

12th March, 2020

Dear Church,

You will most likely be well aware of the evolving situation in our communities with the Coronavirus (Covid 19).

Overnight the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced that this virus is now categorised as a pandemic. The Victorian State Government has also enacted its own Covid 19 preparedness response plan.

With this fast evolving situation it is important that we as a church adopt measures that protect and care for those in our community who are most vulnerable, especially our elderly and those with suppressed immune systems.

The following temporary measures outlined are based on the recommended guidelines given to us by the relevant government and health authorities and also from the Churches of Christ Vic / Tas. My hope is that these will help us to find the right balance between being appropriately concerned but not alarmed.

As of today our church community will adopt the following measures:

1/ We request that anyone who is feeling unwell (even with only mild cold-like symptoms), or has recently travelled anywhere overseas, or has been in contact with someone who has been infected, to stay away from church services or any other church related event for a period of at least 14 days. On Sunday morning we will be live streaming our service online (from 10am) via our Gisborne Church of Christ Facebook page for those who can't or choose not to attend. To access the page go here - <https://www.facebook.com/gisbornechurchofchrist>. Please note that this is a public page and is accessible to all regardless of whether they have a Facebook profile or not.

2/ For this Sunday only, we will not be serving communion or morning tea and coffee after the service. We recognise that in order to mitigate against the risk of spreading infection through food service we need to adopt a much stricter food handling regime than we do currently. We hope to have this in place by Sunday week.

3/ We request that everyone who attends our church facility adopt all the current recommended personal hygiene practices. This includes regular washing of hands, sneezing into a tissue or elbow and not touching ones face. Soap dispensers are available in the toilets and alcohol based hand sanitisers and tissues will be placed in common use areas such as the foyer.

4/ For the time being we will no longer encourage personal touch, which includes normal greetings such as shaking of hands or the laying on of hands while praying for others.

5/ Church Staff have adopted a new daily cleaning regime of church facilities. This includes disinfecting all surfaces, door handles, light switches, and other commonly touched areas at least once every day. As part of this new cleaning regime we are also adopting a single use policy for all wipes and cleaning cloths.

6/ For the time being we will also no longer be collecting our offering in the usual way via the offering bowls mid-service. There will be a signed box available near the sound-desk for you to deposit cash gifts but we also encourage you to use this as an opportunity to transfer to online giving if you haven't yet already done so. The Gisborne Church of Christ bank account details are:

Account Name: Gisborne Church of Christ

BSB: 633-000

Account Number: 145 964 359

Please reference any giving with - Offering / Your Name (optional).

It is most likely that we will be inconvenienced more from the disruption this illness is causing rather than from the actual illness itself. But we recognise that this situation will be challenging for all of us. It is so important that we look out for and care for each other during this time. Early next week we will be sending out an updated church directory (with names, phone numbers and emails). We encourage you to use this to stay in touch and look out for each other, particularly those who haven't been able to make it to church services. If you have previously informed us that you would prefer your personal details not be made public then we will continue to honour this request. However, if you would like this changed please get in touch with Naomi (naomik.gcofc@outlook.com) by next Monday March 16.



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If this situation is causing you to feel overly concerned, anxious or worried then please reach out to one of our ministry staff who are available to listen to and pray with you. The best way to contact our Ministry Staff is via their mobile phones:

- Paul (0438 0438 34)
- Jude (0427 140 850)
- Naomi (0457 240 364)

Additionally, it may be helpful for you to listen (or even re-listen) to the message given at last Sundays 10am service which explores the idea of fear particularly as it relates to the Coronavirus, and how as Christians we can best respond to this fear. To access this message go [here](#).

It also important to emphasise that all church services, activities and events are continuing as planned but with the adjusted level of caution as I've described above.

Please remember that this situation is temporary. It will challenge us but it also gives us opportunity to rely on God, and on each other, in perhaps ways we wouldn't normally.

Finally please continue to pray into this situation, especially for our leaders who are having to make difficult decisions, for our medical staff who are anticipating being swamped, and for God's peace and protection to be resting over all in our nation and our region.

God Bless,

Paul

Paul Crothers
Senior Minister - Gisborne Church of Christ