

The ethics surrounding visiting loved ones during a pandemic

A letter from Tabor Village Ethics Committee

We all want to do the right thing in life, all the time, for all people. We like to believe that we live by ethical principles that take into consideration individual liberties, do no harm to others, and live in a totally fair and equitable manner, (well, at least most of the time.)

These are some of the guidelines society tries to live by. We may call them convictions, principles, or virtues - ethics. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."* (Matthew 5:6) We strive to live ethically, to seek righteousness, to do unto others as we would have them do to us. These are underlying principles that govern Tabor village.

Tabor Village Ethics Committee met recently to discuss the ethical issues relating to restrictions on visiting loved ones currently in place during COVID-19. We truly believe Tabor Village is home for our residents and tenants. A natural part of home is to have people we love and care about come to visit us. And yet, due to the devastating nature of the corona virus, we must hold as a higher priority the health, safety, and well-being of the entire community. This includes not only residents and tenants, but staff, family members, and even our city and province if there is an outbreak. As an Ethics Committee we discussed proportionality (are the safety measure in proportion to the possible tragic outcome?), minimizing harm to residents, equity for all involved, and reciprocity (are we treating others as we would want to be treated?) These are very real ethical issues that affect our individual lives and can be very emotional. Are the measures we as a society are presently taking to limit physical contact between loved ones reasonable in light of the psychological, social, and spiritual distress for all? Some would say no, these are unreasonable and even inhumane restrictions.

We have heard comments like, "I would rather my loved one die of COVID-19 than die of loneliness and isolation;" and, "Spending one's last days, weeks, or months lonely and isolated from loved one is worse than the possibility of dying from Covid." We hear your heart and your hurt in these comments.

In all of this ethical complexity we also need to acknowledge our mandate to comply with public health authority standards. We at Tabor are not making any of these decisions apart from the direction and instructions of the wider health community.

We strive to be "just," to hunger and thirst for righteousness. We care about our families, residents, tenants, staff, and our city and province. Please continue to pray for Tabor Village in these difficult days.

Talk to a committee member to share your thoughts: Vanessa Aparicio, Sandra Biengen, Myrna Earle, Ray Harris (chair), Dan Levitt, Leona Penner, Manjit Sekhon, Kate Tate.