

Ministry @ Zion: Pandemic Response

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

Purpose:

To present a plan of action regarding how Zion Baptist Church will continue to seek to fulfill its vision statement (*We are a Christ-centered family who reaches people for Jesus, encourages growth and shows His love through action*) during the next stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in British Columbia.

Considerations/Background

- In order to comply with British Columbia's limit on mass gatherings of over 50 people, Zion transitioned to online Sunday services beginning March 22, 2020. These services are conducted in partnership with Terrace Christian Reformed Church and are "broadcast" via YouTube and Zion's Online Church Platform.
 - These services have been well received and a wonderful partnership has formed between the two churches. There is no pressure to stop partnering with Terrace CRC
- Our small group ministries, a prayer meeting and other connections have moved online, primarily making use of Skype and Zoom.
- There is no indication that the limits on mass gatherings will be lifted anytime soon.
- Prior to the pandemic, Zion's average Sunday attendance was approximately 55 people.
- In addition, because we are required to comply with physical distancing rules, accommodating this number of people in Zion's physical building will be a challenge.
- The government of BC has also clearly stated that the 50-person limit applies to *all people present in a building*, meaning we cannot plan to have a group meeting upstairs and another downstairs.
- Plans are in place for an easing of some restrictions, such as allowing people to slowly increase their "social bubbles" beginning May 19th.
- We are now moving into the summer months, which gives us an opportunity to experiment with some new approaches to ministry.

Moving Forward

- Zion's Board met on Monday, May 11th to discuss our current situation and to brainstorm about our next "season" of ministry.
- The board affirmed that our current approach has been effective while acknowledging the limitations and challenges of our current, mostly online ministries.
- The board affirmed that the partnership with Terrace CRC has been beneficial but that this time also provides an opportunity to explore other ways to fulfill our church vision.
- At this time, Zion's church board:
 - Does not feel that meeting face to face for Sunday morning worship gatherings is a viable option (due to the considerations listed above).
 - Plans to continue with our current Sunday service model (partnering with the CRC to produce weekly Sunday services) until Sunday, June 14th.

- Will begin planning to record Sunday morning services every second week (The hope is to continue our partnership with the CRC).
- Will combine the recorded services with a “home church” approach.

Home Church Approach

- As a modified approach to meeting as one large church at the Zion building, our plan is to encourage various families and “social bubbles” to join together at people’s homes, following the provincial guidelines, for a time of corporate worship.
- Ideally these times will happen on Sunday mornings, function as the ‘Sunday worship service’ and be a “home church approach”.
- People will sign up to go to a home that is comfortable for them. It would be similar to meeting with a small group bible study group for the weekly worship, but may have different people attending on different weeks.
- We envision that the gathering would involve some kind of snack or meal and a connection on Zoom for a collective worship time, or study/discussion/visiting with other groups.
- Zion’s leadership will provide resources and equipping to help with the leading of these groups. These resources will include things such as:
 - Scripture readings
 - Discussion guides
 - Music resources (online and/or live)
 - Prayer guides
 - Zoom connections
 - Meal suggestions.
- As mentioned above, these groups may meet every second week, often interspersed with our current approach of a recorded Sunday service.
- There may also be other activities planned for the summer months that take the place of our ‘normal’ approaches (campfire services, church in the park, etc.).
- Our hope is to have an “Acts 2 Emphasis” for these times. Acts 2:42 describes the practices of the early church: *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”* During this time of social distancing we hope to see a refocusing on learning to grow together in smaller groups and in different ways.

Please understand that this “home church approach” is still in the planning stages and is a trial experiment. Our aim is to begin meeting this way on June 21st but we recognize that this is a big change that will involve much planning and preparation. In addition, we know that the COVID-19 situation is constantly changing and that restrictions on social gatherings may change with very little advance notice. As a body of believers, we need to be flexible and responsive, respectful and adaptable to various ways we can worship, knowing that ‘church’ and gatherings may change on short notice!

Zion’s Board would ask that you commit to pray about these plans. A prayer guide will be made available soon but, for now, please pray that God would guide our planning process as we seek to be a family of servant missionaries.