

March 26, 2020

Dear KPMB family,

I know at least some of you have been wondering what implications Phase 2 of the “BC Restart Plan” has on our church life and especially what it means for Sunday gatherings.

During this time when we are unable to gather in-person, we are very thankful for our online Sunday gatherings via Zoom meetings. These meetings have done a surprisingly good job of encouraging interaction and continue to give us a chance to hear each others’ voices and if you have use of a screen, see many familiar faces.

We are aware that it is not a direct substitute and I think we all long one day, when it is safe to do so, to meet together again in-person.

At this point, we still have little guidance from the BCMB conference and the BC Ministry of Health (MoH) guidelines don’t specifically address religious gatherings.

The ban on gatherings over 50 only means that lesser gatherings are legal, not that they are advisable. In fact, there continue to be reports of outbreaks resulting from religious gatherings ([Germany](#), [Calgary](#)), though it is not clear whether congregational singing was a contributing factor.

- Congregational Singing

The Ontario MB conference made a [public statement](#) which is very thoughtful and considers both theological and practical considerations. Let me just quote one sentence:

“there are dynamics to this virus that are still being discovered, including recent studies indicating that singing in a confined space together results in a significantly higher rate of transmission – regardless of appropriate physical distancing measures being taken.”

In fact, Alberta’s Ministry of Health has [banned congregational singing](#) explicitly. A similar restriction is in place in [California](#).

I know well that congregational singing is something we cannot recreate using Zoom which only allows us to sing along while muted (a problem inherent to live online events). Congregational singing is something I dearly miss during these times but at least in enclosed spaces, it is not advisable in the near future.

- Lack of Public or Conference Guidelines

We as a board are looking forward to more guidance from MoH and BCMB conference, and are in fact pressing BCMB conference for more. But we acknowledge the challenge for such bodies in providing such guidelines at this point. We all want to watch carefully as to how this plan plays out as BC seeks to restart some parts of the economy. There is still much that is unknown.

- Our Context Requires Caution

We know that each congregation must take into account their own context. According to the [BC Restart Plan](#), those at greater risk (per page 10, over the age of 60 or with underlying medical conditions) should

take extra precautions. As should those in regular contact with such individuals. We see our congregation as at higher risk than some other groups. Consequently, our approach is a conservative and cautious one.

- Our building is not ideal

Although the sanctuary is fairly spacious with a high ceiling, our building does nonetheless have its own share of complications which make thinking through safety and health protocols quite complicated (and time-consuming) to pull off. There are many pinch points at entry/exit points, around pews and narrow stairwells for accessing washrooms. But we will start to investigate what steps would be needed for that time when it is deemed advisable to resume some in-person official KPMB activities.

- No change for now

So, for the time-being, all official KPMB in-person gatherings remain cancelled until further notice.

While we remain vigilant in taking the necessary COVID precautions, let us not only focus on what we cannot do in-person, let us also seek out what we can do over the phone or online with others and at home in our own lives to grow in our relationship with the LORD.

It is encouraging to hear of all of you connecting with one-another as best as you can from a distance. Thank-you caring callers and those helped to coordinate. Thank-you worship council for all your work , including the recent survey. It is very encouraging how many of you participated by completing that survey and is a sign of just how much you love this church family.

Let us do our best to encourage one another in our faith journey even as we respect these health guidelines. As we heard in this week's sermon from Nick Suen, God is at work accomplishing his purpose and he is not done yet. Not only can governments not interfere with His plans, neither can a pandemic.

As always inviting your prayers,
Chris Hall (Moderator)