

Dear friends,

SUSPENSION OF ALL ST JAMES' CHURCH ACTIVITIES UNTIL AFTER EASTER

Last night the leadership decided that the best and wisest course to follow in the wake of the COVID19 virus was **to suspend all church activities for the time being. This means that we will not meet for any of our Sunday services with immediate effect; nor will our LifeGroups, or any other gathered ministry meetings. The only exception will be the prayer retreat, which will go ahead this weekend. We will reassess after Easter.**

We realise that up until now the government has put a ban on gatherings only over 100 people, but we want to play our part at this time in minimising the risk as much as possible.

We know that this will present a great challenge in the coming weeks particularly as we approach Easter, but we will be taking the following steps to continue 'feeding the flock', and would encourage you to be a part of these:

- **Livestreamed and/or recorded sermons.** We will continue our sermon series as normal, but they will be accessed via a livestreaming/recorded platform. We will set these up in such a way that you can 'tune in' as a family on a Sunday morning etc... More information and links will be provided later this week.
- **We will provide devotions, material for families to work through, as well as ways for Lifegroups to meet online.** We want to encourage all of you as much as possible to use this extended 'holiday' period to nourish yourselves and your families. Be intentional, prepared and planned about this. Don't let the absence of Sunday services be an excuse to become lazy -conduct some form of regular home worship. We will also point you to appropriate resources on Rightnow media, particularly for Easter week. (If you haven't yet signed up for this free resource, there is no better time -simply send an email request to the church and we will send you the link.)
- **Stay in touch with one another via the various whatsapp groups, posting prayer items, encouraging one another, and being alert to needs.** Meet those needs where you can. (e.g. offer to someone elderly you will go shopping for them etc...). The pastoral staff will still be working throughout this period and available to you as well.
- We realise it won't necessarily become complete isolation, **so where you meet with someone over coffee or in the workplace, make the most of those opportunities to encourage fellow believers, and to witness to unbelievers. This virus will provide many conversational opportunities to speak of the HOPE we have! Let's not waste this crisis!**
- **The economic impact** of this virus may be much greater than we anticipate. For some it may become a case of 'no work, no pay'. We need to appreciate the long term effects of this too, and be generous where we can be in, for example, how we treat our own employees when transport issues or sickness in the family takes hold. **For our part, the church leadership will be putting into action its newly formed benevolent committee. You can make application to this, or highlight needs in our church community for us to assess and help where we are able.**
- **Keep your gospel giving regular:** After a difficult start to the first two months of the year, the giving for March has already shown immense improvement, and exceeded our expectations. For this we thank you, and we praise God! Whilst we have for some time not taken a physical collection in our services and encouraged EFT's, those who are in the habit of giving to the money box, can continue to put their contributions aside, and at some point either pay it in to the church account, or bring it when we reconvene. It may be a good

opportunity to encourage the whole family to physically set aside something towards God's work.

- **Some of you as professionals in your fields (medical, education etc...) may also be willing to share your expertise and advice to us in this time?** If so, please let me know.
- **Be praying that the Sovereign God will use this to strengthen, rather than weaken, His church. Remember how the painful persecution of the early church in Acts resulted in it growing because of the scattered saints? May God be pleased to do that through us, as we are 'scattered' into our various corners. Pray especially for healthcare workers, hospitals and our country's leadership. Pray that panic would be replaced with His peace, especially the peace of the Cross.**

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the staff or church leadership. We will keep communication open on the various channels we have (whatsapp group, email, website, phonecalls etc...)

God Bless you and may you know His providence, presence, provision and protection!

Rev Ray Beckman

PS -I have attached a leaflet created by one of our churches, sent on by our Presiding Bishop, that is informative, but also cleverly evangelistic.

**God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.**

**Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.**

(Psalm 46:1,2)