

March 16, 2020

Dear Saints at QBC,

We are living in remarkable days, days where circumstances can radically change minute by minute. As you may have heard, yesterday afternoon Governor Inslee made this announcement: “All gatherings with over 50 participants are prohibited and all gatherings under 50 participants are prohibited unless previously announced criteria for public health and social distancing are met.”¹ We gathered yesterday (3/15) abiding by all of the criterion and restrictions in place by our government, but those criterion have now changed. While we could technically still gather under this new restriction (we had 38 persons in attendance this last Sunday), your pastors no longer believe that is loving or wise to continue our Sunday gatherings. This virus can quickly and silently pass from person to person with or without presenting symptoms. This decision pains us deeply, as surely it pains you, because of the unique blessing of gathering corporately for worship. **However, due to the extraordinary circumstances and our commitment to love our neighbor, we will be temporarily suspending our Sunday services and community groups until further notice.**

Why?

- *Aren't there currently no confirmed cases in our county?*
- Yes, as of right now there are currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Benton Franklin county.² However, this is likely due to the lack of availability of tests for the virus. There are confirmed cases in many of our surrounding counties, so it is likely that the virus is present here already. But even if it isn't here yet, it is only a matter of time before it comes and we need to take drastic measures now to prepare for that.

So, Now What?

- *So, what will we do?*
- While the Bible does not tell us that we can have a “church” online, it does give us a model that when Christians are prohibited from gathering together, they still should strive to encourage one another with prayers and with the Word. Paul often longed to visit various churches in person but was unable to—so, instead he wrote them letters to encourage, exhort, inform, and pray for these different churches (ex. 1 Thess 2:17-18). We will be undertaking something similar. This week we will be making up guides for families to use together for worship on Sunday morning. We will livestream or record our pastoral prayer and sermon each week and post them by early Sunday morning. All of our pastors will be regularly checking in on everyone each week and encouraging them to be regularly reaching out to one another. Our community groups will no longer be able to meet, but we will encourage our groups to still be frequently communicating with one another, encouraging one another with God's Word, sharing prayer requests, and informing one another of any needs anyone else has. More information about all of this will come later in the week.

¹

<https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-statement-statewide-shutdown-restaurants-bars-and-limits-size-gatherings-expanded>

² <https://www.bfhd.wa.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=10766056&pageId=16507813>

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- *Can I still have people over to my home?*
- As I have been writing this letter, President Trump just advised that people not gather in groups of more than ten people for the next 15 days. Thus, we would encourage you to exercise great caution in your hospitality—*especially if you are one of the more vulnerable categories of individuals*. If you want to have someone over, do not exceed the ten person limit. Also, you should follow all of the regular CDC guidelines: require visitors to immediately wash their hands upon arriving, avoid handshakes or hugs, and remain six feet apart from one another. If sharing a meal, try to eat in the living room or outside so you can keep appropriate distance from one another. Also consider having only one person serve the food and have them wash their hands immediately prior to doing so. This may feel uncomfortable to ask of people, but remind them that this is something that you are doing motivated by love of neighbor, not fear or self-preservation. Finally, we would advise you to err on the side of caution while still striving to show other church members and neighbors the love of Christ.

- *How long will this last?*
- We are not sure. Right now, we will be keeping a close eye on the recommendations from our local government and the CDC. We are exercising an abundance of caution now because it appears that practicing extreme social distancing over the next couple of weeks will be the most effective method of preventing a catastrophic spread of the virus. Currently America is following the same rate of infections that Italy demonstrated just a few weeks ago—a rate that increased so rapidly that it has led to their medical infrastructure being completely overrun and overloaded, resulting in a tragic number of deaths. So, the next few weeks will be very important for our country and our community.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, so we ask you to pay close attention to your email and social media for future updates from us. Please also be sharing this information with others who may check those less frequently. You can be confident that as soon as it is safe for us to gather again, we will all rush together ASAP. In the meantime, pray hard, trust God, and be patient.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. Your pastors will be working very hard through this season to love and serve you as best as we can.

Eagerly desiring to be with you all,
On behalf of the pastors,

- Pastor Marc