



Monday 1st June 2020

Pastoral Letter – Covid-19 – Church Update #5

Dear friends,

With the announcing of the easing of restrictions for church services as of today, June 1, the church executive leadership team met last night firstly to pray and worship Jesus, and secondly to discuss a strategy for LifeSource coming together to meet again for Sunday Services.

The easing of restrictions is one thing, making Sunday Services work in our context here at LifeSource, whilst adhering to strict guidelines in another thing entirely. Church, we are not a small church and decisions must be made with this in mind. A small church would be 20-30 adults in Australia. In fact, the average size church in Australia is somewhere around 50-70 people. In reality, the restrictions have eased for churches of this size.

I was asked by the team to help us become aware of the blessings God has bestowed over the past couple of years. Over the past three months, we have been in contact, given out care packages and encouraged a church congregation of 370 people. With doing church online, I would suggest that there are also many others in our city who have been following along and being encouraged at this time. If we were in a major city, reality is we could easily be a church of 800-1000 people.

The average age of church attenders in Australia is currently around 53 years old. Our average age hovers somewhere around 28-30 years. This is amazing! We have also had an explosion of kids, with around 52 children between the ages of 0-5. Church, it's not as simple as just opening up now which is both good and bad. We also, must look out for our beloved senior members, who would love to be gathering but are our most at risk in uncertain times. We must see the challenges that are, and see the opportunities that will address them, and together in unity, approach with the intentions of inspiring faith, imparting hope and expressing love.

There is also so much uncertainty as to what may take place when we open again. We could open up this week and have 20 people turn up, because you have become too accustomed to being at home. Or, we could open and have a couple of hundred people arrive and have to turn them away. This is something I feel we could not do. Therefore we have had to really discuss what is best for us at this time, and with the facility we have as we navigate the changes in a different world.

Under the current conditions we would be able to have a total of 50 people plus staff for a service. With two services, we could potentially minister to a maximum of 60 - 70 people of the 350+ we have in our church congregation. With some creativity we could get this to around 80 max per week. Logistically this would be very difficult. It would also mean very strict hygiene rules in place and the call out for teams to clean seats, counters, all toilets and mop floors between services. This would mean that we would need to change the time of our 10:30 service to 11am at the earliest. There would be no way we could offer you a cuppa tea or coffee, and Mission's Kiosk would not be allowed. There would be no hugging, or hand shaking and they even want to stop us from singing together. We would not be allowed to have a children's ministry in operation either. You would only be allowed in and then ushered out with no contact just so we were "following the rules." This is not church and many of us (me included,) would get frustrated quickly at this. All the while, around 250 or more people would not be able to attend. I am really believing that when we are allowed to meet without



restrictions that we are full in every one of our services and creating more space/s for more people to attend. And I don't really want to cause any pain that could jeopardise this vision.

Due to the extra workload, and that the teams are not yet ready for these measures, we have decided as a leadership team that the best action at this time would be to **not** open for services in the month of June, while we await an announcement on easing these restrictions. **Part of the reason for this is also because we need many of you to raise your hand and serve in our critical teams on Sunday's, including Ushers and Cleaning.** For church to return to some form of meeting, we need many more people saying yes and getting involved. This is a great thing and I am encouraged that many of you will respond because, like me, you want to be able to meet as soon as possible.

The restrictions on numbers could ease even more in the next month or two, and we will be able to make more announcements as they do. We feel that we would need to be able to see 80-100 people gather to really value you our church.

This brings up a little disappointment I'm sure, yet I want to encourage you to ask the questions that will benefit us all at this time. Firstly, what really is church? And secondly, how can we grow through this time as we re-think the best way to do church together? I have some suggestions from our conversations last night, that I strongly urge each of you to consider. Before I do, let me encourage you with a simple yet profound story that has happened just this past few weeks.

There are a number of people in our church who live single lives, or even attend church without their spouse. One of these people is our dear sister Wendy. Wendy, for much of the time in lockdown was unable to follow church online, having no means to do so. We were sending her copies of the DVD's each week, but for some reason these would not play in her DVD player. So for 6-8 weeks, Wendy missed church, she missed her regular place where she felt safe, loved and welcome. She also had other restrictions on her meaning she had lost all social contact entirely. Wendy can't wait to get back to church, yet in the past 2 weeks we have been able to address her situation. One of our other dear sisters, Ruth, responded to a pastoral request and made the effort to get out of bed early, travel to the other side of town and pick up Wendy, and bring her back to her place. Together, they ate breakfast, participated in church together, took communion together and spent time talking about the sermon so they could understand it together. Church, this is beautiful. And this is happening. This past week, another dear sister, Sandra, for her friend who was missing church and missing community, this week drove from Yenda to Wendy's place, and together they did church together. And this coming Sunday, Wendy assures me, that she will be going back to Ruth's once again.

