

Dear Cornerstone,

We pray you are encouraged as you fix your eyes upon Jesus during these strange and perplexing days. We are writing to let you know that **effective today, March 18th, we are suspending all church services and group events until April 12th (three Sundays).**

We have been discussing and praying about the path of wisdom and love in this unique global situation. Last Sunday we elected to continue everything as normal with minor hygiene considerations. At our staff meeting on Tuesday morning we made plans to suspend Sunday School and Childcare thinking we would continue with our gathered worship, however, by noon our provincial government had joined the federal government in calling for the cancellation of gatherings over 50 people.

As Christians, the only fear we are ever to be motivated by is fear of the living God. We do not ultimately fear sickness, suffering, or even death; for our God reigns, Christ has triumphed over the grave, and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:31-39). Our decision to suspend services and groups is motivated by love of the weak and the vulnerable and in submission to appropriate government authorities. We look to countries like Italy and Spain and see our own government seeking to apply the best practices in order to avoid such heart wrenching outcomes for many weak or more vulnerable people. Love moves us to act in wisdom to help slow the spread of this virus. Exponential growth is what governments and health authorities are attempting to slow with social-distancing rules and recommendations. We look at the numbers and may feel these steps are overblown, however, those in Italy and Spain are reminding us they felt the same way just weeks ago.

Brothers and sisters, our God is sovereign, and He is good. In his wisdom he calls us to love others and submit to lawful government authority. **We do not take this action to suspend our gatherings lightly.** We love to gather with our blood bought brothers and sisters to worship in spirit and in truth. The corporate worship of the church is not something we take or leave depending on personal preference or desire. There are times, however, when in God's providence we are hindered from such gathering – and we believe this is one of those times.

Here is a list of specific information for our life together:

1. We are preparing to record video of our sermons in order to have them available each Sunday morning along with a family worship guide that will include song suggestions and resources, along with discussion questions for you to engage with your family. Fathers, we will provide whatever encouragement you need as you step into this.
2. All services and groups are suspended. This means that youth group, Sunday School, prayer meetings, Men's doctrine and devotion, etc., are all postponed at least until Sunday, April 12. We recommend that community groups not meet in person, though we will leave the final decision to individual leaders. The church building, however, will not be available for any group activities. This may seem extreme, but elimination of

groups interaction, even small groups, drastically reduces the chance of exponential growth. When this letter was started, we had 8 cases in Manitoba, now we have 15 – that is exactly what we hope, Lord willing, to fight against.

3. Meetings may be suspended, but interaction, encouragement, prayer, and love are not. There are many ways you are already contacting and encouraging one another through phone, email, social media, and the like. Do so all the more. We will have specific encouragements to that end as the days go on.
4. Remember to look for ways you can serve the body, family, and neighbors during this time. Don't forget a simple smile. We who have hope inexpressible and filled with glory and imperishable joy in Jesus can surely smile in trying times!
5. Your pastors and elders are still here to shepherd you! As staff we will still be available at the church for individual meetings, our phones are on, our email is open – we are here for you.
6. Don't neglect giving. The reality is, we do our giving as a church when we gather. This makes it hard to remember giving when that routine is interrupted. Our financial needs as a church will remain the same throughout this time, so please continue to set aside your usual giving each week as you normally would. We will have ideas for this included in our weekly family worship guide.

Beloved, let us hear His voice, "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." And let us pray for and eagerly await the day when we will gather together again.

With love,

Eric, Chad, Doug, Cam, and Jeff