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Responding to COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) have officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic and in coming weeks and months there may be significant impacts to our community's work, lifestyle and public gatherings.

In the midst of this, we want to encourage our church family to respond well, with wisdom and grace, as those who seek to follow Jesus in loving and serving our communities. There may be a level of fear and panic around us, but our trust in our great God should strengthen us to live and speak with confidence and hope even in difficult situations.

We invite you to join us in prayer. Pray for healing for those who are sick. Pray for peace for those who are isolated and afraid. Pray for wisdom for governments and health authorities in their decision making and responses. Pray for God's grace and mercy in slowing and restraining the effects of the virus. And pray for God's people to show love and compassion always.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[Phil 4:6-7]

The current situation also challenges us to respond with love and care. In many times throughout history, Christians have been those who have stepped up, at risk to their own personal safety and perhaps even in defiance of recommendations, to demonstrate the love of Jesus in practice. Jesus touched the lepers and reached out to the bleeding woman. He taught his disciples to feed the hungry, visit the imprisoned, and look after the sick. There are inspiring stories of Christians in Wuhan emerging, as they took the opportunity to show the love of Jesus in very practical ways during their city's lockdown.

We want to demonstrate wisdom in practice as we respond to the practical realities of the spread of disease, but we also recognise that fear can lead to attitudes of selfishness and self-preservation at the expense of love for others. How can we model a different way? We can consider the language we use at this time and how it reflects the love of Jesus for all and radical discipleship in practice. We should consider those in our churches and neighbourhoods who are more at risk or isolated and how we can generously love and support them at this time.

Finally, we encourage you to continue following the advice of health professionals as appropriate. We recommend monitoring the S.A. Health web site to keep up to date with developments: <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+topics/health+topics+a--+z/COVID+2019>,

Some practical tips specifically for churches include ensuring good hygiene practices, particularly around children's and youth ministries, communion, food service; ensuring those cleaning your church are properly sanitising and disinfecting surfaces; and making hand sanitiser and tissues easily and visibly available at gatherings. These simple practices can also serve as prompts and reminders to be prayerful and loving in the midst of this situation.

For further information refer to the Australian Government information sheet which is available from:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-what-you-need-to-know>

The understanding and spread of the COVID-19 virus is an evolving situation so we will endeavour to provide appropriate updates as things develop.