church of Pentecost of Canada, Inc.

His Grace Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan

His Grace Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan
Primate
Armenian Holy Apostolic Church Diocese of Canada

Mobeen Khaja, O Ont.

Mobeen Khaja, O Ont.
President
Association of Progressive Muslims of Canada

Kevin Schular

Kevin Schular
Executive Director
Baptist General Conference of Canada

Charles Mashinter

Charles Mashinter
Executive Director
Be In Christ Church – Canada

Lee Nicholas-Pattillo

Lee Nicholas-Pattillo
President
Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms

MGen Guy J.J. Chapdelaine, OMM, CD, QHC

MGen Guy J.J. Chapdelaine, OMM, CD, QHC
Chaplain General
Canadian Armed Forces

Rev. Dr. Terry G. Smith

Rev. Dr. Terry G. Smith
Executive Director
Canadian Baptist Ministries

Dr. Peter Reid

Dr. Peter Reid
Executive Minister
Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada

Rev. Tim McCoy

Rev. Tim McCoy
Executive Minister
Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec

Rev. Rob Ogilvie

Rev. Rob Ogilvie
Executive Minister
Canadian Baptists of Western Canada

Religious Leaders (continued)

Dr. Adriana Bara

Dr. Adriana Bara
Executive Director
Canadian Centre for Ecumenism

+Richard Gagnon

+Richard Gagnon
Archbishop of Winnipeg, President
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Elton Da Silva

Elton Da Silva
National Director
Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches

Rev. Stephen Kendall

Pastor Peter Noteboom

Rev. Stephen Kendall, President
Pastor Peter Noteboom, General Secretary
The Canadian Council of Churches

Imam Mohamed Refaat Abo Onar

Imam Mohamed Refaat Abo Onar
President
Canadian Council of Imams

Nina Karachi-Khaled

Nina Karachi-Khaled
President of the National Board
Canadian Council of Muslim Women

Rev. David McGrew

Rev. David McGrew
National Director
Canadian Fellowship of Churches and Ministers

Pandit Roopnauth Sharma

Pandit Roopnauth Sharma
President
Canadian Multifaith Federation

Zul Kassamali

Aileen Van Ginkel

Zul Kassamali, Co-chair
Aileen Van Ginkel, Co-chair
Canadian Interfaith Conversation

Rabbi Reuven Poupko

Rabbi Baruch Friedman-Kohl

Rabbi Debra Landsberg

Rabbi Jonathan Infeld

Rabbi Reuven Poupko
Rabbi Baruch Friedman-Kohl
Rabbi Debra Landsberg
Rabbi Jonathan Infeld
Co-chairs
Canadian Rabbinic Caucus, an affiliate
of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs

Beverly Shepard

Beverly Shepard
Presiding Clerk
Canadian Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Rev. Dr. David Hearn

Rev. Dr. David Hearn
President
The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada

Rev. Ann Stainton

Rev. Ann Stainton
Moderator
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada

The Rev. Dr. Darren Roorda

The Rev. Dr. Darren Roorda
Canadian Ministries Director
Christian Reformed Church in North America

Religious Leaders (continued)

Michel J. Carter

John N. Craig

James E. Evanson

Michael R. Murray

Elder Michel J. Carter

Elder John N. Craig

Elder James E. Evanson

Elder Michael R. Murray

Area Seventies

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

H.G. Anba Mina

H.G. Anba Makar

H.G. Abba Boulos

H.G. Anba Mina

Bishop Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada

H.G. Anba Makar

Bishop of Goshen, Egypt;

Papal Vicar in the Archdiocese of Toronto

H.G. Abba Boulos

Bishop of Ottawa, Montreal, and Eastern Canada

The Coptic Orthodox Church in Canada

Rev. Dr. Ian Fitzpatrick

Rev. Dr. Ian Fitzpatrick

National Director

Church of the Nazarene Canada

L.K. (Rev. Fr.) Messale Engeda

L.K. (Rev. Fr.) Messale Engeda

Head priest and Administrator

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church of Canada

Kerry Richards

Kerry Richards

President, Canada East

Community of Christ

Dr. David P. Lavigne

Dr. David P. Lavigne

Bishop

The Evangelical Christian Church in Canada

Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka, CM, Ph.D

Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka, CM, Ph.D

Rabbi Emeritus and spiritual leader

Congregation Machzikei Hadas, Ottawa

Bruce J. Clemenger

Bruce J. Clemenger

President

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Rev. Dr. David Schrader

Rev. Dr. David Schrader

National Pastor

Congregational Christian Churches in Canada

Dr. William Taylor

Dr. William Taylor

Executive Director

Evangelical Free Church of Canada

Netta Phillet

Netta Phillet

Coordinator

Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education & Action

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson

National Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Religious Leaders (continued)

