

July 17, 2020

A Call for Common Sense and Christian Virtue



Dear People,

In recent weeks, COVID-19 has swept across our communities and, while the vast majority of our people recover from its symptoms, some have become quite ill and required hospitalizations. There has also been the challenge of stigmatization that our communities have had to deal with; several report Hutterites not being permitted into stores and being denied service.

When you encounter this kind of cultural profiling, do not fight back and make the situation worse. The question we need to ask is, "What are a minority of our people doing that brings suffering like this upon the rest of us?" Such situations are a golden opportunity to be a light to the world and show mainstream society that we have many great people among us.

While there have been the reports mentioned above, there are also repeated reports of Hutterites behaving in such a way, that makes it clear it's no wonder we are being treated in this way. This includes being untruthful, not only with public health authorities, but also with family doctors and at other non-essential appointments. Doctors are reaching out to the HSC and asking with frustration, "Why do your people lie to us?"

The medical community has staff and families who they need to protect as well. We have trusted these doctors and nurses to deliver our babies, patch us up when we are broken, repair the knees and hips of our parents, and provide comfort to our elderly and dying. We have enjoyed this level of care for the last 100 years since arriving in Canada.

Presently, we find ourselves in the media spotlight because we could have done a better job of staying at home and be more mindful of our choices. There is good reason for mass gathering and non-essential travel restrictions. It is safe to say that these two things are responsible for the resulting wide-spread COVID cases amongst us.

We may be forgiven for becoming ill but we have the responsibility to prevent spreading it to others. Please remember that Hutterites are not in the centre of the universe and society does not owe us any exemptions. In contrast, it is our Christian responsibility to act in such a way that expresses care and concern for all humans.

While a few of our people do not recognize the gravity of the situation, the public health authorities have a legal obligation to take the necessary actions if they feel our behaviour is increasing the overall risk to non-Hutterite people around us. "*Irret nicht! Die Obrigkeit lässt sich nicht spotten!*" It is critical that we apply common sense to our behaviour.

While the public health authorities are strongly opposed to naming individual communities, they also face increased pressure to release more information regarding municipalities and/or zone cases involving Hutterite communities. We can do our part in this struggle by practicing common courtesy at a local level in how we interact with businesses and neighbours.

Overall, it must be said that we can do better. Let us do better by being truthful with health officials and observing pandemic safety protocols with diligence. Let us demonstrate Christian love by going above and beyond the call of duty.

While we are rightly critical of the behaviour of a few, we have also received many reports of excellent behaviour and would like to express our gratitude. One such report yesterday was about a community in southern Saskatchewan: *“If we could hand out gold medals to these colony leaders and families, we certainly would.”*

In summary, please help us contain the story that we permitted to develop through our actions and apply common sense moving forward. If your community is well, then be kind and respectful to others; if your community is ill, simply stay home and support each other. Ignorance is no defence. Let's keep it together for a few more weeks.

Thank you kindly and let your light shine brightly!

Hutterian Safety Council
COVID-19 Taskforce