



March 19, 2020

Dear friends,

Our Moderator Bill Konnert is today communicating the decision by our Boards of Elders and Deacons yesterday evening to cancel our Sunday services and other church gatherings, including mid-week meetings, until the health authorities deem the situation safer.

Many of you will already know the specific background, not least the BC Government's decision to reduce the size of legally permitted meetings from 250 to just 50 people. With up to 120 people sometimes attending on Sunday mornings, and a significant number of members in higher risk categories for contracting the COVID-19 virus, we must do all that we can as brothers and sisters in Christ to protect one another and the wider community.

We are sorry that this comes so suddenly. We all hoped that we would have more time to prepare. But the situation has changed very rapidly.

In light of last evening's decision, our staff and other leaders are already making plans for the coming weeks that include different ways to connect and encourage one another and to support the church.

These include the following:

- We aim to "livestream" a weekly worship service on YouTube and possibly Facebook as soon as we can. The first is likely to be on Sunday, March 29 at our standard service time of 10:30 a.m. When we have details, we will let you know immediately.
- Again from March 29, a new Sunday sermon will be posted on our website for every Sunday.
- I will be sending out regular devotional materials that may be of help in our current situation.
- Members of our leadership team will be attempting to call people and/or households on our mailing list by the end of next week to check in with you and to ask about possible prayer and practical needs.

We seek to glorify God by winning & building passionate, life-long followers of Jesus Christ

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- Over the next few days, we will be exploring other ways of offering help for those who may need it.
- Our Prayer Chain remains fully functional. Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to me, Sharon Iseli or Freda Ross.
- Because of current visiting restrictions, I will be unable to visit the sick in nursing homes or hospitals without special permission.
- I am available at all hours in the event of an emergency. Otherwise, you can reach me on any other matter from Wednesday through Sunday. I will be regularly in the church office in the mornings, as circumstances permit.
- We will be fielding all calls and other communications to the church office. Please leave a message on voicemail, if you cannot reach us directly by phone.
- We will be exploring the possibility of organizing prayer meetings using Skype and other media and I will let you know more about this in due course.

We will send further updates soon about specific programmes and opportunities. In the meantime, let us pray. Let us pray for those who are infected, suffering, and grieving; for medical professionals on the front lines; and for political and institutional leaders seeking to find ways to monitor, contain, and address this outbreak. Let us pray for our church and for our whole community that we may enjoy God's grace, comfort and protection during this challenging time.

As we continue to place our faith in Christ, confident that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28), may we also take every practical opportunity to serve our neighbours and to share the good news of Jesus in word and deed.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor John Oakes

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