



Plentylife Response to COVID-19

13 March 2020

This document aims to outline how we as a church are responding to some of the challenges presented by the coronavirus, otherwise known as COVID-19.

Concern over increasing person to person transmission of COVID-19 has meant that there are some implications for the way people gather and interact with one another that are relevant to us at Plentylife.

The Diocese of Melbourne has released some guidelines for churches and we have already implemented a number of those guidelines in our gatherings.

Whilst we have no need to be overly anxious, and indeed have a God who invites us to cast all our anxieties on Him, we want to be responsible in the way we meet together as a church so as to reduce the risk of transmission. This is particularly important when we have people amongst us who would be considered to be in a high-risk category due to age or health issues.

We want to do everything we can to be responsible and to care well for each other.

At the most basic level we need to be vigilant in the washing of our hands and in not gathering with others if we are experiencing any cold or flu like symptoms. If you have such symptoms and have either recently returned from overseas or know that you have been exposed to someone with the COVID-19, then please follow the Department of Health's recommendations that can be accessed here:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

This link also provides all the up to date information you need to know concerning the virus and its management.

If you feel it's best for you to not attend gatherings (either as a precaution or due to the need for self-isolation) then please know you have our full support and understanding. We would encourage you to let us know so we can continue to connect with you and provide prayer and practical support as needed. Also please remember that all our sermons are online and can be accessed at any time via our website.

In addition, as of Sunday the 15th of March we are modifying some of the ways in which we gather, as outlined below:

1. Hand sanitiser will be on the welcome desk and we encourage you to use it on entry and at any other time during our gatherings.
2. We won't be having a formal 'Greeting of the Peace' time, however we would encourage everyone to continue greet one another warmly as is our custom - just use your smile and words of welcome as your basis for doing so.

3. Communion will still take place on the third Sunday of each month. We will be using individual cups rather than the common cup, and gloves will be worn by those distributing the bread.
4. An offertory container will be at the welcome desk rather than passed around the congregation. Please do still give generously to the Lord and His work either before or after the service. Alternatively, please consider giving online - our bank account details can be found on our website.
5. Morning tea will still be provided but with some modifications. One of our hospitality team will serve you tea/coffee/cordial in a disposable cup. In addition, individually wrapped biscuits (rather than cakes and slices) will be available.

We have been advised that it is possible that services will need to be suspended at some point. This is currently unnecessary, so we encourage you to continue to come and participate in worship with your church family whilst exercising wisdom in these times.

If the ceasing of gatherings does become necessary in the future, we have both the plans and the technology to take our services online. We will inform you if and when this time occurs.

As we have been advised that the risk of transmission will likely be at its greatest from May to August, it is very likely that we will shift our church camp that is currently scheduled for June to later in the year, if not next year. The Board will make a final decision about this very shortly.

Plentylife staff and Board will continue to assess what modifications might be necessary in light of the most up-to-date advice provided by both government departments and the Diocese of Melbourne. We are committed to keeping you informed of those developments and ask that you join us in praying for all those impacted by this outbreak, particularly for the well-being of those whose health has been impacted or who are in quarantine, and also that people will exercise grace, patience and love through these trying times.

If any of you happen to be in any need of assistance either in the provision of food or basic supplies, please do get in touch with me or any of our staff team. We want to ensure that anyone who is in need is able to find care and support within our community, as has been the way of the Church from the very beginning.

Finally, if you would like to talk through any of this further please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for your understanding and God bless,

Craig Ogden

On behalf of the Plentylife staff and Board