

## Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 Update – City Tabernacle Baptist Church

4 April 2020



Dear Friends,

In the midst of the global pandemic, we are reminded more than ever that we live in a fallen world of sickness and suffering. This past week has been extremely challenging for so many. This is a time where we must trust in God as the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all life and upon whom we all depend.

On Sunday evening, the Prime Minister announced gatherings were to be limited to just two persons to further mitigate the spread of Covid-19. The Queensland Chief Health Officer also issued a Home Confinement Direction in accordance with emergency powers to confine people in their homes except for some essential purposes. This week, there was great uncertainty about whether we would be allowed to continue to record and stream our worship services. Queensland Baptists, various Church Denominations, and others, issued varying opinions. At times, it was uncertain whether we could record a service at the Church building, whether those participating were to be limited to just two, and whether those who did participate were required to be appointed staff or officers of the Church. The Church leadership remained actively engaged with the emerging situation throughout the week. We also sought definitive advice from Queensland Health. We are very grateful to the Chief Health Officer who confirmed our service arrangements at the City Tabernacle Baptist Church are acceptable. This is important to us because the Chief Health Officer's directions are those which have the force of law in Queensland. We're also grateful for the Prime Minister who provided further clarity to all churches last evening. We will continue to provide services abiding by the new restrictions observing adequate social distancing.

Last week, it was mentioned that as far as we were aware the City Tabernacle had not in our 165-year history been prevented from meeting for public worship services. This week, Rev Dr David Parker, long term Queensland Baptists Archivist, confirmed that churches did not close down during the last major health pandemic in Queensland, the 1918/19 Spanish Flu, although social distancing requirements required limits on numbers and the length of services. We're certainly living in unprecedented times! As much as we are thankful for technology that allows for us to provide services online, a biblical picture of a church prioritises us being together in person. Let's be in earnest prayer that the authorities would be given all wisdom to eradicate the threat of the coronavirus, so that we could once again meet in person to encourage and support one another, share in baptism, the Lord's supper, and sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

### Services

Our first online service last week attracted great interest from our church community and from even further afield. Many participated from other parts of Queensland and a few from other parts of the world. At the time of writing, over 1,200 unique people accessed our service on Facebook and via our website. If we assume an average of 2 people device, that means around 2,500 people worshipped with us! We also received numerous emails, text messages and comments of encouragement. It is such a blessing that we can continue to remain connected corporately each Sunday.

What has been especially encouraging is that our service reached a number of people who are not churchgoers and do not know the Lord. As people are largely confined in their homes, and in desperate need of contact with others as well as spiritual input into their lives, we have an opportunity to reach people in their very own homes. Please let us continue to "share" our service online with others who do not have a home church or cannot access their own church online.

We must remember that Sunday is the Lord's Day. For centuries, the people of God have dedicated this time as set apart for Christ and for the sacred task of worshipping Him. While our format has changed in this season, the call to worship remains. It's important that our Church family continues to meet corporately on Sundays and engage with one another and our God. While the services will be available for viewing afterwards, we are encouraging our church family to all watch together at 10.30am.

At 10.30am on Sunday:

- [Click on this link](#) on the church website. The picture can be made full screen by clicking the icon on the bottom right hand of the video. A lower quality version is available for those whose internet connection may experience difficulties. Alternatively, if you experience streaming difficulties, the Facebook stream may be utilised. You may also access the order of service from this link.
- For those on Facebook [click on this link](#). This will also allow you to engage with others who may be watching at 10.30am. You may also press the "Get Reminded" link from today so that you will receive an alert once the service commences.

Those using mobile phone or other cellular devices without access to Wi-Fi connectivity should be mindful of data allowances.

This Sunday, Pastor Richard will exhort us to trust in the Lord in these uncertain times. His message from [Psalm 121](#) will encourage us that our Lord is our maker, is always on duty, is close at hand, and is our promise for now and the future. We'll also have a special video for our children.

Those who would prefer to access a DVD of this service should email [office@citytabernacle.com.au](mailto:office@citytabernacle.com.au) and provide your postal address details. We're happy to provide DVDs each week free of charge to Australian address recipients.

### **Our Church Community**

If you're aware of anyone struggling or in need of a voice of comfort, please let us know. Our Pastors and others involved in pastoral care are available to provide support by telephone at this time.

Please access our weekly bulletin by [clicking this link](#) which contains further news about our church family. We'll look forward to implementing new ways to connect, interact, and support one another in the days ahead.

On Wednesday night, the Jews celebrate Passover. Last year, Bob Mendelsohn from Jews For Jesus presented the meaning of the Jewish Passover at the City Tabernacle Baptist Church. This video recording is available for you to [re-watch at this link](#) (scroll down).

We'll be having online services on both Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Please begin thinking about who you could invite to join with us online as we come to celebrate the importance of Jesus' death and the good news of His resurrection. Although the circumstances do not allow us to meet in person, please prepare elements of bread and grape juice for your family so we can corporately share in communion on Good Friday.

One harsh reality of the pandemic is the financial impact on our church. We know many of you give online or via other electronic means. We've made it easier to give online by [clicking this link](#).

### **Conclusion**

In these difficult times, may our lives be characterised by peace and not by panic, and by the proclamation of the gospel to a world that desperately needs the good news of Christ. Let's continue to respond to our current circumstances from a place of faith rather than fear, as we continue to put our hope and confidence in our Lord.

*"I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2).*

The Church Secretary

For and on behalf of the Diaconate

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