

CHURCH UPDATE 25.3

GATHERING IS PRECIOUS TO GOD AND VITAL TO US

One of the most precious gifts God has given us in Jesus Christ, is that he unites us all together into a building for his dwelling place. We are called the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are united as the body of Christ with Jesus as our head. We are called God's household and he is our Father, so we are brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Which all means that one of the most precious gifts God has given us is each other. Gathering together is the powerful declaration of what he has done in our lives through the death and resurrection of Jesus. This gathering is also described as the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Timothy 3.15).

God's powerful and glorious work of saving us individually by grace, through faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2.1-10), achieves his eternal purpose of uniting separate and selfish sinners, into one new transformed humanity - the church (Ephesians 2.11-22).

So it is no wonder that it is a hard thing that for now we cannot gather to be together, we cannot see each other in person, we cannot fully express this amazing gospel truth.

But our local gathering together is really an expression of a deeper unity, a more eternal gathering, the heavenly spiritual church we are part of. We know when we gather Christ is with us, and unites us by his word and his Spirit. We know that God has raised us up and seated us in the heavenly realms in Christ. We know that we have already been gathered to the the assembly (literally church) of the firstborn, the city of the living God (Hebrews 12.22-23).

In the Apostles' Creed we express this truth when we say we believe in the communion of the saints. We are united together with all Christians, past and present, living and dead, because we are all found in Christ by faith. The reformers talked about the church militant, being Christians in the world engaged in the struggle against sin and the lies of the devil, and the church triumphant which is the heavenly spiritual gathering of all believers, living and dead, united in the joy of God's glory. No matter what happens we are still united with each other and united with Christ.

All this is a very long introduction to the unfortunate reality of our next church update.

GATHERING IS NO LONGER PRACTICABLE FOR THE PRESENT MOMENT

New restrictions that have been put in place to protect our society and especially the most vulnerable among us, mean that for now we can't physically gather together for church on Sunday, for Gospel Teams mid week, or for any of our regular ministries.

- Church on Sunday will continue to be presented online but we cannot gather in small groups to participate together.
- Gospel Teams are all in the process of moving to some form of online engagement and sharing, either through zoom (which seems to be taking over the planet) or some other platform.
- we are working hard and have started producing material and encouraging biblical resources for all ages on our website
- those of you with kids and youth in your families will have been contacted, and we have plans for continuing to bring the gospel into their lives

All this is difficult, and so far from ideal. We need each other now more than ever to stand firm against fear, sinful desire and the world. But Christ is with us by his Spirit and he will never leave us, and, in the end, I look forward to how he will work in and amongst us to achieve his purposes, to strengthen and unite his church, and to bring glory to God our Father.

Yours in Christ,

Adrian