

Dear Church Family,

The ways of Christ are so paradoxical: When we are weak, we are strong. When we humble ourselves, we are exalted. When we serve, we are great. When we take on Jesus' yoke, we find rest. And when we die to ourselves, we live.

These sentences are all counterintuitive yet true. And here's another one: We will serve the Lord, each other, and our community best by not holding services. Willowdale will join our world in "social distancing."

I hate saying this! It runs counter to everything I believe about the nature of the church, the power of face-to-face fellowship, and the glory of corporate worship. But we need to flatten the curve of the spread of the virus, and large gatherings pose unique threats.

So we will not hold worship services this weekend at either campus.

We will, however, deliver Sunday content to you via video.

We'll record our service and send you the link via email on Sunday morning. I hope you'll do virtual church with us, that our hearts might remain united and aligned. Though absent in body, we will be present with one another in spirit. (But maybe some of us will be physically present too. Maybe there's another family or two that you could bring together for brunch and home church. The coronavirus is serious, but it's not bubonic plague.)

Going forward, we will make further determinations about future Sundays and other ministries. At this point, smaller gatherings under 100 still seem allowable, so we are not pulling the plug on Celebrate Recovery, Relengage, or other mid-size gatherings. But stay tuned, that could change. It could change tomorrow.

Obviously anyone gathering at church, school, or work should be in good health. And those who are naturally more vulnerable--our older members and people with preexisting medical conditions--should be especially cautious. But as of now we are still glad to see small groups and ministries meeting.

One of the strengths of a church like ours, with over 100 small groups, is that we have a network of disciple-making fellowships. As long as you are healthy, lean into these! We are strategizing how to resource and leverage our small groups even more in the weeks ahead.

Likewise, we are weighing other ways to minister: increasing home visits to those requesting them; leveraging technology; or conducting smaller, daily services like our Catholic cousins do. Maybe the experiments we've done on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (morning, noon, and night services) will prove beneficial in the season ahead. We will keep you informed as we prayerfully and diligently adapt our many spiritual gifts and strengths to serve you.

We trust you'll remain committed to your church family too, praying, serving, and giving generously that we might meet the demands, seize the opportunities, and **advance the gospel** in this unique time.

We'll be in touch again; Sunday morning, if not sooner!

For Your Progress and Joy in the Faith,

*Pastor Greg
for the Elders and Staff*