

March 27, 2020

Dear Bethel Family,

It's been seven days since the last letter went out to the congregation and yet it feels like seven years! The impact of COVID-19 increases daily and there may yet be more changes and upsets to our plans, preferences, schedules, and desires. Our lives have been impacted significantly and it can be easy to find ourselves drawn to fear or anxiety. Depending on your personality, you might be more quickly drawn to anger or impatience. It can be hard when we realize that we are not in control of our lives and things are not going as we would like, but it is helpful to recognize when this is happening.

As Christians, we have two primary relationships: our up-and-down relationship with God, and our left-and-right relationship with others. It is important for us to keep both relationships healthy! We can spend time each day reading God's word, praying, and in worship. These things all help us remember who God is and remind us to see the world as He sees it. As well, we can work to keep relationships with others healthy and strong by looking for ways to connect with people, pray for people, and care for those around you.

As you may recall, we took a look at the book of Ephesians in the fall and saw that we as the church have been blessed, have been saved by grace through faith, have been brought near to God, and have God's Spirit dwelling within us, among many other amazing truths. We have also been called to use our gifts in ways that build up the body of Christ and display God's wisdom to the world.

None of this has changed, even if so many other things have.

We are still the body of Christ, we are still saved, we are still loved, and we are still known by God. We are still called to use our gifts to display God's wisdom and build up the body. The only thing that has changed is what it looks like in this new and oh-so-strange season. So I would like to ask you to re-read the book of Ephesians and ask what it means to you *today* to be in relationship with God in this season. What gifts do you have, and how can you use them to bless others? You could look at things like:

- Using a gift of encouragement to phone, text, or e-mail someone
- Using a gift of teaching to remind someone of the truth of God's word
- Bless parents and kids alike by coming up with a creative idea to engage with their kids by phone, internet, or even "snail mail"

- Using a gift of prayer and intercession to pray for the hurt, lonely, broken, anxious, or fearful
- Using a gift of giving according to your means to help provide for those who are needy
- Using a gift of service to meet someone's need, perhaps by getting them groceries if you're healthy and mobile

It is incredibly important that we remember we are still the church. We are not the church because of the building, the service, or the time but because God has called us by His grace, put his Spirit in us, and called us to be his hands and feet to the world.

This is an essential reminder in this season, particularly as we as a church seek to act in faith and wisdom in response to the ongoing spread of COVID-19. Governments at all levels are strongly encouraging people to physically distance and stay home as much as possible. We want to be mindful of our own health as well as the health of those with whom we are in contact and have made the following decisions:

1. The church building is now closed indefinitely. This means that Sunday services and all programs that meet in the church will be postponed for the time being. While we don't have an exact timeline from the government, it is likely going to be at least 4-6 weeks and perhaps longer.
2. In an effort to keep our church staff safe and healthy, they will work from home as much as possible. (Linda will still be picking up the mail regularly through the week.) You won't be able to stop by and see them in person, please feel free to reach out by phone, text, or e-mail!
3. Although we cannot meet in person, we will meet online for services. It's not quite the same as being in the same room, but our plan is to have worship, a sermon, and a kids lesson available weekly on our website. To find this, please visit:

<https://bethelmc.ca/pages/service-this-week>

4. We will aim to connect at other points online in smaller groups through the week using Facebook (search for the Bethel Mennonite Church group) and Zoom, a free and easy to use video conferencing app. If you haven't yet signed up for Zoom, you can have get a free account at:

<https://zoom.us>

5. Giving will be an important part of our ministry in this season. There will be many for whom finances will soon be a significant concern, and many who are already in this position. If you are able to give above and beyond what you would normally give, we ask that you would! You can give by cheque sent to the church, an Interac e-transfer, and on our website (<https://bethelmc.ca/give>) with Visa Debit and credit card.

As it says about giving in 2 Corinthians 8:12

¹² For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have.

¹³ Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. ¹⁴ At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, ¹⁵ as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

6. We also want to know about the needs of our community so that we can be the hands and feet of Jesus! Are you feeling anxious, concerned, or afraid? Do you feel alone or like you’re losing hope? Are you running out of cereal and are nervous about going shopping? It can be hard to reach out to someone and say these things, but you’re not alone! If you’re struggling or just want to chat with someone for a bit, we want to have a conversation with you! If you need groceries or household items, let us know and we can help get them for you. If you’re willing to help by running simple errands or chatting on the phone, please let us know so we can connect people who need help with the people willing to help. Here are some ways to connect:

- a. Contact the church office – office@bethelmc.ca / 604-856-8454
- b. Join the Facebook Group – Search for Bethel Mennonite Church
- c. Reach out to one of our staff or deacons

i. Deacons

1. Bodo & Sharon Goetzke
 - a. bodogoetzke@gmail.com
 - b. sharongoetzke@yahoo.ca
 - c. 604-856-3545
2. Matt & Eva Horst
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 - c. 604-856-8815
3. Sara Pearson
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 - b. 604-882-0460
4. Emily Reesor
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ii. Staff

1. Jon Reesor
 - a. jon@bethelmc.ca
 - b. 778-245-8224
2. Linda Hoock
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3. Aleah Scanlan
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 - b. 604-655-6155
4. Daniel Warkentin
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 - b. 604-300-3033

We are in an uncertain time and nobody is entirely sure how this will continue to play out. (If you actually *do* know how it will all play out, please call the church office as we have some questions for you.) As a blessing that comes through the uncertainty, we can more clearly see the unchanging nature of an ever faithful God. As we trust Him, he leads us into a clearer and deeper understanding about who God is and how He is at work in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Let us continue to believe into Jesus: to trust him more, depend on him more, and move more towards him day by day.

See you soon!

Terry Christie, Congregational Chair Person

Jon Reesor, Pastor

For Bethel Leadership