

Golden Grove Uniting Church
Pastoral Letter
25/03/20

...neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ro 8:39)

Dear Friends,

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an increasing impact on our daily lives. We have never experienced anything quite like this before, even though some of us have lived through the ravages of war and the major shortages that can accompany it. Many of us feel shock as the hard reality sinks in.

However, what is an unheard of shock to us is not to Jesus Christ. He is the One who has been crucified and died, raised from the dead to eternal life, and reigns as Lord over all; and He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. (Rev 22:13). Christ is already the Lord of the end of history, and of our histories; He knows where it and we are all headed. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic is no surprise to Jesus; and the end to which He is drawing all things is His conclusive and eternal victory over all sickness, suffering and death! (Rev 21:1-4; 22-27)

Many have said to me that a major part of their shock is that, *all of a sudden, they have been cut off from all their usual social contacts*. We are built for relationships - for marriage, family, friendships, society; to love our neighbours is in our DNA. This is because we are created in the image of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Gen 1:27), who live in a communion of love.

Yet, Christ is also bigger than our separation. When He was ascended, God the Father sent His very presence into our lives by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us (Jn 16). He is nearer to us than our bodies and breath, so that we can know right now that the Spirit, the Father and Son, *dwell with us and have made their home with us!* (Jn 14:23). We also remain in close fellowship with one another, since the same Spirit of God dwells in each one of us (Ro 8:14-17). That fellowship also includes our emotions and affections. As important as physical fellowship is to us, the fellowship we have in the Holy Spirit is even more real than that! (Phil 2:1-2).

While we can't be together physically for a time, it is all the more important that we live in fellowship with God and each other in the Holy Spirit. We can express this by being in contact with each other through a variety of ways – telephone, email, social media... even by letter! and by praying for and helping one another in any ways that we can.

We will also continue worshipping as a church family, even though not in the same place. We will be preparing pre-recorded worship services each week, including our familiar worship hymns, songs and prayers, lead by our usual worship leaders and preachers. These will be available for you to view by Sunday morning (or whenever you would like) via the internet on our church website (<https://www.goldengroveuniting.org.au>), or Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/goldengroveuniting/>). If you don't have access to the internet and would like a DVD or MP4 copy to watch, please contact the church office and we can arrange this for you (8251 4298; office@goldengroveuniting.org.au).

We will also be keeping in touch with all of our church family members through our pastoral carers, and responding to your needs in any way we can – spiritual or practical. If you would like to speak with anyone, please feel free to contact your Pastoral Carer, or one of the Elders or Church Council members, or myself (0467 683 333).

Our aim is to continue “full steam ahead” in our life and witness as believers in Jesus Christ through this difficult time. We look forward to when we can all be back together physically, as

well as spiritually. Of course, all the usual functions of the church continue in spite of having to operate in a very different way from normal, just as we will have all the usual expenses, for ministry, property, etc. Therefore it is vital for us to maintain our regular offerings and income.

We have three options for you to make your regular offerings:

1. Via the new credit card payment facility on the GGUC website.
2. By arranging a regular direct debit through your bank, using the GGUC BSB and Account Number (*BSB: 805-007 Account Number:00702729).
3. By cash or envelope offering (*contact the treasurer to arrange - Chris Holroyd: 0411988147)

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Church Council and Elders will continue to closely monitor developments, consider how we need to adapt in the ways that we operate, and keep you regularly updated via the website.

We continue to pray with you to God our Father, a *faithful Creator*, for His mercy and blessing upon all people, and His Church, that we may be renewed in faith in Him and His Gospel of salvation, and that He will soon rid the earth of this terrible disease.

Christ said "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world".

All grace in Him,
Jonathan

CHANGES TO REGULAR CHURCH PROGRAMS

**Due to the COVID-19 Crisis, and government regulations,
the following changes have been made to regular church programs.**

Suspended until further notice:

- Sunday AM services
- Sunday evening services
- Kidz Connect & Creche
- Café Church
- Bible Study Groups (*Some however are continuing via Zoom video conferencing – speak to the leaders)
- KYB
- The Dinner Table
- Mainly Music
- Estia Worship Services
- Mission & Wider Work Lunches
- Working Bees (Maintenance undertaken by Property Committee Members as required)
- Any group gatherings (including hall hire) on the church property