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Issue  
**FIVE**

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Thursday, April 23, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vancouver

**EBC**

**Update**



## *Online Community*

As we progress through the COVID-19 health crisis, a number of Ebenezer folk are making and maintaining more contacts online, including using video programmes like Skype and Zoom.

Last Friday, we launched our first Zoom Bible Study, which went well. One or two other more informal church groups have also been meeting this way.

We're continuing with a weekly Bible Study and Prayer meeting every Friday at 7:00 p.m. You can find access details on the next page.

Another possibility would be to hold a regular session on Sundays at around noon. The goal would be to share and pray for an hour or so and to have an opportunity to respond to the online service.

If you would be interested in being part of such a gathering, please call or email Pastor John directly and we'll arrange for one.

## *Planning and Providence*

"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'" (James 4:13-15)

"You ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will we will live and do this or that.'" But I wonder how often we really take the apostle James' advice to heart.

We have differing approaches to future planning. I like to know as much as possible in advance. It may take me some time to make decisions, especially major ones. When I've done so, I tend to be quite flexible and adaptable in implementing them, but I can still be thrown for a loop when things don't turn out as I anticipated. You may or may not be the same way.

We certainly live in a society which sets great store by future planning. Whether buying RRSPs for retirement or booking a vacation, whether trying to plot our career paths or budgeting for the year ahead, we're encouraged to look forward.

When I first discovered that one of my daughters was studying a subject called "Career and Personal Planning," I was surprised. But I guess that the schools, like the rest of us, are simply reflecting more general concerns.

The trouble is that if we spend too much time on this kind of thing, we risk forgetting who's really in charge of our lives and our futures. And that, I think, is what James is driving at in these verses.

It's not that God doesn't want us to look ahead and plan sensibly as Christians. Far from it! There is plenty of counsel in the Book of Proverbs and elsewhere about the need for wisdom

and prudence. It's rather that we shouldn't take too much for granted, and we certainly shouldn't boast about future achievements or intentions.

"Now listen," James writes, "you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. Why you don't even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.'"

We may not like to hear those words. They may sound a little harsh. But they're perfectly true, of course. None of us can predict the future exactly and our earthly lives are really very transitory, when we think of the big picture.

I can make all the plans I want, but my world could change dramatically within 24 hours, because I have no idea precisely what tomorrow may hold. We've been reminded of this more than ever during the recent COVID-19 crisis, as our plans have been cancelled or put on hold by a totally unexpected train of events.

So we've learned again that whatever we schedule must always be provisional. Nothing can be set in stone. That's why it makes such good sense practically, as well as theologically, to trust God, rather than ourselves, for the ultimate outcome of any plans that we make.

We don't live in a godless universe where the future is determined by random chance or human manipulation. God is in control. Only God is omnipotent and we should consider all our designs contingent on God's blessing.

"Man proposes, but God disposes," as the old saying goes. And James 4 reminds us that it is important to bear this in mind wherever we are on life's journey and especially in circumstances like this.

Pastor John Oakes



## Prayer Needs

- Our sick & shut-ins
- Government leaders
- Doctors, nurses and care workers, especially those from our own community
- Our online services
- All who are anxious, depressed or lonely
- The complete defeat of the COVID-19 virus



## Giving to Ebenezer

Offerings to the church can now be made by Interac e-transfer through online banking, as well as by cheque in the mail to the church address.

You can find full instructions about the process on the church website [here](#). Please contact Graham Gertz, our Treasurer, for further information.

## Staying in Touch

This newsletter is intended to be a source of community news and devotional materials. Please let Pastor John know of any updates, content ideas, or feedback.

- We have organized another Zoom Bible Study and Prayer Meeting for Friday, May 1, at 7:00 p.m. To join the meeting, go to [this link](#) on your computer. The meeting ID is: 881 3601 0546. You can also call in by phone to 778-907-2071, entering the same meeting ID when requested.
- Our Prayer Chain remains fully functional. Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli (xxx-xxx-xxxx) or Freda Ross (xxx-xxx-xxxx).
- Our first five online services are now available at this [link](#) on [Youtube](#), which can also be accessed through our [Facebook page](#) and our [church website](#). The next will be available Sunday, April 26, from 10:30 a.m.
- Pastor John can be reached in the event of an emergency at any time on 604-779-2356. His email is [seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com](mailto:seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com).