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## Faith Ministry Update - October 2020

### Preamble

During the past eight months and more we have been subjected to matters we never had to deal with in the past. Our vision for 2020, captured in three words, Exaltation, Transformation and Innovation, has been very much on display this year. The way we do things as a society as well as a church family have been permanently altered, and so we had to be *innovative* in our approach to ministry. In desperate times God works in the lives of people *transformatively* bringing about spiritual change. In so doing, as God continues to reign and sovereignly rule over his creation, he is *exalted*.

The following is an update on the various ministries and goings on at Faith Baptist during this period of time. While we as leadership sought to keep everyone in the loop it has proven difficult given the manner of ministry in which we have been involved. May God in his wisdom and mercy continue to strengthen us as we forge ahead by grace.

### Overall Summary

As we take the overhead view of our ministry over this time period one gets the sense that things have gone very well. In March when we made the switch to everything online we managed to keep things going with little interruption. In going back to in-house ministry in June, again we were able to make the adjustments and provide quality ministry both online and in house. Now this does not mean it was easy nor did we avoid some necessary lessons. However all in all I would say that God in his infinite kindness enabled Faith to continue its ministry and see the gospel go forth. The following is a breakdown of some of these areas.

### Covid Protocols

I have mentioned this area many times over the past months as maintaining the health and safety of our church family has been a priority. As a leadership team we have had regular contact with local health officials to ensure that we have all the proper protocols in place. I am particularly proud of the way our crew came together early on in this and have continued to maintain a standard of excellence each Sunday. This has also had the effect of providing another opportunity for people to minister here at Faith, volunteering to take attendance, sanitize the building and care for attendees needs.

### Sunday Worship

I decided to preach each Sunday under lockdown at the regular time of the church service and live stream rather than tape a message and simply upload it to the website. There were several reasons that went into this decision and I am pleased this was the route chosen. It meant that, among other things, we got to worship together in real time and this seems to have been appreciated by all and most effective.

Due to the concern initially over distancing challenges we made the decision to not have live music but rather use pre-taped selections. At first we had the help of the Westerholm's and then utilized Sovereign Grace music who allowed the streaming of their material without copyright concerns. Then we switched to Sarah and Jay who have carried the load to this point. In managing things this way we were able to keep our worship leaders safe and at the same time produce some excellent worship times. While we plan to get back to live worship in the future, we will continue for the time being under the present format.

We now have both in person services and the online streaming through our website and Facebook each Sunday. This enables us continue to meet the needs of the entire congregation. It is strongly encouraged that everyone pray about returning to worship in person as this is

most fitting for the people of God. As the numbers grow we have the ability to add service times as needed in order to meet the required number limitations.

### **Finances**

In looking at our finances, under the counsel and expertise of our finance people, though offerings are down considerably, we have been able to cover all our bills and then some. This is due to a number of factors;

- People have stepped up and given above and beyond during this time of need.
- Offering online options like E-transfer was a significant factor in making giving easier.
- All committees have worked hard to be prudent in spending and save wherever possible. While there are numerous fixed expenses, the myriad of other expenditures have been kept in check as best as we could manage.
- With God calling Pastor Sam to a Lead Pastor role in Goderich in May, we have not incurred the Associate Pastor salary during the back half of the year which has contributed some savings.

There are still concerns over the finances but God continues to show his care and goodness to us. It is important for us to continue to move ahead by faith and not fear.

### **Associate/Assistant Pastor Search**

As leadership we have taken time to assess our needs and begin the search for who God might want to come on staff here at Faith. Due to some obvious factors already mentioned it was decided to push things back in regard to hiring in order for us to chart our course through the pandemic. We continue seek the Lord's leading together as a board through fasting and prayer with the hope of filling a position in 2021.

### **Elders**

In February as a church we chose to move forward with the plan to adjust our leadership structure and better reflect the scriptures by establishing a plurality of elders. While the process has been slowed somewhat we are still on track to get things done. The timing is flexible but the leadership team are continuing to work very hard on this matter which includes the overhaul of our constitution as it pertains to leadership, reorganizing roles and seeking those men God desires to fill this important leadership role. Despite the aforementioned challenges we've experienced through Covid-19, we continue to make progress and hope to bring an update to our upcoming Fall Business Meeting.

### **Arabic/Muslim Ministries**

Like all areas of ministry Nadalla's work was adversely affected also. However he has continued to minister to this part of our church family in effective ways utilizing a variety of online tools. They have also been able to reach out to the Muslim community on Oakville, the GTA and beyond. God has marvellously used this ministry to impact the lives of people literally around the world.

