

Coronavirus Response

18/3/2020

Brothers and Sisters of Blacktown Anglican,

We are in unprecedented times as we respond to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

As of this morning, the Federal Government have banned all non-essential gatherings of 100 or more people. The aim of this measure is to continue to slow the spread of the virus by limiting the physical contact people have with one another, which allows our health system to care for those most vulnerable.

As a result of this announcement, we are making the following decisions for the foreseeable future, effective immediately:

1. We are ceasing all Sunday Service gatherings – our 8am, 10am and 1pm services.
2. We are ceasing all midweek ministries (including Playtime, Youth Group, English Classes)¹.

Though not all our gatherings have attendances above the banned limit, the principle of encouraging physical distancing is important to adhere to out of love for one another.

These decisions are also in accordance with a public statement Archbishop Glenn Davies issued this afternoon as a measure for all Anglican churches to take.

We are being guided by the advice of health experts and government officials as we make these decisions. Of course, our primary concern is not simply of obeying the law, but of expressing deep, sacrificial Christian love for others, and especially for the vulnerable. The aim of all these measures is to slow the spread of the virus, allowing the best care for those most vulnerable to the worst effects.

There has been a lot of talk about ‘social distancing’ in recent days, but what is really required is ‘physical distancing’. It is more important than ever for our social, mental and spiritual wellbeing to continue to engage in community, even if it is from a physical distance.

As such, our church has an important role to play in the life of our city, and to bring the good news of Jesus to those who desperately need it.

As a staff team, we are working hard on plans and resources to help us continue to grow as Jesus shaped people, and as a Jesus shaped community, through these exceptional circumstances.

Our Community Groups will be key places to ensure people are being supported and cared for spiritually, emotionally and practically. If you are not in a Community Group and would

¹ The Mobile Pantry is a unique community service and may prove very helpful in these times. We are currently uncertain as to whether it may proceed (in a restricted form) and will let you know accordingly.



like to be, please contact Robbie, and he will assist you. If you are unable to join a Community Group, you are certainly not forgotten. We are planning ways on assisting those who may be especially isolated at this time. And we want to encourage all of our church to be in regular touch with those who might be in such a position.

So what now?

From this coming Sunday, we are moving church online.

We will be publishing a special Sunday Service video, which we will make available on our website, and send you details via email.

I encourage you to set aside the time you would normally gather at church to watch this. But we know that church is never about consuming media or information, but about the expression of being united together as brothers and sisters.

Therefore, we want to encourage our Community Groups to consider gathering in a home on a Sunday morning to watch and engage together. And if that is not possible, then with your family or a friend.

In the video for this Sunday in particular, you can expect a few things: some further announcements about our ongoing plans in this season of church life; our next 'Moments with Moses' video for our kids; a Bible reading and teaching time, and prayer for our church and our world.

We are already planning what long-term Sunday Services via video may look like after this Sunday. We hope this Sunday will be a simplified version of what we intend to produce for each Sunday moving forward.

Friends, there is no instruction manual for what to do in such unusual circumstances. And there is no clear timeframe for how long such measures may be in force.

No doubt there are many questions raised by these circumstances. We hope to address some of these concerns in further detail in our video on Sunday. (On the back page of this letter, we have provided answers to some common questions you may have).

In the meantime, if you have any immediate questions or concerns about how things might go moving forward, please be in touch with myself, Robbie, Renee or Laurice. We will be available to assist you in any way we can.

"³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

In Christ,

Luke Thomson

Senior Minister



Common Questions

Should Community Groups stop meeting?

We want to leave this decision up to individual groups to make. For some, it will make sense to arrange alternative ways to gather. For others, you will be able to gather relatively as normal, providing you take the appropriate precautions of physical distancing and hygienic practices.

If any member is unwell, they should stay physically away from the group, but might join in via phone or video.

We will provide more resources on best practices for running groups in the coming days.

If my Community Group was meeting at the church building, can it keep meeting there?

Yes. For the limited number of groups that currently meet at the church building already, this may continue to be the best space to meet to ensure you can take appropriate measures of physical distancing (for the time being).

Can I still visit the office?

Yes. At present the church office will still be open, and staff still working as normal. You are welcome to drop in.

How can I give financially if we are no longer gathering?

No doubt, this will be a difficult time financially for people and businesses across the world. If you typically give via the bag at a Sunday Service, and would like to give online instead, our details are as follows:

BSB: 082-490

Account Number: 52 546 7594

Account Name: Blacktown Anglican Church

How long will this continue for?

At present, we do not know. Please be assured that we will continue to keep you updated as the situation develops and changes. We will be returning to our normal schedule of physical gatherings as soon as it is safe to do so.

