

Dearest neighbours in Edmonton/Amiskwaciy Waskahikan and the surrounding Capital Region, beloved siblings in fellow humanity,

Across this province, all of us continue to be impacted in many difficult and painful ways by the Covid-19 pandemic and its collateral effects. It has already been a long season of uncertainty, fear, suffering, and loss, and it is not over yet. In fact, as in many other places across the country, in Alberta it seems as though we are bracing for another major wave of the crisis that will be even more challenging.

It is with this in mind that we write this message of solidarity and mutual concern as people of diverse spiritual and religious communities. This is a time where we must make an even more intentional effort to preserve social cohesion and concern for the common good. Although each member of our society must do our individual parts to be safe and stay well, how we pass through this pandemic is not something only up to our personal responsibility – it is a collective obligation. We are not alone, and we cannot and do not face this trial alone.

Many religious and spiritual traditions hear and learn from their sacred ceremonies, stories, and texts that all creation is connected, and all people are interrelated. It is from this basis that we continue to encourage all our fellow Albertans to attend closely to the recommendations and directives of public health officers and government officials. Even more than this we encourage our fellow citizens to not merely adhere to them begrudgingly and minimally but willingly and with an overabundance of care. We pledge to model this ourselves each in our own particular communities as well in ways appropriate to contexts. This may require certain sacrifices of self and of freedom, but such is the path of love.

The wisdom of our various teachers, prophets, elders, and saints also calls us to be especially mindful to those in our human family who are at more immediate risk of harm when times of crisis such as these emerge: those who are inadequately housed or homeless, newcomers to Canada, First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities, people living with pre-existing health challenges, and those without the same financial security that some enjoy. Our community responded admirably to a first wave and corresponding restrictions, and leaders in many sectors and at all levels of government responded to ensure social supports were there. This need has not gone away. Likewise, charities and human service agencies have gone above and beyond the call to attend to these and others who have found themselves in need. Even as we ask individuals to be generous in giving to support such efforts, it remains critical for governments to prioritize these pillars of our society in addition to working to protect businesses and economic growth.

We who sign this statement are leaders representing communities which draw their inspiration and strength from what we variously understand and relate to as a higher and transcendent source. We believe it is important, especially in times of great difficulty, to seek out these powerful spiritual resources which such traditions and practices offer. Yet we also believe there is an intangible strength to be found when the diverse human community embraces togetherness rather than going it alone.

In the face of Covid-19, let us all commit to carrying the burdens of one another, and to leaving no one behind.

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Saddle Lake First Nation

Bishop Jane Alexander
Anglican Diocese of Edmonton

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President, The Edmonton Interfaith Centre
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