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From the Minister. COVID-19 Pastoral letter No 1 – 19 March 20

Dear all,

It's a bit like a bad dream with the world retreating because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I write from home as I'm in self isolation with the flu. So much has happened so quickly. Last week we looked ahead and could see how the pandemic was tracking so cancelled Messy Church & the Garage Sale, to minimise the risk to our community. A couple of days later we closed the Café and Op Shop. Today brings the announcement of another decision. Again, it is in the interest of not spreading the virus and keeping those at risk, safe. Church Council has decided to cancel gathered worship on Sunday mornings until further notice. We don't know how long this will be for, most likely months. Also, the Church Office will not be open to the public; however, people will be in the office on particular days – more info to come on that later.

None of this will stop us being a church, as we the people, are the church not the building. How we will be church, how we will care for each other and worship together, will be different as we keep physical contact to a minimum. There are ways in which we can maintain and build social contact. I encourage you all to keep in touch with each other using the telephone, email or text. Over the next few days volunteers in the office will be contacting everyone on the church roll to inform all of the decision to cancel gathered Sunday worship, to make sure contact details are up to date and to find out how members access information. The methods to rapidly disseminate information we currently have at hand are via email & Facebook www.facebook.com/TheCornerUC. If you have the internet and are not subscribed to Facebook can I encourage you to do so, if only to follow our Facebook page.

We are currently exploring ways we can worship together weekly without physically gathering. More on that later. Planning for Holy Week and Easter, being the high point of our calendar, is well under way. In the planning weeks ago we saw that the pandemic could possibly cancel gathering. So we started preparations for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Day to be done from where people find themselves. You are encouraged to be with family or friends at worship time and use the provided resources. We will have a worship pack in a brown cardboard compostable lunch box. Each will contain printed liturgies & activities to do. On line will be multimedia to watch. Blank Canvas, our Youth Arts café church, being a much younger demographic are already "wired". The team are exploring a few options to offer an online delivery of Blank Canvas.

These are the plans for the moment but like the virus they are changing all the time. I will send out pastoral letters in future to keep you all informed.

Blessings

Mark

