

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As many of you are aware, Governor Inslee has released Phase 1 and 2 instructions for churches to start meeting in person. Many of you are wondering what our plans are for the near future. Here are some things we affirm:

- Nothing happening today is catching God by surprise
- Even in the midst of this pandemic, God expects the church to grow in influence and impact for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ
- Even in the midst of this pandemic, God expects his disciples to Make new disciples, Grow up as faithful disciples, and Share the love of Jesus with all people. God wants us to grow, mature, and thrive

So how shall we move forward? Because we are a people of the book, we always turn to God's word to give us guidance. There are three scriptures that give us guidance:

- Romans 13:1-2 *"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed. And those who resist will incur judgment."*
  - Under normal circumstances, the church is to abide by the laws and rules of those who govern.
- Acts 5:27-29 *"When they (the authorities) had brought them (the disciples), they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them saying, 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in Jesus' name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us.' But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than any human authority.'"*
  - When the laws of the land contradict God's laws, the church obeys God
- 1 Corinthians 6:12 *"All things are lawful for me,' but not all things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be dominated by anything."*
  - Paul teaches the church not to use our freedom to cause injury to our neighbors

If the government had told us that we could not meet because Christianity is against the law, or that proclaiming the exclusivity of Jesus is hate speech, and therefore against the law, I would be the first to violate such governmental laws.

But this is not that. This has always been about protecting and being compassionate toward the most vulnerable and those for whom this virus would be quite dangerous. This has been about the church leading the way in loving and having compassion on the most vulnerable neighbors in our midst.

This has always been about loving our neighbors as ourselves.

For that reason, we will continue to worship online until it is safe for all of us to worship together.

We will keep a close eye on the congregations who are meeting in person to see what impact that has on the spread of the Covid-19 virus, and we will re-examine our gathering for worship in person as we learn more about how the virus is spreading.

In the meantime, we know that an extended period of social isolation is not emotionally, spiritually, and physically healthy. We are making plans for groups of ten or fewer to gather in person on campus for small groups, committee meetings, Baby Boomers, etc. We will be opening up for larger gatherings when it is safe to do so. You can hear more about this in the video regarding this announcement on the church's web page.

We look forward to the day when we will be able to gather in person for worship. That day will come. Until then, know that the session and your staff continue to work hard at providing you with best worship experience online as possible and ways for us to stay connected as a church. God bless you! Know that you are all in our prayers.