

## A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM YOUR PASTOR

**I trust you are keeping safe and well and that you are blessed of the Lord.**

As a pastor and community leader I am feeling the weight of responsibility to provide leadership and pastoral care in this unprecedented health crisis, the coronavirus known as COVID-19. Accordingly, I want to share several things with you in this email:

**Firstly**, I want to let you know that Joy and I love you and care for, and pray for each and everyone of you. I am very keen to know what is happening in regard to your own health, both physical and mental. You may be feeling fearful and therefore I also want to know how your faith is holding up. Please let us know about your needs, for example, if you need someone to deliver groceries to you, or to pay bills for you. We will do what we can within the restrictions imposed, and will encourage you all to serve one another.

Let me say that it is only natural to feel some fear and apprehension in the midst of a pandemic, and such apprehension is not a lack of faith as such, but a challenge to commit every day to Him who said, "Be anxious for nothing..." Our mental health and wellbeing relies on staying close to the Lord in His Word and in prayer, and by knowing the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Peace is found in giving thanks in everything.

**Please look out for one another**, and please allow regular communication from your pastors and leaders so that we can really pull together as the fellowship of CLCG.

**A VERY IMPORTANT REQUEST:** Could you **PLEASE REPLY** to this email and tell us if you are prepared to share your contact information in a Church Directory so that you can keep in touch with one another, and care for one another.

**Secondly**, our faith should never be presumptuous, and we do not test God as Satan tempted Jesus to do (which Jesus resisted). We stand on the promises by faith but we don't deliberately expose ourselves to the virus in the same way that Satan tempted Jesus to deliberately jump off the temple to prove that His angels would protect Him (as promised in Psalm 91). Some Christians will adopt a sort of 'super-spiritual' stance. My simple question to them is, "Do Christians strong in faith get colds and flu?" The answer is yes, and so why would it be any different with the flu that we know as COVID-19?

Some will argue that this virus is a plague and pestilence against which the Bible promises protection. There are such promises, I agree, notably in Psalm 91, and I am standing on those promises, but I will not test God and be presumptuous in my faith. I am believing that the Christian community will be protected, but I am also going to take every precaution and will wisely practice isolation and social distancing. Also, the community will condemn us if we do not respect the law and government health directives.

**Thirdly**, I want to echo the words of our prime minister and other health authorities, to affirm that our best practical defence is isolation and social distancing (our best spiritual defence is prayer). This practical strategy means that we should stay at home as much as possible and avoid even one-to-one contact. An authoritative example of how the virus rapidly spreads in our community from just one person is as follows:

**If one infected person** infects 2.5 people in five days, there will be 406 people infected in 30 days.

**If one infected person** halves their public exposure and thus infects only 1.25 people in five days, there will be much less infection, with only 15 people infected in 30 days.

**If an infected person** practices 75% less exposure to the public over five days, there will be less than one person infected (.625), and in 30 days only 2.5 people will be infected.

**This very powerfully illustrates** how important it is to practice isolation and social distancing. Many people think that if they go and visit only one person who is supposedly not infected that they will be safe. But we must ask how many people has that one person also been in contact with? You also need to know that some people do not show symptoms and can be infecting other people without knowing it for up to 40 days.

**Fourthly**, it is very important in this health crisis to be thoroughly informed of relevant facts, and for that purpose you will need to get up-to-date information from these websites: <https://www.pm.gov.au> <https://www.health.gov.au> Regarding finances see <https://ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/josh-frydenberg-2018/media-releases>

It is also very important to visit the the **Queensland government website on health**. It provides information on things like COVID-19 symptoms, 'social distancing', 'self-quarantine' etc. For example, if you are wondering if you should get tested for COVID-19, it says: *'If you are unwell and haven't been overseas or been in contact with a confirmed case, you may not be tested for novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Your doctor will make this assessment based on your symptoms...etc.'* (Note also that you need to ring ahead if visiting your doctor re the virus). See: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au>

**Point Five:** You probably know that the government has **closed churches** as part of its strategy of social distancing and that means that there will be no church services in the foreseeable future. We have also closed the Prayer Meeting. Therefore, **I am now researching and investigating ways to communicate**, such as live-streaming a form of church on Sunday morning, and also ways of video-conferencing for Management Committee Meetings and the Prayer Meeting, and any other meetings. I will be sending out information about this as soon as possible.

**SECOND VERY IMPORTANT REQUEST:** Could you **PLEASE REPLY** to this email and tell me what apps and social media you use? Do you have a FaceBook account and/or use Messenger? Do you use YouTube and/or Vimeo? Would you be willing to download from the Apple App Store or Google Play the very popular app, Zoom, a video conferencing tool, that could be useful for church services, prayer meetings, etc. Also, could you please like <https://www.facebook.com/CLCGatton/> which we may use for Facebook Live, as a live-streaming tool. See also <https://www.clcgatton.org>

**Point Six:** We are now very busy re-organising the finances of the church in order to ensure that the church remains financially viable. The church's regular bills will not stop just because the church services have stopped. Joy and I will play our part, and we are also rearranging our finances, such as investigating how to finalise the debt on our car and considering drawing less wages. Some of you may also experience financial hardship, so let us know so that we can stand with you in whatever way possible.

**We are so grateful and encouraged by those now doing Tithes and Offerings online**, and we thank you for your faithfulness. We will be sending out more information about how you can maintain support for your church. While we understand and appreciate your giving privately, please know that your online giving is kept confidential and that this is not a time to be shy when the church so desperately needs to remain viable.

**God bless you richly and keep you safe,**

Pastor Rick and Joy Armour.