

March 18, 2020

Dear Shiloh Church Family,

I wanted to give you an update on how we at Shiloh are dealing with the current COVID-19 crisis. The Elders, Pastors and Staff are heeding the advice of the CDC, the Governor's office and the President who are asking for large in-person services and all gatherings of 10+ people to cease for a short time to slow the spread of the Corona Virus. For at least the next three weeks, including Sundays March 22, 29 and April 5, we will be not be meeting on campus for any of our ministries, studies or worship services. We will however, be worshipping online together as we broadcast our services through our website and social media.

This week we are reading about many things being canceled out of an "abundance of caution." But Shiloh has decided to do this for a different reason: **an abundance of love.**

During the pandemics that swept the Roman Empire during the 2nd and 3rd centuries, while civic leaders and even medical professionals fled for the countryside to protect themselves, Christians remained in the cities to care for the sick and dying. The resurrection of Jesus made these Christians unafraid to die, which freed them to love their neighbors sacrificially. This compassion inspired many people to become Christians and the Church grew exponentially!

When Bubonic Plague devastated Europe in the mid-1300s Christians demonstrated this same sacrificial love by choosing to remain and care for the sick rather than run to safety.

Such wonderful examples might encourage Christians today to continue meeting fearlessly despite threats from COVID-19. But I believe that today that same sacrificial love for our neighbors must take a different form. We need to take steps to protect our most vulnerable neighbors and precious members of the community.

At this time, the best way to serve our neighbors is to slow the spread of this virus so that medical facilities and professionals are not overwhelmed by more patients than they can care for. We can do this by avoiding gatherings, and even in smaller gatherings (10 and below) practicing "micro-social distancing," and frequent hand washing. If you are interested in the science of why physical distancing matters, I have attached two documents below that as a resource:

1. Cancel Everything: Social Distancing is the Only Way to Stop the Coronavirus - The Atlantic
2. Coronavirus (COVID-19): Update and Thorough Guidance - Flatten the Curve

While I am saddened by the prospect of sacrificing many of our beloved and meaningful regular gatherings, I wonder what new invitations God may be giving you personally and us collectively in this season. Our staff team is exploring ways to connect virtually and in smaller groups, including online Sunday services and many more new and different opportunities throughout the week. We will send out more information about this in the days ahead. Churches in Japan were forced into virtual gatherings during their quarantine, but some found that this allowed many of their neighbors to join them who might have been reluctant to show up at a service in person. Many new people are finding Jesus that way. Imagine if God opened new doors for the Gospel even while we are all stuck behind closed doors!

In addition, we are looking into ways that we can serve those who are impacted by either the disruptions caused by COVID-19, or by the disease itself. We are currently in talks with community leaders and medical professionals to figure out if there are ways we can bless others in this difficult and frightening time.

Finally, I want to say THANK YOU to the many medical professionals, researchers, and community leaders who are on the front lines against this pandemic. If some of the rest of us have extra time at home over the next few weeks, let's use some of it to pray for those who are working even harder to protect everyone else, and in many cases, facing much greater risks.

As always, check in on each other; and if you have needs, share them with others in your Community Group, your circle of friends, or to the church at (602) 569-0311 so that we can be a body together. We will not be dominated by fear, but by love.

Grace and Peace,

Jason West  
Lead Pastor, Shiloh Community Church