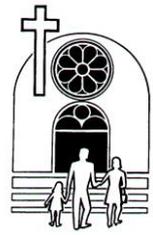


Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 Update – City Tabernacle Baptist Church 21 March 2020



Dear Friends,

We are living in difficult times. In such a short time, we've seen our world shaken by a new virus that is rapidly changing our lives, and causing much fear, uncertainty and anxiety. It is clear that the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic will require profound changes in many aspects of daily life, including the ministry of the City Tabernacle.

You will be aware that on Thursday and Friday this week the Prime Minister, acting on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer, announced that non-essential indoor gatherings are to be now limited to 100 people, and outdoor events of more than 500 people will be disallowed. Indoor non-essential gatherings of fewer than 100 people may only be held if 4 square metres of space is provided per occupant. Whilst these restrictions do not apply to supermarkets, public transport, shopping centres, office buildings, and various other activities, it is clear that such limitations do apply to churches.

The advice from Government is based upon the latest medical advice regarding the spread of COVID-19. It is the view of the leadership of the City Tabernacle that our response should not lag behind, nor run ahead of, the advice from that of the Prime Minister and Chief Medical Officer. Bearing in mind that further restrictions may be imposed at any time, it has been determined for the time being that Church Services will continue on Sundays, but subject to strict conditions elaborated on below and at all times in compliance with the guidelines issued by authorities. In particular, the large size of our sanctuary will allow Church services to continue because there will be sufficient space for social distancing in compliance with Government guidelines.

We are mindful that the number of persons attending morning services each week is well in excess of 100 people. Last Sunday, our numbers, albeit still in excess of 100, were reduced considerably, and it is expected this will reduce further on Sunday. The elderly and/or those with co-morbidities (such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes, and cancer) are at an increased risk and as such should carefully consider their attendance at services. We would also encourage those who are able to attend the evening service to consider doing so in place of the morning service.

Having said this, none of us has had to navigate such tumultuous conditions. It is a personal decision for you and your family as to whether you attend a Sunday service (subject to space limitations). Those who do not attend will be given the opportunity to participate by means of a recording of the service which will be made available online on Sunday afternoon, an online live stream from next Sunday 29 March, or by accessing a DVD recording (see below).

Conditions for Services

- The Church's 10.30am and 6.30pm services will be limited to 100 persons in total (including the church leadership, choir, children and volunteers etc).
- Entry to the building will be via Wickham Terrace only. It is important that other doors are not used so that the numbers in attendance can be monitored.
- If the number attending exceeds 100, further attendees will be declined admittance to the building and asked to consider coming to the evening service.
- Individuals and immediate family groups are to sit in alternative pews in compliance with "social distancing" standards. Pews have already been roped off to facilitate.

- Please bring your own hand sanitiser if available and use it before entering the building and after you leave. Alternatively, there will be hand pumps in the foyer which you should use.
- Please refrain from physical contact and minimise unnecessary touching of surfaces.
- Please do not queue in rest rooms.
- Extra cleaning of the church will occur between services to focus on surfaces such as doorknobs, railings, counters, bathrooms, pews, and other high-risk areas.
- At this stage, an abridged children's program will operate for those who choose to attend. Children should access the downstairs hall via the internal front stairs. Parents should collect children after the service.
- Morning tea, the coffee cart, and all after service lunches will be cancelled for the foreseeable future.

If you have been in contact with anyone who has tested positive to coronavirus or have a test pending, please do not attend Church at this time (and confidentially inform the Church of any COVID-19 status). If you (or your children) have any flu like symptoms, including fever, sore throat, cough or shortness of breath, please do not attend Church and seek medical advice.

Personal Hygiene and Personal Distancing

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. This includes:

- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet. Wash for at least 20 seconds and dry with paper towel or a hand dryer.
- Cover your cough and sneeze - if you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow. Dispose of tissues and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth.

Social distancing should now be observed and is one way to help slow the spread of viruses and includes:

- Staying at home when you are sick.
- Avoiding gatherings if they are not essential.
- Where possible, try to keep 1 metre to 1.5 metres of distance between each of us.
- Avoid touching others such as shaking hands, kissing or hugging.

Queensland Health also states that "there's no need to change your daily routine, but practising social distancing can help protect the people in our community who are most at risk."

Participating in services at home

The Church is not a building or an event. With this in mind, for those not attending public worship services, we encourage you to participate online this Sunday afternoon from approximately 2.00pm (via a replay of the morning service) or by a DVD recording posted to your home later in the week. If you would like to be added to the mail distribution list for DVDs, please email office@citytabernacle.com.au and provide your postal address details. These will be provided free of charge to Australian address recipients. From next Sunday, we also expect to be able to provide live streaming of services. Sermons will continue to be available on the Church website.

Please access <http://media.citytabernacle.com.au/Sunday-Service.htm> at approximately 2.00pm on Sunday.

In these trying times, we remember that the meeting of believers together physically is an important part of the Christian church. The functions of the church community include meeting together as a body (Hebrews 10:25) and serving one another. The community gathering is a spiritual refuge

important for our growth as we share another's burdens spiritually (Galatians 6:2). We meet together for fellowship, worship, prayer, communion and edification.

This year of 2020 is the City Tabernacle's 165th year of Christian witness in the City of Brisbane. Over this time the ministry of the Church has endured in the midst of wars, trials and turmoil, and even though meeting physically may not be possible in these times, the work of the Church must go on. Please remember the Church can receive electronic offerings by electronic funds transfer to BSB: 704 913 and Account: 400019634.

The global COVID-19 pandemic may well keep many of us from physically gathering for many weeks or months. It is possible that the pandemic will necessitate even greater restrictions than those already imposed. Whilst technology may help overcome some of barriers, may we like Paul be able to say, while apart, that we "having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured more eagerly to see your face with great desire." (1 Thess. 2:17).

Conclusion

These are trying times and we are hopeful we will be able to work with one another to help our gatherings run smoothly, whether you are participating in person or with the assistance of technology. It's also important that we continue to maintain our community as best we can. To that end, this email has been sent to a wide number of people connected with the ministry of the Church. If you would prefer to not receive emails such as this, please use the unsubscribe function below.

This Sunday morning, Dr Douglas Green of the Queensland Theological College will be our guest preacher. Dr Green will bring a fitting message on Praising God in Times of Trouble. We trust this message will be a source of spiritual nourishment and encouragement in this time of trial for our country and indeed the entire world.

We also expect that many will be in need of prayer in these times. The Church maintains a separate prayer chain email list where those who have requested prayer may have their need distributed. If you would like to be added to the prayer chain so that you may hold up in prayer the needs of such folk, or indeed ask for prayer for specific needs, please let us know. There are those who are in self-isolation, those facing reduced work hours or loss of employment, and those who may be directly impacted by COVID-19. Please reach out if you are in need of prayer or support.

"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). These words are especially relevant in these trying times and we trust will provide some comfort in the days ahead.

Yours in Christ,

The Church Secretary
For and on behalf of the Diaconate

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