

Re: Parish Response to Covid-19

17/03/2020

G'day friends,

I am writing to you today to inform you about the discussion that was had by our Parish Council on Monday evening, and to begin to let you know about some of the measures that we're putting in place.

Let me begin by saying that our conversation was marked by calmness, by measured assessments of the life of our church, and chiefly by an unfailing conviction that God reigns over his creation and has revealed his love to us in the Lord Jesus.

Over the course of our discussion, there were four chief concerns raised that we considered:

1. Public Ministry

Because so much of our ministry is public, and therefore easily accessible, it makes it very difficult to control a multitude of factors.

2. Hygiene

It is not easy for us to raise the cleanliness of our buildings to a standard that would adequately mitigate the risk of Coronavirus spreading easily and rapidly.

3. Responsiveness

We do not have significant capacity to respond quickly (i.e. Within 24 hours) to changing situations given the existing demands on our ministry staff, and ministry teams.

4. Vulnerable people

There are a substantial number of vulnerable people within our churches because of age or other significant underlying health conditions.

For these reasons, Parish Council has unanimously supported my decision to **suspend all public ministry activities immediately**. I can say clearly now that this includes all three Sunday Services, Kids Klub, and Playtime.

I am conscious however, that during this time of "social-distancing" & in some cases, "social-isolation" to slow the spread of the Coronavirus, that we must work hard to maintain social cohesion – or in other words, genuine Christian love for one another, for our neighbours, and even for strangers.

Accordingly, pending further advice from either the Diocesan Coronavirus Taskforce, or Government authorities, **we are encouraging people to still meet in small non-public groups** to read the Scriptures together, to pray together, and to express care for one another. Michael, Tara, and I will be working this week and next to produce resources that will help facilitate discipleship and care even while we are not able to meet with one another as we usually do.

Please note that our goal is not to *eliminate risk*, but rather to **mitigate risk**. It is not unlikely that many of us will acquire Coronavirus – and present with relatively minor symptoms. Our goal is to **slow the spread** of the virus, **protect vulnerable** people in our church and broader community, and make it **easier to identify** those whom we've each had contact with and may be at risk should any member of our congregations be confirmed as having the Coronavirus.

Alongside taking preventive measures, we must also be proactive in finding ways to express love and concern for one another and our broader community. The Ministry Staff Team can assist in facilitating and resourcing some of that – but we will each need to take personal responsibility to love others beyond our own families at this time.

The Ministry Staff team will predominantly communicate with you via **Email, SMS, Official Church Facebook groups & message threads (but not usually one-to-one FB Messages), and where necessary phone calls.**

As you can appreciate, this is an extraordinary situation that is unfolding very rapidly, and so we will endeavour to communicate with you as we are able. Please be patient currently and gracious with us and others as life is somewhat out of the ordinary at the moment.

One final word about how church is resourced. About 1/3 of our offertories is made of cash that is normally given during our Sunday Services. While Sunday Services are not running, this means that we're not receiving this income. On the one hand, we can easily absorb the *reduced cash flow* – this is precisely why Parish Council adopted the practice of having 2-3 months of expenses in reserve. However, losing that income entirely may have a drastic impact on our church once this immediate distancing/isolation period has passed. I appreciate that there may be uncertainty related to your own income at this time. However, where that is not the case – please consider setting up your offertory via regular, electronic direct deposits. If you must give via cash or cheque, it will be helpful to discuss options to reduce the strain on the parishes cash flow.

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Brothers and Sisters, it seems fitting to conclude with one of the assigned prayers from this season in the Anglican Prayer Book:

Almighty God, we confess that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves: keep us outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities that may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grace & Peace,



Rev. Brett Hall