



March 20, 2020

Dear Rowandale Congregation,

It may be an understatement to say that we are living in extraordinary times, but there is no doubt that we are. We, as Council, have been wrestling with how we can and should respond to everything that has been impacted by the dangers and potential harm of the coronavirus. Council did meet this past Wednesday and I would like to share the substance of what we talked about with you, so that everyone can be fully informed.

We were pleased that our own Kristin Harris (a medical doctor) came to the meeting to share what she knows about COVID-19. The main thing we can do to stop or slow down the spread of this virus is to avoid unnecessary contact with others, especially in group settings. This affects us very directly, since so much of a normal church operation involves group meetings, whether in a service or in small groups. For the present time, we will not plan for or hold any gatherings of the church until this crisis has subsided. That means that there will be no Sunday morning services or any other church gatherings until further notice. It is impossible for us to know whether this will involve just a number of weeks or maybe months; we will have to wait to see how things unfold, and will make decisions accordingly.

However, even though there may not be any scheduled "in-person" meetings or events, we do have other resources available to us these days, whereby we can stay in contact with each other as a congregation. Some of the things we have in mind to do are as follows:

1. we will maintain communication with our people in several ways:
  - personal calls to as many of our people as possible, each Council Member having a number of people to call
  - sending messages or updates through email - e.g. prayer chain, but perhaps to the larger database of email addresses which we have
  - posting of items on the Rowandale Website ([www.rowandale.ca](http://www.rowandale.ca)) and Facebook page
2. our Pastors will create devotionals or short messages which will be posted online so that anyone with a computer or Smartphone can watch them. For example, Pastor Jon plans to begin posting devotionals through a blog on our church's website. Also a reminder that past audio sermons can be accessed on our website, in case you want to get caught up on any you've missed: [www.rowandale.ca](http://www.rowandale.ca)
3. Pastor Dave has been working on a number of creative things involving the youth
4. we want to be aware of any special needs in the congregation and try to find help for those, as we are able. For example, if someone is house-bound and cannot go to the store or pharmacy, we have some people who have volunteered to do that for others; we hope to help make the connections

Here are a few things we decided last night, in terms of operating during the upcoming weeks:

- Council will connect weekly, or as often as necessary, using a Zoom online connection to stay up-to-date on things and to make further decisions as needed

- Audrey will continue to work in the church office to answer phone calls, take care of administration and to support Pastor Jon and Pastor Dave in what they are doing (Pastor Jon will need to work from home for the next two weeks due to having traveled, but he will be busy with these new initiatives)

- our caretakers, Doug and Judy Newton will not have as much regular work to do while the building is not being used, but there are other projects around the church that they will now have time and energy for

Some may be wondering about what they can do with tithes or offerings for the Church during these weeks that we are not having regular services. There are three options available:

1. You can mail a cheque to the church by regular mail and it will get processed by our finance people
2. You can contact our treasurer, Jason Nickel, about getting set-up for regular withdrawals from your bank account (use this option only for regular, ongoing donations)
3. For one-time online donations, you can use Canada Helps (<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/>) and search for Rowandale Baptist Church. The funds will then get forwarded to us. (If using this method, note that your charitable donation receipt will come from Canada Helps, and not directly from Rowandale.)

Thank you to all for your financial support of Rowandale Baptist Church as we come through these challenging days.

I wrote at the beginning that we are living in extraordinary times. Definitely true, but such times also provide us with extraordinary opportunities. As our regular patterns of life get disturbed, maybe it will cause us to reflect and to adjust the priorities in our lives - that could be a good thing! There will also be extraordinary opportunities to minister and serve others - that would be good too. And, we may find ourselves having more time to spend at home with our immediate families. Watch for the good things that God might have for us in the midst of it all. Trials and difficulties often bring about great blessings!

On behalf of Church Council

Leo Jansens  
Moderator