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Saturday, 21/3/2020

**Re: Response to Coronavirus COVID-19**

To the Disciples of Jesus Christ in Temora, Trungley Hall and surrounds:

**Words of comfort.** The Christian life is not free of trouble or suffering. Job had great faith, yet he also experienced great hardship for a time. The letters of 1 and 2 Peter also speak of Christians enduring through significant suffering. But in all this, God is with us and for us. Psalm 46 assures us that God is our refuge and strength in times of trouble. Even though the earth trembles and the oceans roar and foam, we have comfort knowing that God is our fortress. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are with us and unshakable.

**A unique opportunity.** In a world troubled by fear, doubt and confusion, God is giving us an opportunity to shine his Light. Let's do what we can to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Instead, let us find safe ways to spread his love, kindness, peace, joy and laughter to those around us (as these are all contagious too).

**Perspective is important.** Our generations have not experienced anything like this before. But other generations have experienced great disasters and the human race has survived. For example, in 1527, during the bubonic plague, Martin Luther wrote a letter entitled, '*Whether one should flee from a deadly plague*' ([blogs.lcms.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Plague-blogLW.pdf](https://blogs.lcms.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Plague-blogLW.pdf)). He writes,

"I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbour needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God."

So out of love and respect for God and others, let us listen to the government and health officials and respect their guidance, requests and demands in regard to the best way to contain this virus. And let us be creative in how we continue to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his love to others.

**Public Worship Cancelled.** This week the Congregation leaders have had a number of meetings to discuss our situation. On Saturday (Today) they made the difficult decision that Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March will be our last public service until further notice.

**A way forward.** The main thing we need to do during these coming months is to keep ourselves healthy physically, emotionally and spiritually. Continue to practice healthy hygiene (handwashing, physical distancing and physical isolation if you or the other person are infected or in the high-risk category). Maintain a healthy diet and exercise.

Regulate and control the amount and sources of media you listen to (listen to factual information, not fake or hyped up news). Keep in touch with others to overcome emotional/social isolation and help keep fear and depression at bay. Continue to be immersed in God's word because his love is what truly casts out fear and gives us true peace.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7, NLT)

I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, ... neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. (Romans 8:38, NLT)

Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. (1 John 4:18, NLT)

**Stay in touch.** What will be crucial is making an effort to keep in touch with others using technology.

- Please ring each other and send each other encouraging and uplifting messages (text, email etc). Be creative. One son visited his father each day by standing outside his window and talking to each other on the phone.
- Offer care and assistance to your neighbours. Drop a note in their letterbox with your name and contact details and ways you might be willing to assist them, even if it's just offering someone to talk to.
- For congregational gatherings, we are offering Zoom meetings as a way to keep in touch with devotional services and discussions via teleconference. This approach also allows us to break up into smaller groups (random or allocated) for discussion or just to catch up like we do at morning tea. This allows you to join in by either internet connection or using your telephone:
  - Internet allows you to see others and/or what's on my computer screen (eg a service order we may be using). This is accessed by going to zoom.us in your web browser, clicking join meeting, add the meeting ID and allow zoom to launch if requested. You can choose whether or not to allow others to see you with your webcam (if you have one).
  - Telephone allows you to ring in and join in like a standard phone call. This will be charged at your normal call rate (eg whatever it would cost you to ring a landline in Sydney). The phone number is (02) 8015 6011. (In case that is busy you can also try (03) 7018 2005 or (08) 7150 1149). When prompted, enter the meeting ID followed by the hash (#) key.
  - Zoom Meeting IDs and times arranged at present are as follows:
    - Sunday Gatherings 9:30am meeting ID: 519-257-802**
    - Lent Discussion 7pm Wed meeting ID: 462-264-352
    - G4E from 4pm Fridays meeting ID: 942-204-198

**Updates and Resources.** We plan on having updates and devotional resources available via email, Facebook, website and physically available under the carport behind Trinity or dropped into mailbox on request. If you are available to help with distribution of these resources or help people learn how to access online resources please contact Pastor Darren or one of the Deacons.

**Recorded services.** To help you engage in God's word, a number of LCA congregations have recorded or live services available. We will have various DVDs available during the week (these will be available in the carport behind Trinity or can be dropped off on

request). A list of LCA venues offering live or recorded services online are now available on the LCA website [www.lca.org.au/worship/wpp/](http://www.lca.org.au/worship/wpp/). Don't forget things like *Songs of Praise* on ABC TV, 11:30am on Sunday mornings.

**Financial Offerings.** As we care for our community, the church still has running costs. You can contribute to our weekly offering via setting up a regular electronic transfer (find out more: [www.lca.org.au/giving/regular-electronic-giving-reg](http://www.lca.org.au/giving/regular-electronic-giving-reg)), or putting cash aside each week in an envelope. Envelopes may be dropped off at the bookshop.

You can use the following bank transfer details:

- Temora Lutheran Community Church: BSB: 704942, Account No: 22875; or
- West Wyalong Lutheran Church: BSB: 082912, Account No: 516267080.

**Pastoral care.** If you, or someone you know, needs to talk during this time and be assured of God's grace and forgiveness for you, please contact Pastor Darren or one of the Deacons (details below). We will be considering how we may offer Private Communion individually or in small groups as the situation develops.

**Small gatherings.** At this point, small gatherings may still go ahead with the following restrictions: Maintain government guidelines in regard to group sizes and physical distancing etc. Ensure good hygiene such as hand washing. Anyone displaying flu or cold symptoms should not attend, but seek pastoral care in other ways. No food is to be served or served only in individual servings. Give special consideration for those in a high risk category (aged, breathing issues, or low immune systems). This means the prayer group may continue at this stage. This week the Lent discussion will start at 7pm without food. You can attend in person or via Zoom meeting (details above).

**Take Care.** Please creatively consider how you might help others during these times. It might be as simple as making a few phone calls each day, knocking on the door of your neighbour and asking how they are going, or offering to do some shopping for a vulnerable person who is self-isolating. Let us be a Church where love comes to life.

Peace in Christ,

### *Pastor Darren Kupke*

#### **Pastor & Spiritual Landscaper**

*Creating spaces & places to grow all ages in Christ through faith and love*

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#### **Contact details for Deacons:**

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*(Doreen is available after 5<sup>th</sup> April)*