

Dear Church Family,

One of the greatest privileges we have as God's people is to gather together to worship God, and to encourage one another. Gathering together is one of the greatest testimonies to God's grace to save and unite people together under Christ. When the church gathers in a united way it is a witness to God's power to do what other human institutions can't do.

It is therefore with a very heavy heart that the elders have taken the decision to suspend Sunday gatherings in the school. This decision has not been taken lightly but only after much prayer.

We keep hearing that these are unprecedented times, and they are. In our lifetime we haven't experienced a pandemic that has brought travel, schools, shops, leisure and entertainment to a stop on a global scale. Not since the Spanish Flu outbreak of 1918 have churches in the West been pushed into shutting down their gatherings.

Clearly for governments and leaders of institutions, including church leaders, we are treading new ground.

That means we have had to weigh up the advice of government, consult with other church leaders, read countless articles and blogs and see what other denominations and faith groups are doing, so that we can come to an informed decision. Following the advice of the government, and the FIEC, we have come to the decision that the right thing to do is to suspend our Sunday gathering, home-groups and prayer meetings for at least the next two weeks, and to stop Ignite until after Easter. We will be continuing to review this on a daily basis.

As with other churches, we will make an online 'service' available on YouTube. This will include a Bible reading, a short sermon, prayers and relevant news of the church fellowship. We would encourage you to watch the 'service' at 10:30 on Sunday morning, knowing that the rest of your church family are doing the same.

We are currently looking at ways we can continue to connect and provide care while reducing unnecessary contact. This is especially important for our elderly, many of whom won't have access to YouTube, and who already spend a lot of time alone. We will let the church know what we intend to be doing in the next few days. However you don't need to wait. We can all look for ways to serve the church family during these unprecedented times. A phone call, offering to get shopping or taking a meal are a few ways we can show love to those who will find themselves shut in.

If you have children at home, we would encourage you to use this time to have times of family worship. This can be as simple as reading a passage from the Bible and praying together.

We often don't realise how precious something is until it's taken away. The prayer of the elders is that during this time of restriction we will realise afresh what a privilege it is to gather with God's people. Then when the restrictions are lifted, we will have a greater desire to gather with our brothers and sisters.

Your brother in Christ,
Pastor Tim,
on behalf of the elders.