

ULVERSTONE BAPTIST CHURCH

17th March 2020

UBC FAMILY CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

Hello again family,

We find ourselves needing to act quickly with the information we are being given concerning coronavirus. The call for the church is to be a leader in the community. This update is to inform you of our responsibility, and to provide 'a caution' around our current ministries. Where this may lead in the coming weeks, no one knows.

We are not looking to respond out of fear or panic instead from a position of faith, love and care. We recognise the seriousness of this highly contagious virus, and it would be irresponsible of us not to consider what changes need to be made and how this will look for UBC in the days and weeks to come. Firstly, let us be praying during this time, acknowledging Jesus is Lord of all. Jesus said to take heart in

"John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Secondly, stay in communication call each other. Reach out to each other and please, as much as you can, do not become completely isolated. I think you will all agree this is not an easy time. The uncertainty and, at times, anxiety can keep us from making our best decisions. When factors around self-isolation are considered amidst lockdowns it can feel quite surreal. As a leadership group we are not able to manage this situation on our own, it's all our responsibility, we are in this together!

Here is the Tasmania health services link, for updates on developments in relation to the management of COVID-19 in Australia and around the world. <https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au>
For your personal wellbeing and safety please monitor and keep up with the updates and developments.

I firmly believe we are a church that is resilient and courageous, and we will see God move in our midst. The leadership group met on Sunday and we have considered some measures to be put in place to ensure we can continue meeting, with noticeable restrictions. As a church we have decided to take the following precautions to mitigate risk

- ◆ Unfortunately, we will no longer be providing morning tea after our Sunday service. This will be monitored in relation to the severity of the coronavirus updates.
- ◆ The duration of our Sunday service will be shorter and seating will be spaced-out.
- ◆ We are asking that social distancing be respected (the recommendation is 1.5 metres apart) when we meet, which means keeping out of close proximity in regards to meeting, greeting, catching up and seating spacing, i.e. families sit together where possible.
- ◆ UB kids ministry will be postponed after this Sunday until further notice.
- ◆ Ministries, weekly groups, life groups and team meetings, are to meet in smaller groups (less than 12 people). If meeting with over 12 people we encourage the use of a large room to provide space between seating.
- ◆ At all meetings and groups we respectfully ask that no food or drinks be provided and we ask people to bring their own bottled water. We encourage all gatherings to be limited to one hour. Evidently, less time together helps to reduce contamination risk.
- ◆ If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms or feel unwell in any way, please refrain from attending any meetings and contact your group leader or your ministry team leader as soon as possible. This way we can be aware of you and pray for you. If you are a volunteer serving on one of our teams this will help us to organise a replacement and ensure that you are prayed for and cared for in your absence.
- ◆ We encourage that you take steps to self-isolate.
- ◆ If you are in the vulnerable age group (70+) and have any underlying health risk, we advise you to stay home until further notice.

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- ◆ We understand how difficult this is and we seek to only protect yourself and others.
- ◆ The advice we have been given is to stay at home where possible.
- ◆ We will be posting our weekly sermons on our website at ub.church/podcast/
- ◆ Our U-CARE team is ensuring you are connected and contacted. If you are living alone, please ensure you have connection and communication with family, close friends and neighbours. Keep in touch. Feel free to reach out to our pastoral care team if you are concerned or in need of help.
- ◆ Regarding your self-care, please refer to our previous letter dated March 14th 2020
- ◆ To keep germs of any kind at bay, let's put a pause on handshakes and hugs and be nice in other ways.

One of the challenges of social distancing is isolation. How do we exercise more care for one another? This is a time to consider the ways we can show love for our neighbours within the context of this current health crisis. Let's look out for one another, demonstrate care for one another and simply check in with one another. A phone call has great meaning and provides a lifeline for those who are alone. If someone is on your mind, call them and say hello. We love you, it is a difficult time for all of us, please pray for your church family, friends, love ones, the church leaders, our community and the state of Tasmania at this time

Finally, while we are implementing the above changes straightaway, there is absolutely no reason to panic. I would be sad to hear our action plan did not provide you with the best level of safety while staying connected. All the information so far suggests this will get worse before it gets better. My prayer is that while all this feels foreign to you and me, we must do what we can without feeling like we have overreacted; we MUST ACT.

We'll keep talking and discerning together in the coming weeks. In the meantime, look out for one another and pray for God's protection for our region and for God's love to permeate this difficult challenge.

Love and Blessings,
Louis and the Leadership team.

In closing, please join us in prayer.

Heavenly Father, ever present one, we are mindful of these times in which we live. Uncertainty, anxiety and fear are present among us as we listen to and care for one another in these days. We ask that your peace and healing presence be with us, as we pray for and hold each other in love. We ask for your guidance and direction as we live out your command to love one another as we are called to love you. In the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ, who has called us and prepared us for these challenging days, we pray. Amen.

We will continue to inform you of any further updates as they become available.

**1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.
For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.**