The best thing about this time we are in currently, has been the church taking upon themselves to reach out and reveal love to one another. This is one example. Another is the constant phone calls and messages that I'm hearing about as people are checking in on each other. God would be so proud that His children are loving one another so well.

These stories came up last night. And I would like to suggest to you all, that in this next month or so, that you shake it up a little. Firstly, you are allowed 5 visitors to your home. Think and pray to Jesus and ask, who can I have come and be church with me as we join in watching the videos together? Reach out and invite someone. Wouldn't it be great to share communion together? If you are bold enough and friendly enough, invite yourself to someone else's place and help them get online for church. Take a cake, have a cuppa and fellowship with



them. Because sadly, if we opened up church you would not be able to do this. But in your homes, for a season, you can. Pray together, thank God for keeping us all safe, and ask Jesus how you can help.

Secondly, look to meet up midweek with someone. Our Grow Groups should be starting to think about getting together again. I have asked Ps James and Amy to start encouraging this, and to look out for more people who can facilitate a home gathering where people can meet, pray and encourage each other. We need the midweek meeting to grow in our relationship with Jesus and His church. Believe for the moving of the Holy Spirit in these times, in particular through the Charismata. (See 1 Corinthians 12.) If you missed our service yesterday, you can watch it here on YouTube, <https://youtu.be/tHOiEJCJk4>. If you would like to know more about Grow Groups, please email james@lifesourcechurch.org.au.

Thirdly, Hannah King will be hosting our Wednesday prayer meeting in the church building this month on Wednesday 10th of June. We will be restricted to the 50 people. If we see a great turnout, 25-30 people, and people would like to meet more often, we will consider prayer nights on a fortnightly basis during this time. If you can advise Hannah that you would love to know more and join this prayer gathering, please email her at prayer@lifesourcechurch.org.au.

Ps Jamie King has been encouraged to start working on a plan to see our youth group meet again. I am really looking forward to seeing our youth start meeting and encouraging each other in the gospel. Youth is open for teenagers from 13 to 18, or years 7-12. If you would like to know more, email jamie@lifesourcechurch.org.au.

Ps Theresa Mataora, our Kid's Pastor will, with her team, continue to put together fortnightly Kid's Services Online. These have been great to participate in. We at home have been so encouraged watching the little ones jump and dance and sing along to the songs. The stories have been great too. Stay tuned to Facebook to know when these are getting released. If you want to know more about Kingdom Kids, you can email Ps Theresa directly at kingdomkids@lifesourcechurch.org.au.

If you have read this and are encouraged to get involved, please contact Ps Jamie, our Community Pastor. He is just the guy to get you connected to our Deacon's and Usher's, who will open up a world of serving opportunities for you. His email is above.

Can I ask you to like our church Facebook page and follow us for announcements please? We also need you to subscribe to our YouTube Channel so we can get our own URL. We need 100 subscribers for this. Currently we are at 65. You can find us under LifeSource Church Griffith.

Church, this is as much about keeping you all safe as it is about making sure we can accommodate the changes we need to make as we tackle being a larger church community. I can't wait until we are able to all be together in one place. When we reach a specific target, I have a great dream about hiring the Regional Theatre to bring us together for an outreach service. I have hoping it will be in the next 6-8 months. Jesus willing☺. Before this though, can I commend you to keep being the church, reach out and care for each other, and look to opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus with any and all who will listen.

Lastly, I want to conclude this letter by thanking a few people. Firstly, I want to thank Ps Maika and Va. They have gone over and above in this time making sure we all stay connected through our church online. They have been well supported by Ps James Brown and Cesar Cabrales. The hours of filming and editing so we have a beautiful video to watch has been greatly appreciated. Thank you. The many people who have assisted and

LifeSource Church



Cnr Murrumbidgee Ave and Stafford Road
P.O. Box 946 Griffith N.S.W. 2680
Church Office Phone: 02 6964 9953

ABN: 12026621733

played a role in the online services, from service leaders, to worship team, to speakers and announcements readers and online hosts. Well done! Our pastors and leaders, for the prayers and support that you have offered. Those who are on our Pastoral Care Team, thank you, including many of you who are new to this role. Our Kingdom Kids team! You rock. Our pastors and Jan who helped with the Care Packs, the hours spent on them and delivering them, it was well worth it. Thank you. We have an amazing church and I am a very privileged man to be able to lead you all. It takes many hands to make this work, and it has all happened in the most loving way. All hurdles are overcome in grace and I thank you all for the unity you have shown.

If you are missing our services, I will encourage you to join in. Register at our Church Online platform by going through our website; www.lifesourcechurch.org.au, and join in the chat. Until we all meet together, let's make the most of what we have, so we can celebrate advancing through this time together upon our return. If you have any questions, or need any clarification, please talk to one of our Elder's, our Pastor's, or you can email me at steve@lifesourcechurch.org.au.

Many blessings

Pastor Steven Rand
Senior Minister.