Tim Dyck

Tim Dyck
Executive Director
Evangelical Mennonite Conference

Rev. Steven F. Jones

Rev. Steven F. Jones
National President
The Fellowship of Evangelical
Baptist Churches in Canada

Steve Falkiner

Steve Falkiner
President
Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada

Bill Hall

Bill Hall
President
Grace Communion International Canada

Philip Bryant

Philip Bryant
Executive Director
Grace Fellowship Canada

His Eminence Archbishop Sotirios

His Eminence Archbishop Sotirios
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Canada

Pandit Roopnauth Sharma

Pandit Roopnauth Sharma
President
Hindu Federation of Canada

Rev. Paul McPhail

Rev. Paul McPhail
General Secretary
Independent Assemblies of God International Canada

Dr. Ronald A. Kuipers

Dr. Ronald A. Kuipers
President
Institute for Christian Studies

Halil Yurtsever

Halil Yurtsever
Intercultural Dialogue Institute

Brian A. Hawes

Brian A. Hawes
President
Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy
in the Correctional Service of Canada

Imam Ilyas Sidyot

Imam Ilyas Sidyot
Grand Mosque of Saskatoon
Islamic Association of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon) Inc.

Jennifer Henry

Jennifer Henry
Executive Director
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

Naj Mankal

Naj Mankal
President
Islamic Centre of Southwest Ontario

Imam Zubair Sidyot

Imam Zubair Sidyot
Lethbridge Muslim Association (Alberta)

Belle Jarniewski

Belle Jarniewski
President
Manitoba Multifaith Council

Religious Leaders (continued)

Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa

Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa
Bishop, Diocese of North America And Europe
Mar Thoma Syrian Church

Doug Klassen

Doug Klassen
Executive Minister
Mennonite Church Canada

Zul Kassamali

Zul Kassamali
President
National Alliance for the
Advancement of Pluralistic Society

Muneeb Nasir

Muneeb Nasir
Co-Chair
National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee

His Eminence, Archbishop Irénée

His Eminence, Archbishop Irénée
Archbishop of Ottawa and Canada
and the Archdiocese of Canada
Orthodox Church in America

Rev. Dr. David R. Wells

Rev. Dr. David R. Wells
General Superintendent
The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

Rev. Terry W. Snow

Rev. Terry W. Snow
General Superintendent
Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland & Labrador

The Rev. Amanda Currie

The Rev. Amanda Currie
Moderator
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Imam Irshad Unia

Imam Irshad Unia
Prince Albert Muslim Association (Saskatchewan)

The Rev. Marijke Strong

The Rev. Marijke Strong
Executive Secretary
Regional Synod of Canada
Reformed Church in America

Pascale Frémond

Pascale Frémond
President
Religions for Peace Canada

Commissioner Floyd J. Tidd

Commissioner Floyd J. Tidd
Territorial Commander
The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda Territory

The Most Rev. Zenji Nio

The Most Rev. Zenji Nio
Abbot, Samurai Buddhist Temple & Museum
Tokyo, Japan & Bay Street Corridor, Toronto

Rabbi David Seed

Rabbi David Seed
President
Toronto Board of Rabbis

*The Most Reverend
Lawrence Huculak, O.S.B.M.*

**The Most Reverend
Lawrence Huculak, O.S.B.M.**
Metropolitan Archbishop of Winnipeg
for Ukrainian Catholics in Canada

Religious Leaders (continued)

*His Eminence, The Most Rev.
Metropolitan Yurij (Kalistchuk)*

**His Eminence, The Most Rev.
Metropolitan Yurij (Kalistchuk)**
Archbishop of Winnipeg and the Central Eparchy
Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

Rev. David Rowley

Rev. David Rowley
General Secretary
The Union of French Baptist Churches in Canada

Rev. Brian K. Magnus

Rev. Brian K. Magnus
Bishop
The United Brethren Church in Canada

*The Right Rev. Richard Bott
Nora Sanders*

**The Right Rev. Richard Bott, Moderator
Nora Sanders, General Secretary**
The United Church of Canada

David Ruis

David Ruis
National Director
Vineyard Canada

Pastor Mike Stone

Pastor Mike Stone
Executive Director
Vision Ministries Canada

Rev. Dr. Eric R. Hallett

Rev. Dr. Eric R. Hallett
District Superintendent, Central Canada District
The Wesleyan Church

Venerable Dr. Bhante Saranapala

Venerable Dr. Bhante Saranapala
West End Buddhist Temple and Meditation Centre

Jaskaran Singh Sandhu

Jaskaran Singh Sandhu
Executive Director
World Sikh Organization of Canada



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