



18 March 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

No doubt you have been hearing and reading about the rapid spread of the Covid-19 (Corona) virus in countries around the world. The threat now poses a very real and serious danger to us here in Townsville. Each day we read of new restrictions placed on communities by governments. Sometimes we hear what seems like conflicting advice. Your Church

Council has been listening attentively to advice from our Church Assembly, Synod and the medical and health leaders.

Church Council met on Monday 16 March and considered what our church response should be following a presentation by a medical doctor on various aspects of the virus. In our discussions that followed we sought God's guidance and responded to what medical science is saying. At the forefront of our thinking was the safety of members of our congregation, especially but not exclusively, our older members who are most vulnerable. We are a family of God's people here at Aitkenvale Uniting Church and must have a care for each other. We don't want to cause a problem but instead be a part of the solution to this escalating crisis.

We are writing to you to let you know that there will be no services this Sunday and until further notice at Aitkenvale Uniting Church. We are painfully aware of the significance of this decision and have not taken it lightly.

In making this decision we do not wish to alarm you or make you anxious. We must not be afraid. The best of all, God is with us. The Apostle Paul reminds us to "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4: 6-7)

In the next few days we will make you aware of how you can access worship materials prepared by Graham and other congregation members electronically and in print format. We will be exploring various options such as live-streaming and recordings so that together we can still worship even though we will not be meeting together as a gathered community in one place. We will also keep you informed of other relevant matters as they arise in the days and weeks ahead.

We will also be exploring ways in which we can help those of our number who are unable to access food and other necessities of living. As Christ's family we shall continue to find new ways of serving one another.

Let us not live in fear or despair. Let us be a people of hope, compassion and prayer and approach this challenge in faith. Let us also look to how we can help those in need. Being isolated or sick can be lonely and we need seek ways in which we can show the compassion of Christ – and remind people to wash their hands frequently and well!

Let us place our trust in God in this difficult time. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in whom we move and have our being.

Yours in Christ

Graham Huth, Pastor

Ron Store, Chair, Church Council

"He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."
Deuteronomy 31:8