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Greetings Everyone!

I've got a question that I wish I could ask you personally face-to-face but honestly that's just not possible right now – the question is this: *How are you doing?* Right now you might want to just pause and think about what your answer is to this question. At this point we're three weeks or so into what has been described as 'the new normal' and I'm sure that everyone of us profoundly feels the obvious reality that everything we're facing right now is anything but normal. And on top of that we've been told that the restrictions that have become part of our daily lives over the past few weeks will be in place at least until the end of April.

Quite honestly, all of this is a 'heavy load'. All of us are walking a together on a journey of trust. We're experientially learning to trust the Lord in a deeper way because we all have far more questions than we have answers and things are changing around us at a dizzying speed. With all that said I want to say thank you for being flexible and showing grace in this time. I can certainly speak for myself that moving our ministry online in the way we have over the past couple of weeks was not something I expected to be doing and the learning curve here has been a bit steep at times – that said we're all in this together.

Here are a couple of passages of Scripture that have been a big help to me over the past few weeks:

Isaiah 46:9-10 (ESV) –

*...remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose'...*

Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV) –

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.*

James 4:13-15 (ESV) –

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

We are on a journey together learning to trust the Lord more deeply. He declares the end from the beginning, He knows and controls the future. And reflecting on this enables trust! And as we're walking this journey of trust everything is – 'If the Lord wills.'

Now with all of that said our elder team met earlier this week on Zoom to discuss and pray together. And one of the things that we discussed is that we want to be sure that we do the absolute best we possibly can to care for each other in these unusual, unique and even unprecedented (in any of our memories anyway) times. And with that in mind here are a couple of updates / thoughts:

1. As a church family together we've already been doing a great job over the past few weeks of reaching out to each other. I'm hearing about phone calls, texts and reaching out on social media. I want to say – 'great job' – let's keep this up. Please don't assume that someone else has checked in with someone (even though they probably have) – if someone is on year heart be sure reach out by picking up the phone or sending a message.
2. And I'd remind us that we should be seeking 'reach out' to those within our 'church family' and those who are outside of it. Sometimes it's just as simple as asking a couple of questions and listening for the answers. Ask – *How are you doing?* And – *How can I pray for you?*
3. Please know that the Deacon / Deaconess team and our Sunday School teachers are praying for you and seeking to contact and check in with you. That said – please, please, please don't wait for someone to call you. If you have a prayer request please reach out to your Deacon / Deaconess, another leader or a friend so that we can be praying for and practically serving each other. Please note that the Deacon / Deaconess list with phone numbers is attached to this email.
4. Here are some practical questions – *Do you have a specific need or needs? Are you ill? Are you 60+ years old or in another 'risk category' and are concerned about going to the store for essentials? Has the economic consequences of all of this put you in a place where you are wondering how you will afford the essentials of life?* These are very, very real questions at this time for many and we want you to know that as a 'church family' we want to help. We have people who have offered to shop and drop off groceries, we have a 'mercy fund' to help with urgent financial crisis and most importantly we want to pray for you and with you about the burdens we're all carrying.
5. That said – I believe that many of the needs I'm talking about are already being met informally. As a church family we intuitively know to do these things and to love one-another. That said our elder team's heart is that no-one slips through the cracks at this time. Please let us know if you have a need!
6. Many of you have been asking about how to give and financially support our church during this time and I wanted to give you a quick update on that – we're working toward and exploring launching 'online giving'. That said – there are a few 'pieces of the puzzle' that need to fall into place for that to work well so in the meantime please feel free to mail a check to the church or if you prefer an online / electronic option go to your 'online banking' and use the 'online bill pay' feature of your bank (many from our church have been already doing this for quite some time and it works well). Remember giving back to the Lord financially from what He has first entrusted to us is a joyful privilege!

Wow – that's a lot. So as we conclude – here are just a couple of other practical items: please remember that we are emailing out and posting on Facebook Sunday's sermons and worship music playlists. Please share these resources online. We'd love to reach as many as possible with the Gospel message. Also if you are aware of a need where someone does not have access to the internet we have a small group of people who receive CD's at their doors each week and we can add to the list as we learn of needs.

Joyfully! Yes, that's right joyfully. Our current series is focusing on Philippians and we're talking about – *Finding and Sustaining REAL Joy...*

Pastor Dave (and your elder team)

