



# *Birchcliff Bluffs*

UNITED CHURCH

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Rev. Gregory Daly

Minister of Community Development: Rev. Carmen Llanos

33 East Road, Scarborough, ON M1N 1Z9

416-694-4081 ~ [bbucoffice@bellnet.ca](mailto:bbucoffice@bellnet.ca) ~ [www.bbuc.ca](http://www.bbuc.ca)

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## **To all members and adherents of Birchcliff Bluffs United Church**

We have certainly been through many ups and downs with the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020. Right now, it seems that we are in both an up and a down situation simultaneously: the availability of the COVID vaccines is definitely grounds for optimism, however the accelerating presence of COVID variants is a significant concern. Toronto recently moved from a lockdown phase into the Grey Zone and then back to stay-at-home orders within a matter of weeks.

In recent communications, the United Church of Canada ([Faith Communities and COVID-19 | The United Church of Canada \(united-church.ca\)](#)) continues to express concern that any large gatherings put people at risk, especially with regard to the COVID variants, even if safety precautions (masks, social distancing, etc.) are observed. This seems to have been borne out with a recent increase in infections in Toronto over the past weeks in part due to one of the COVID variants.

Given these concerns, we are not expecting to reopen for in-person services or other activities anytime soon. We continue to take the stance that it would violate our sense of community to divide the congregation into those who can attend services, and those who can't (for example, elders and people with health conditions). Furthermore, the current COVID-related restrictions, such as no congregational singing, would challenge the structure and content of services.

We will continue to monitor and follow the guidance of public health officials and the larger church. Our approach will continue to be a conservative one, given the continuing risks that the virus and its variants pose to our health. We will be exploring long term options, including the possibility that when in-person services become a realistic possibility, some form of online participation will continue to be an option as well.

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There is no doubt that we continue to feel longing for simple human contact when we are grieving or celebrating, praying or learning, and ache for a time when we'll be able to feel each other's presence, warmth, and caring in person rather than online. In the meantime, we will continue to stay strong, engaged, and supportive as a community through our online gatherings. We're fortunate to have been able to offer online worship services in a variety of formats, and a wide range of programs online, and we will continue to do so.

As ministry leaders, we are grateful for the commitment, support and creativity of this community of faith and its continued role in the Birchcliff Community.

Please stay home and stay safe.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gregory Daly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Rev Greg Daly, Minister of Word & Sacrament

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rev Carmen Llanos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Rev Carmen Llanos, Minister of Community Development