

# Reformed Church BOX HILL

Grace Alone • Christ Alone • Faith Alone • Scripture Alone • Glory to God Alone

Wednesday 25 March, 2020

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

As you have no doubt experienced, the situation in which we find ourselves continues to unfold and change by the day. Nonetheless, we take confidence in our Sovereign Lord, knowing that through it all He will do great and mighty things to the glory of His name. For our part, we must trust in Him, worship Him, look to Him for our needs, and seek in every circumstance to honour Him. We trust that each of you has been strengthened and encouraged in your faith through this particular trial.

Session is seeking to honour the Lord as we shepherd His flock here in Box Hill. Please bear with us and pray much for us as we seek to make wise and God-honouring decisions in the life of our (Christ's) church. This has not been an easy situation, and no doubt there will be different opinions among us as to how we should respond. You are very welcome to share your concerns, encouragements, and needs with us at any time.

As you know, Session last week decided to temporarily suspend public worship services at our building in Box Hill. This temporary suspension is intended to contribute towards the preservation of life directly by stopping the spread of the virus, and indirectly by easing pressure on our health care system. We have an obvious and immediate concern for our vulnerable members, but also a general concern for the wider community. And the further government policy announcements this week have also made it illegal for us to meet in regular public worship services. Our current plan is to re-start public worship services when it is safe to do so. We pray and ask you to join in praying that the Lord, in His mercy, will enable this soon.

For so long as these circumstances continue Session is determined, under God, not to suspend church life, fellowship, relationships, discipleship, and – most importantly – worship. So we will be seeking to continue church life as much as possible by any means safely available to us.

With all this in mind, Session is putting the following measures in place immediately. We will continue to monitor the situation as it unfolds, and will review, adjust, and change any and all of these measures.

1. Isaac will continue to provide online recordings for us all to use in our homes in lieu of Sunday services (similar to those provided this last Sunday). If you do not have access to a computer, please call any Session member, and we will provide sermon and service notes for your use.
2. Please note that, in keeping with the government's advice to stay home as a general rule, Session regrettably recommends that for at least the next 2 Sundays, you refrain from gathering in other people's homes to worship together.
3. Likewise, for at least the next 2 weeks, mid-week meetings will be cancelled. We will provide updated advice on our approach to this situation in 2 weeks time.
4. In lieu of the Wednesday night Prayer Meeting this week, we will provide a list of prayer points. Session exhorts you to take time, if possible, on Wednesday night (tonight) to pray at home. In this way, we will be united together in prayer to seek the Lord's face.

5. In lieu of Bible Studies, Isaac will provide a sermon-based study of the previous Sunday morning sermon. This study will be suitable for use by individuals or families/small groups. Again, for at least the next 2 weeks, Session regrettably recommends that you refrain from gathering together in small groups outside your own home.
6. If for any reason you do go to one another's homes, we sincerely encourage you to diligently observe best practice hygiene and maintain a distance of at least 1.5 metres from one another.
7. All other planned church gatherings (e.g. working bee, men's breakfast, Youth & Young Adults, etc.) will be postponed indefinitely for now.
8. Although we are not meeting in person to worship, please don't forget that part of our service is bringing our tithes and offerings in thankful worship. The weekly *Newsletter* will continue to be produced and distributed electronically (and in hard-copy to anyone who requests it), and it will include information about both offerings, and banking details to enable electronic transfers or over-the-counter deposits at any bank.
9. Session is grateful for the nominations that have been submitted over recent weeks for men to fill the office of Deacon. In ordinary circumstances we would move quickly to discuss the nominations with those concerned, and bring the names before the congregation for prayer and, in due course, an election. But we prefer not to do something as important as that by phone calls and Skype meetings if possible, so we are temporarily halting that process in light of the circumstances. We will review it and complete the process as soon as we are able.
10. We had also planned to conduct office-bearer training across the course of this year, and Session is currently considering a means of conducting that training under the present circumstances.

Although Session recommends for now that we do not congregate in homes, we will review this in two weeks' time. Our hope and prayer is that it may soon be possible for us to have organized, hygienic small home-based gatherings to facilitate the following activities: Sunday worship (using the online recorded services); our regular Bible-study program; the Prayer Meeting; and possibly office-bearer training.

In the longer term, Session knows that prolonged home-based isolation would be detrimental. Our prayer is that the measures we have put in place will counter that isolation as much as possible at present, but we will continue to monitor and make whatever lawful changes we can to reduce the isolation and foster our fellowship. Again, please be much in prayer for wisdom in this regard. Also, please be diligent in maintaining contact between one another. Working through the address book and calling 2, 3, or more members a week is a ready way in which you can "*encourage one another*" (Heb 10:25). Even a simple text message will do good!

With much love to you in Christ, and in the prayer that our Great God will use even these circumstances to cause us all to grow in faith.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.* Romans 15:13

With love in the Lord,  
Albert G, Isaac, Ken, Willem, & Henry.