COVID-19 AND WORSHIP AT FAIRVIEW

Dear Fairview Friends,

**After considerable thought and prayer, the leadership of Fairview Baptist Church has made the decision to suspend services at the sanctuary for the time being.** The reasons are as follows:

1. The city and province have already declared a state of emergency.
2. Our meetings are close enough to the 50 persons or above category, which have already been halted throughout the city.
3. In temporarily cancelling gatherings, we can do our part to love our neighbours by taking measures that stop or slow down the unnecessary spread of infection. Though many of us may never have symptoms or become ill, the possibility of unknowing transmission is real, which endangers our vulnerable friends, family and neighbours.
4. Some members, including the pastor, are already self-isolating either as a preventive measure or because they have cold symptoms.

In a time of crisis, we often look to our sanctuary as a place of refuge and spiritual renewal where we can draw strength from God and from one another. For some it may seem counterintuitive to stop gathering for worship at a time when worship is needed more than anything. Our real sanctuary is God, and God cannot be lost if we love Him and abide in Him. Our worship continues, even when we are temporarily separated by space. This year, God has given us a radically different kind of Lent: we are being forced to give up salaries, grocery items, conveniences, education, public entertainments, certain kinds of medical treatment, and even corporate worship. Some of these obstacles to normal life are going to continue after Lent. It is a good time to reflect on how good God has been to us for years—we have managed to live with very little economic difficulty, almost no natural disasters, and a level of convenience, freedom and safety that is not the norm in the world. God has invited us into a time to reflect and rely on Him for everything, and Scriptures teach us that God is enough. The prophet Habakkuk describes such a scene: “Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength” (Habakkuk 3:17-19). Jesus is with us, no matter what happens: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). God will continue to be our sanctuary; we will continue to worship in Spirit and in truth; we will continue to abide in His love as He abides in us, and as we learn to abide in each other even without physical proximity.

To answer your spiritual needs, the church will continue to do the following:

1. The pastor will continue preparing and uploading sermons to the Facebook page and the church website.
2. Additional videos of prayers, scripture readings and words of encouragement will be provided from time to time.
3. Videos of hymns and worship music will be uploaded as well.
4. The pastor continues to be available for phone visitations.
5. The pastor will be sending out a list of additional faith and worship resources that can be accessed from the Internet.

It is important to continue practicing the measures the government has recommended: careful handwashing, social distancing, self-isolation if necessary, and staying informed. New information will be posted to the Fairview Facebook page and the Fairview website as it becomes available. It is also important to stay calm, hopeful, and loving during this period. In the media, we have already seen the chaos that can be caused by panic, selfishness, and thoughtlessness. God calls us to be thoughtful, careful, hopeful and calm: “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:25-33). With God as our sanctuary, let us continue to seek first the kingdom of God together, in prayer and wisdom, in hope, faith and love. The Lord is with us.

*Our hope is in the Father, our refuge is in the Son, our shelter is in the Holy Spirit. O Holy Trinity, glory to You!*

Stephen Hasbrouck, Pastor

Denis Vaillancourt, Moderator