

Whitefish Naz Family,

Our world seems to be shifting and changing by the hour. As I am sure you are already aware, Sunday, Governor Bullock announced the statewide closure of schools and a ban on groups larger than 50. Yesterday, President Trump advised that people avoid gatherings of more than ten people. Our priority at Whitefish Naz is to practice the way of Jesus (being with Jesus, becoming like him, and doing what he did), which means loving and caring for those around us well.

Therefore, our church will be taking the following actions:

Gatherings at the church will be suspended until further notice (except Tuesday morning prayer), this includes Sunday morning classes and worship. Each week, beginning this Sunday, March 22, we will send out an email to everyone on our mailing lists, and through all available avenues including social media, that will include the following:

- Important updates on our current status
- A guided family worship experience
- A brief message from Pastor Jason
- Small group discussion questions
- Pertinent announcements
- An online Kids church experience

For community groups and small groups: We will encourage small groups to continue to meet as they feel comfortable doing so. Please discuss with your group leader how your group will proceed. Along with this, please keep into consideration the President's caution regarding groups larger than 10.

Thoughts and ideas on how to spend time and how to respond to our present situation

1. Take seriously the guidance given by the CDC and medical professionals (avoid large gatherings, practice good hygiene, avoid shaking hands and other forms of touch, stay home if you are sick, etc.)
2. Remain connected. Use technology to connect with friends, family, and church family. I encourage you to contact 3-5 people a day.
3. Stay active. Go for a walk, take a hike, keep moving. The weather in NW Montana is supposed to be great this week. Take advantage.
4. Don't binge on social media or virus news (confession, I am already guilty). This will drive you to distraction.
5. This is an excellent time to read your bible and spend more time in prayer.
6. Enjoy your family. Kids are home from school; some parents are off work or working remotely at home. Take advantage of forced family time and enjoy it.
7. We just finished a series on Sabbath. Perhaps this is an opportunity to slow down, take a breath and rest.
8. Take care of your neighbor.
9. Be optimistic and positive. Avoid complaining about our current challenges, but instead, choose positivity. Be an asset to your community rather than a liability.

Stone Creek Apartments: I want to share with you what has taken place regarding Stone Creek. Yesterday, Heidi and I spent a couple of hours going door to door to check in with the tenants at Stone Creek and to offer our services to them. We distributed a flyer with the offer to help specifically with grocery shopping, laundry, running errands, and rides to appointments. The

people we spoke with seemed overwhelmed with gratitude and appreciation by our offer. Many of you have already expressed a willingness to serve in this project.

I anticipate we will need a few more as things get rolling. If you are willing to go grocery shopping, do laundry, or run errands, will you please let me know so I can add you to our list. This will be a tremendous help and blessing to our neighbors.

Finally, I believe this moment in history is an opportunity for the church to demonstrate the true nature of the church. I believe we can actually come out of this looking more like the church than we did before. But I would argue that if the church is so dependent upon its large gatherings that we are willing to ignore the directives from the CDC and health department, then we have ceased to be the church. Every pastor I know preaches that the church is not the building or the gathering, but it is the people. Now is our chance to prove it.

Finally, remember the words of Paul, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7) That means that we do not give in to fear, but we live confidently as the people of God. Moments like this, I believe, are opportunities for the people of God to have a profound impact on the lives of our community members. May we be bringers of peace during chaos. Sunday, I offered a Christian Response to Fear for my sermon. If you were not able to attend in person or online, I encourage you to take a listen. You can find the service in its entirety on our church Facebook page or the sermon along on our website.

Martin Luther during the Black Plague:

“I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See, this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God.”

—Martin Luther

Blessings, my friends

Pastor Jason