



Important Elder Update

Regarding the Coronavirus Pandemic



Dear Faith Community Family,

After much prayer and consideration, your elders have decided to suspend our regular Sunday morning gatherings (including all CMD, FSM and Growth Groups) here at the church and instead live stream our services into your homes. We did not come to this decision easily. We highly value the meeting together of the saints (Heb. 10:25). It is our joy to encourage one another, stirring up one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24), on a regular basis. But we are also called to protect the sheep (Acts 20:28), to submit to our governing authorities (Rom. 13:1-2), and to be good citizens who love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31) and seek their good (Rom. 15:2).

On March 11, our California State Governor, Gavin Newsom, issued a statement announcing that gatherings with 250 people or more should be rescheduled or cancelledⁱ. On March 12, Governor Newsom issued a new executive order to direct Californians to follow public health directives including cancelling large gatherings more than 250 people.ⁱⁱ Our general disposition as Christians ought to be to subject ourselves to our governing authorities (Rom. 13:1) unless our governing authorities are asking us to disobey God's law (Acts 5:29). We, as your elders, did not believe that submitting to this executive order was a violation of God's law or our consciences. We believe that the church can enjoy weekly fellowship, prayer and worship around the Word of God even if she is distributed in homes throughout this valley.

So, until further notice, we ask that each one who calls Faith Community Church home gather in homes to worship the Lord together via a live stream of the weekly service. If you are a part of a life group, we ask that you meet together with your life group on Sunday mornings to worship together via the live stream. If you are not a part of a life group, we ask that you band together with others who live close to you to worship together each week until we can return to our regular worship format. By gathering together in this way, we can still stir one another up toward good deeds and better participate in the corporate parts of our worship service, such as singing, praying and encouraging one another.

We will live stream our worship service each Sunday at 10am. Links to both Facebook Live and YouTube will be available on our website. We ask that if you are hosting a worship group at your home that you ensure that you are connected and ready to go by Sunday morning. If you don't know where to go this Sunday, enjoy the live stream from your own home and watch for updates from us next week with potential host houses in your area where you are welcome to join each week.

We ask that you take wise precautions when you gather in your smaller groups. Wash your hands regularly. Greet one another with a smile, elbow-bump, or any other method that demonstrates care without touching each other's hands. If you must sneeze or cough, please do so into the bend of your elbow and seek to wash your hands as soon as possible. We are preferring one another as we take these steps.

There may be good reason for you to remain home entirely. If you, or any family member, have shown any signs of sickness (cough, fever, respiratory difficulties, etc.), please stay home. If you are one of our senior saints, we know that you are at extra risk. We encourage you to take extra precaution by staying home. If you have an underlying health condition such as heart or lung disease, respiratory problems or a weakened immune system, don't risk yourself. Finally, if you are pregnant (we are super excited for you), it is wise for you to avoid the exposure.

Spanish Ministry will continue to meet on the campus during their regularly scheduled worship times. We have not decided to cancel other ministries that fall well under the 250 person threshold at this point, but we know that this situation is fluid. We will keep you informed if any other ministries outside of our weekly Sunday gathering are altered. We ask that you apply the safety measures outlined above to each of these ministries.

The executive order is scheduled to last through the end of March. We will re-evaluate at that point and keep you posted with any changes when they become available.

Change is never easy, but we believe that God will grow us through this. We will be forced to trust Him more as we live in a bit of uncertainty. We may develop new relationships with others that would not have happened in any other way. And we will be reminded that the church of Jesus Christ is a living organism that can thrive no matter how challenging the circumstances around it.

Let us not over-react. God is still on the throne (Psalm 103:19). As those deeply loved by our Heavenly Father, we need not live in fear (Rom. 8:15). He is with us, even in this!

But let us not under-react either. There is much that is unknown about COVID-19. None of us presume to know the future. Minimizing this, or poking fun at others, will only cause divisions among us.

Finally, let's be praying...for those already infected by this virus, for those who are fearful and anxious, for His church to shine brightly during this time, for the Gospel to go forward and meet fertile soil, and for this pandemic to come to an end very soon. We will be staying in touch with you. But until then, may the God of all comfort, comfort us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

Your Pastor on Behalf of Your Elders,

Steve Jackson

ⁱ <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/11/california-public-health-experts-mass-gatherings-should-be-postponed-or-canceled-statewide-to-slow-the-spread-of-covid-19/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/12/governor-newsom-issues-new-executive-order-further-enhancing-state-and-local-governments-ability-to-respond-to-covid-19-pandemic/>