



GYMEA BAPTIST CHURCH

18th March 2020

Dear Church,

IMPORTANT UPDATE FOR GBC Regarding COVID-19 response

This morning the Prime Minister addressed the nation and outlined the next stages of the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a staff team we have met to consider the implications for us as an organisation and have decided that, effective today, all activities that take place in the church building will be suspended indefinitely. This is an unprecedented step for us to take, but one that we believe is prudent at this point. This situation continues to develop and there will be further recommendations that we will continue to monitor. As we move forward as a community of faith there are a few key things to let you know about.

1. No access to the church building

There will be no access to the church building for the foreseeable future as we seek to create a space that is infection free. This allows our staff team to safely continue to meet together to best serve our community.

2. No on-site services to be held on Sundays

We will be moving our services on-line. You will be able to join with others at gbconline.org.au at our regular service times of 8:30am, 10:30pm, and 6:00pm from this Sunday. We'd encourage you to access that site and to participate with others in that on-line space. We will be exploring other options for those who cannot access this site in the weeks to come. Our youth program on a Friday night will also be exploring the use of on-line spaces for their program.

3. Recommendations for Life Groups

If you are a LifeGroup leader you are free to make the decision about whether your group will continue to meet in a physical location. At the time of writing, these groups are permitted, but it is important if you meet that you encourage members to self-assess their level of risk, that you facilitate physical distancing of 1.5 m, and that you practice good hygiene protocols especially around food. Please keep an eye on the government information on this here.

4. Food donations needed

This Sunday we will be holding a food donation drive-thru. Hopefield has a pantry ministry on non-perishable food for people in need in our community and their supplies are running low. We will have staff at the doors of the church from 2:00pm-4:00pm this Sunday 22nd March, to accept any donations of non-perishable food items and other essentials.

- This will be a drive-thru service.
- Staff will be wearing gloves.
- Drive in to the church driveway.
- Remain in your car and pass your donations through an open window.
- Then drive away.

This is an opportunity to be Big-Hearted as a community of faith. If everyone were able to donate even one or two items we would be able to serve many more in the community.

As a staff team we are focused on implementing these immediate action items but will continue to work out our response in the weeks that come. This includes:

- How we connect to and care for those who are self-isolating or who are socially vulnerable due to physical health, age, or other factors.
- How we can encourage spiritual practices that sustain us as individuals, families, and a community at this time.
- How we can experience what it means to be a community of faith without meeting together in a physical location.

As we develop these next steps we will seek to communicate them with you and invite you to participate as you are able. One thing we are able to do right now is to continue to pray. Pray for wisdom for our government and other decision-makers. Pray for health and sustenance for our medical professionals. Pray for a peace that passes understanding to settle on the hearts and minds of our community who are so panicked and anxious. Pray for the health of those who are particularly vulnerable to infection. Pray for our community of faith as we seek to participate with what God is doing in the world.

Finally, let me remind you of the words that are written over our door at GBC, “As the Father sent me, I am sending you.” The church is truly being the “church,” when it is sent into the world to join in with what God is doing. This period of time when we are not able to meet together does not change who we are or what we are called to do; it just changes the parameters of how we do it. Let us consider how we might keep our eyes open for where God is at work even now; for he is always at work.

Look forward to seeing you online this Sunday.

Marc Rader
Senior Pastor