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March 18, 2020

Dear church family and community:

What a difference a few days makes. Last week I hurried to prepare a letter on council's behalf to explain our cancelling of Sunday's events; today I write to explain more.

But how to explain it? Words do not suffice. The ancient Christian prayer has been chorusing through my mind: "Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy."

More than anything else: pray!

- Pray in thanks to God for the wisdom and help He's given through experts and leaders
- Pray in expectation that God will hear and respond to the prayers of His people
- Pray in hope that God is at work through efforts made to slow the epidemic
- Pray for those hurting, lonely, afraid, confused, that they receive comfort.

So much more that should be added, but trust that God knows our hearts better than we know them, and keeps up with our changing times and inner thoughts.

For now, the church council wants you to know that all our church events are indefinitely postponed. At this point, we don't have a timeline for resumption of activities, nor do we have contingency plans for group ministries.

Yet we want you also to know that we will strive to be as active as we can with what is essential to us and our ministry for a time such as this: prayer, and God's word, and caring for one another.

Imagine what this situation would be like without the internet, cell phones, texting, our church app, and video and audio sharing!

Our church website and Bridge app will remain our main ways of one-way communication with you. Through them we will continue to provide a weekly (shortened) bulletin. You will also be able to listen to the weekly "service" which will continue to provide songs, prayers, God's Word, and a sermon.

This week I began a "daily encouragement" audio message as well, with a print copy of the meditation. It too is available on the website, and through the app. Since it is a smaller audio file, it can also be emailed – let me know if you would like to receive it in this way.

For a number of you, these technologies can be hard to learn to use or work with. If you would like to learn, or are having issues, please contact us and we will help make it work for you.

We will also still have “two-way” communication through the church phone, and to my personal and confidential mobile # - 250-877-1377. (Please note that I no longer have a home telephone number). Do not hesitate to contact me at this number. Also, Sylvia and Stacey will be maintaining regular hours as possible at church, and so you can also call any of us at church. Do leave a message if you don't get an answer!

Our building remains open at this time. We have a hygiene protocol that all those entering must follow upon entry (thorough handwashing, and keeping appropriate space).

How I wish I could give you a clearer indication of when and how we will resume our usual ministry activity! Alas, many decisions are already being made for us, and we resolve as a church to submit to the wisdom of our earthly authorities.

What is God saying to us in a time like this? There are a number of things I could or should say. In humility I am reluctant to say I know the mind of God.

Yet I am convinced that this is an opportunity He is giving us to pay attention to Him, to cry out to Him and find Him faithful, and to be reset and re-learn how dependent we are on His mercy. If you are afforded extra time, give thanks for the opportunity to have a slower pace, to read more, sleep more, and connect with people in small numbers as appropriate.

Here's one thing we ask of you at this time. Please check in with others from church. Ideally, call, rather than just email or text. Hearing each other's voices sounds especially good these days. Ask them if they're able to get from the website the bulletin, our announcements, and “services” and “daily encouragement from the Psalms”. If you can help them do so – thank you! If we can help, please ask, and we will be glad to do so. Most of this kind of help can be done by phone.

When we have more information, and make more announcements, we will do so again in this way – through a mass email, posting this on the website, and on the app. Until then, may God hover with His mercy and grace over us all.

With you in trust that God loves the world He made,  
sent Jesus into it to redeem it,  
and remains faithful by His comforting Holy Spirit,

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***John 14***

***“Do not let your hearts be troubled.***

***Trust in God; trust also in me.”***

***~ Love, Jesus***