On another note is the ongoing concern for Nadalla's health and his wife Rachelle's situation in Lebanon. Our brother continues to battle serious health issues - please pray. Rachelle's immigration status is still pending - please pray. God can move in ways we can't even imagine.

### **Expansion Plans**

Our expansion team continues to move forward though with the Covid situation the challenge has been greater. The focus has been on supporting the church ministry during this time and praying for the Lord to continue to guide us in the building plans. The parking lot continues to be priority #1.

## **Media**

While I could spend several pages highlighting all the media related challenges let me simply and briefly update you. I recall the first Sunday we made the decision to lockdown and switch to streaming - literally the day before. So there is Michael Gill at the back and me up front with my iPad going live! We've come a long way. We now, by purchasing some tools, are able to produce a quality service simultaneously online and in-person. The difficulties of doing both are quite significant but God has blessed us with a great crew under Michael's leadership who have managed to do it all and still remain relatively sane. One of the blessings of this pandemic, in this area, is that it has forced to think on our feet and institute measures that will benefit our ministry not just for now but also for years to come.

We have relied heavily on our website and Facebook page to keep people informed and extend our ministry beyond what takes place in our building. This is continually updated so as to be current in all our information.

## **Other Ministries**

In addition to all I have mentioned are the other ministries that make up Faith;

- Prayer Meeting went online with Stephen taping messages and posting online. Since then we have moved back into the building (Sept 16) for our study and prayer as well as continuing to record and post on the website.
- Faith Kids are now online and doing very well. Though we long to have the little kiddies all back in place, our team of teachers are providing quality programming. You adults could benefit so check it out on the website.
- Monday Ladies Bible Study continues to meet each Monday via Zoom.
- Youth and College and Career are back up and running - Jonathon Demers and Isaac Hines are working with the youth and one of our new couples, Chris and Sherrie Coleman are working with the college crew.
- Sunshine Committee and maintained a presence in sending cards and such to those sick, in hospital or who have lost a loved one.
- Seniors under the capable direction of Ken and Heather Davis have been meeting via Zoom and hope to meet in person sometime in October.
- Growth Groups have continued, for the most part. Some managed to meet through the spring to the end of June and after breaking for the summer have now picked back up online and will continue virtually through the fall in hope that we can return to meeting together in person before too long.
- Our mission support has continued unabated during this time with our missions team doing its best to keep connected and be an encouragement to those serving in the field.
- A new ministry, born out of the pandemic, has been our Thursday Noon Devotions. These weekly studies in God's word and prayer times have been a blessing and encouragement to many particularly during the lockdown period.

## **Deeper Needs**

I am certain that in this update I have missed an item or two, so please forgive me. I am also anxious to share that the journey thus far has been in many ways incredibly difficult. The toll it has taken on our staff and volunteers as well as regular members is real. In addition to this many needs within the church family simply have not been met in the way we are used to. I want to highlight a couple of the specific areas we that continue to face as a church.

First, consider the emotional, spiritual and psychological effect this pandemic has had. It is impossible to see into the lives of others when we never have the opportunity to meet with one another. I have a small and growing list of individuals who have shared their loneliness, and fear. It is difficult enough to get through isolation when you're isolated with your family. Try doing it on your own, day after day and week after week without human contact. We need to

pray and get active in reaching out to others. This is our mandate as a church family - to love one another with action.

Or what about the financial needs of individuals and families within our congregation? Many have had their economic situations hammered and for some destroyed. How can we find ways to support those in such a need?

These are just two areas but you get the idea. While the Lord has chosen to do marvellous things with the gospel during this time, he has also chosen to lead us through some desperate times as well. Let us be much in prayer for these matters and for each other.

### **Conclusion**

As I reflect on this unique time a number of bible texts come to my mind but the one that stands out at the moment is Romans 11:33-36;

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,  
and his paths beyond tracing out!

“Who has known the mind of the Lord?  
Or who has been his counsellor?”

“Who has ever given to God,  
that God should repay them?”

For from him and through him and for him are all things.  
To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Moving forward means being committed to Jesus Christ, putting substance to our faith and reaching out in love to those around us. It means praying for and supporting leadership to lead God's people as they, in turn, are led by the Lord Jesus. It means conquering our fears and living by faith through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It means, under the guidance of our Heavenly Father, taking the gospel to the world so that they might know him.

May the Lord continue to bless and give us strength for the days ahead.

Soli Deo Gloria

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