

# COVID UPDATE – MARCH 18, 2020

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR SCOTT



Good Evening VKHBC!

I am assuming you are all aware by now that yesterday the Province of Ontario declared a state of emergency. [You can read the full content of the declaration here.](#) As a result, in Ontario, "all organized public events of over fifty people are also prohibited, including parades and events and communal services within places of worship. These orders were approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and will remain in place until March 31, 2020, at which point they will be reassessed and considered for extension, unless this order is terminated earlier."

As a congregation we are small enough to pursue options to keep us well under that 50 person cap, but because the community doesn't necessarily know that, and in wisdom and clear demonstration of our submission to this prohibition, **we will be temporarily cancelling all services, programs, and meetings.**

If the prohibition extends beyond March 31, depending on the extent and effects of the spread of COVID-19 and the governments recommendations at that time, there may come a time to consider options to gather responsibly in smaller numbers, and perhaps even meeting outdoors. But we are getting ahead of ourselves in this regard.

Regarding our plans for the next two weeks moving forward, please pray for us as our leadership is considering the options and will update you in the coming days. As we do so I would like you all to consider something.

Here is a quote from an add that found me on FB. "As your church responds to COVID-19, social distancing is wise. But that doesn't mean your church has to feel apart." My question is: Should our feelings not resemble our physical reality? My concern is that the automatic reaction of churches to virtual resources is going to consume and distract us from the deeper blessing God could desire for His people at this time. Should one aspect of acknowledging God's sovereignty over the current state of the world be to call out to him in prayer and faith BECAUSE there is something very unusual about this situation? So why is it that our gut reaction is to try to make this unusual experience feel more usual to distract us from the fact that there is indeed something wrong with the world right now? Is it not because we still struggle to accept the fact that God is in control and therefore without realizing it, we seek whatever options are left to maintain some semblance of the illusion of control we previously established in our minds?

We laugh at the irrational response of people loading their shelves with toilet paper, meanwhile the church at large appears to be turning to a counterfeit experience of corporate worship as if providing the usual motions of corporate worship is what feeds and sustains us as the people of God. When in fact it is the gracious provision and sustenance of God's living Word which enables us to offer worship of any sort at any time to our God.

**I'm not suggesting the use of any or all virtual options is wrong**, our church has been posting our [sermons online for years](#), and this very email is a virtual mode of communication! There are also other excellent ministries that have excelled in offering

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online resources for years now that would be redundant (and impossible) for us to try to replicate and therefore I will be pointing you in the direction of some of those ministries for you and your families to take advantage of in the coming months (eg. Ligonier Ministries is offering [all their teaching series](#) to stream for free until June, among other great resources that were already free).

My concern isn't so much with what we end up doing as a church, but that before we decide 'what' to do, we carefully reflect upon 'who' we are in relationship to our Lord, and allow that to shape 'what' we do moving forward. The attitude that we can continue as usual in the virtual realm is a scary symptom of a church whose identity is rooted in her style/method of corporate worship, rather than the church's worship being rooted in who she is in relationship to Christ—in relationship to the Word. It is good that we long to gather together as the bride of Christ. Would it not also be good, if because of circumstances outside of our control—but well within God's control—he might design that we not gather for a short time in order to remind and awaken us to the spiritual blessing of physically gathering as the people of God that we too often take for granted? Is it not good that our longing to be together could for a time serve to help us pray more fervently for one another?

It is understandable that we would struggle with discerning how to be or 'feel' like the church without our weekly habit of corporate worship. But this is a struggle I thank God for and do not want us to miss out on this opportunity to press into our dependence upon God at this time. This is an unusual time, may we as a church allow it to be just that—unusual, and may the extent to which we turn to our Lord, seeking His face and guidance and the promised blessing the flows as a result prove to be equally unusual to the glory of God the Father. May these days of isolation awaken the souls of the lost in our communities to the truth of the dreadful reality of being isolated from Christ. The world has been attempting to distract and isolate our hearts and minds from the thought of God and His pending judgement since the sin of Adam in the Garden (cf. Genesis 3:8; Romans 1:18-25). Let us pray that God would extend mercy and grace and shake the scales off the eyes of men and woman that they may see that they have been infected by the most vicious and deadliest of all viruses known to all creation—sin. And let us also pray, and study and meditate upon God's Word that we may be "<sup>16</sup>...prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you...<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit" (1 Peter 3:15, 18).

For now, at the very least I plan to have a message available on our website in order to continue some helpful sense of unity among us, as we have always done for those who have not been able to gather with us in the past for various reasons—including health precautions. I will also continue to communicate more than usual through email as I have been doing this past week, as well as phone calls, and personal visits to any who determine that the benefits of my physical presence (still exercising caution) would outweigh the risks. Regarding personal visits, I don't expect many (if any) will desire such a thing at this time, but if you find yourself in a spiritual or physical circumstance where

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my presence could potentially be of help or needed comfort to you, please do not hesitate to ask! If you are worried about protecting (or protection from) my little girls, let me mention again that I do know what it is to exercise extreme caution when visiting our severely immunocompromised twins in the NICU for four months as both of them were born 3 months premature weighing under 2 lbs. And then having to continue to exercise various degrees of caution in the years that followed. I am not saying I learned how to eliminate the risk, but that I did learn a lot about how to weigh the risks and do the best I could to LIMIT the unnecessary risks. While exercising all the reasonable precautions, because of that experience I also know the incredible blessing of dwelling “in the shelter of the Most High” at a time when the shelter of the world is exposed to be shaky and temporary at best, and to know what it is to peacefully say to our LORD “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” (Psalm 91:1-2). [There are also many people in our church who are already all too familiar with isolation due to health issues that we need to continue to pray for, reach out to and can look to as testimonies of enduring faith in the face of adversity!]

In Christ,

Pastor Scott