

WPCB worship & fellowship in the no-public-worship-service era

(on account of the coronavirus COVID-19)



Announcement to our congregation

25 March 2020

Honouring the civil authorities and care for the vulnerable

Our Biblical responsibility

It is important for us, as the people of God, to:

- honour the civil authorities whom the Lord has placed over us (Romans 13¹⁻⁷),
- go out of our way to care for the vulnerable in our community (Isaiah 58⁶⁻⁸).

Hence, we should be doing our best to maintain the advocated principles of social distancing:

- each space should contain no more than 1 person per 4m²,
- each person should seek to maintain a face-to-face distance of 1.5m from others.

We also abide by the Government directive to:

- cease meeting together for public worship,
- cease meeting in small groups.

At the same time, we also want to continue in our calling from the Lord to:

- **Exalt the Lord** - "*Oh, magnify the Lord with me; and let us exalt His name together*" (Psalm 34³),
- **Edify one another** - "*Let us pursue the things ... by which one may edify another*" (Romans 14¹⁹),
- **Evangelise the lost** - "*Lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.*" (John 4³⁵).

Our challenge is how can we best fulfil this calling in a time of such constraints. This paper seeks to outline our way forward in this at the present time.

It is good to remember how in times past God blessed His people in their time of exile.

Worship on the Lord's day

Principle

We will continue to meet for worship, but not in the physical space of our building in Cook, rather we will meet in cyberspace (online) from our own homes at the same time as is our custom – 9:30am on Sunday mornings and 6:30pm on Sunday evenings. In this era of severely restricted social contact and relative isolation, we encourage everyone in the congregation to make good use of both morning & evening worship times, in order to maintain and grow our relationship with the Lord and with one another as His body. God can use this era as a time of significant growth in our walk with Him.

Preaching series

Our morning series is currently continuing our journey through John's gospel, working through Ch 13-14. The theme is **Preparing for Parting**, as Jesus prepares His disciple for His departure from them in death. This series will conclude on 5 April. Then over the Easter weekend we will return to our theme of AWE – *in Awe of the crucifixion*, and *in Awe of the resurrection*.

Our evening series has just launched into the theme of **Parenting with Promise**. This has been chosen because we are particularly blessed to have lots of children in our midst and we realise that parenting is far from easy. The basis of the series is that "our Father in heaven is the perfect parent" and so there is much for us to learn from His parenting of us for how to parent our children. Nevertheless, the series is for everyone, not just for parents, because every single one of us will benefit from a better understanding of our Father in heaven. This will be a series of 12 sermons, and will take us through to the middle of the year.

Again, for maximum growth in grace, we encourage everyone to become partakers of both of these series.

Practice

The worship services will be as close as possible to what we are accustomed to. There will be:

- Announcements - by an announcer
- A call to worship - by a worship leader
- Singing of God's praise - we can sing along to a recording of the songs chosen by the worship leader
- Reading of God's word - by the worship leader
- Prayer - by the worship leader
- Children's talk - by the preacher
- Sermon

The service will be accessible online at our regular worship times (9:30am & 6:30pm), most likely from our own website – wpcb.org.au. (Further information will be forthcoming on this, by email, before Sunday.)

The whole congregation is encouraged to meet 'virtually' together by connecting online at the same time.

For those without internet access, we are exploring other ways in which we can deliver the worship services to you.

For single people or small families, we understand that it is permissible (but not encouraged) to go to someone else's home to partake of the service together. However, the group must be very small (perhaps 3 singles or 2 couples), and the social distancing measures must be adhered to (4m²/ person, and 1.5m separation). If you would like to avail yourself of this, but are not sure whom you could meet with, please contact our Admin (Jen Finlayson: admin@wpcb.org.au, 0417 493 548).

Publications

Our usual handouts will be available electronically:

- Sermon outline,
- Sermon notes (especially for those for whom English is not their mother tongue),
- Bulletin (containing the order of service, announcements & matters for prayer).

These will either be emailed to you or made available on the website (or both).

Problems

If you need help in accessing our worship service online, please do not hesitate to contact Ben Wyllie (0428 371 374, benjamin.m.wyllie@gmail.com). If you have any helpful feedback on difficulties you encounter or ideas on how to improve the delivery, again please contact Ben.

Prayer

Please be praying for the team who will be producing the worship services each week. At the moment we are planning on pre-recording the services on Friday nights, so as to smooth out the technical difficulties we have been encountering so far with live-streaming. This also enables the worship team to be at home with their families for worship on the Lord's day. The team will comprise the announcer, the worship leader, the preacher and 2 tech guys. We will also need someone to be sourcing songs for us online. Please pray for the Lord to prepare the way before them, and for the technology to serve well the purposes of God for us.

Life Groups

Principle

In order to grow in the Lord, each of us needs mutual edification and fellowship in the body of Christ. So now more than ever, we encourage everyone in the congregation to be connected into a Life Group. This is going to be the only way we can encourage one another and build one another up (beyond one-on-one interactions over the phone and the internet). Hence we believe it is vital for each of us.

Life groups will be meeting online, in such a way where everyone in the group can see one another and interact with one another. The technology for this is really good these days. We have people setting this up for us.

Practice

We will have various groups, for various purposes:

- Sunday meeting after morning worship to discuss the sermon,
- Sunday evening meeting after evening worship to discuss the sermon,
- Mid-week meetings to explore the text of the morning sermon beforehand,
- Mid-week meeting to do their own Bible study (eg, ladies KYB),
- Mid-week prayer meeting (this goes beyond praying for one another, this is our church's prayer meeting praying concerning our role in the big picture realm of the kingdom of God).

There is also the possibility of:

- Youth group meeting online,
- Sunday school classes meeting online, perhaps including some interaction in relation to the children's talk.

Process now

We will need everyone to indicate which of the above Life groups you would like to be connected to. It is fine to be involved in more than one, as they serve different purposes. We will soon be sending out a form or questionnaire for you to fill in on this.

We will also be recruiting a good number of leaders for these groups – so be praying for those whom God is calling to step up into this role. Training & support will be provided for the leaders, pastorally & practically with the technology. In the meantime we are trialling the system with some of our existing Life Groups this week. More info to come soon. If you have any suggestions, and especially if you are offering to help in any way with this, please contact me (Geoff).

Offering

Principle

"I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction. The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9⁵⁻⁷)

"Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come." (1 Corinthians 16¹⁻²)

Practice

If you are able to contribute electronically, that would be very much appreciated. Many of us have found it helpful to set up an automatic direct transfer. If you would like to do so, but need help, or have any other questions about this, please contact Peter Harper (0451 395 647, peter.harper@tpg.com.au).

The church's bank account details are: "Westminster Presbyterian Church", BSB: 082906, Acct: 533145288.

Outreach

Principle

Whilst our immediate concern is to minister to our own people, let us also be mindful of those outside of Christ. Especially at this time of social isolation, business collapse, unemployment, home education, and life/death uncertainty, there is the proneness to despondency, depression and despair. Yet this is also an amazing time of gospel opportunity, as people come to the end of themselves and are looking for purpose, meaning, hope and assurance. Ultimate answers can only be found in Jesus Christ, and this is the message entrusted to us.

Prayer

Whilst opportunities for contact are more limited in the current era, our sovereign God is not constrained to save by many or by few, (1 Samuel 14⁶) and He is not thwarted by this pandemic. Maybe it is so that we become all the more earnest in prayer for Him to work above & beyond anything we could ever do. What an awesome God we have the privilege of serving!

Geoff Findlay
0435 557 117
geoff@wpcb.org.au
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