



To the Good Ship CCLF,

They say if you get six men in a room together, you'll have at least eight different opinions. That's why it is so amazing when the peace of God floods over our souls and we have a strong surety from God to move in a particular direction. That my friends, is seriously miraculous.

I'm reminded of Psalm 133 when God declares, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity -- there the Lord commands a blessing. It is as the dew of Hermon or the oil flowing down on Aaron's beard to the rest of the body."

It's a beautiful thing.

The CCLF elders met Tuesday night to discuss our next steps as a church in light of the provincial government's latest health order. We have to say that none of us like the situation we are in, and long for the day when we are back together in the joy of in-person fellowship, but felt the posture of humility overtake us as we prayed, and a rising sense to simply stay the course as far as online services go and LifeGroups being on hold.

We felt strongly that it is the will of God to love Him in this way and love our neighbours, knowing that we are responsible before God to lead and will give an account for our actions.

So we will continue to use the building to engage people online and as far as LifeGroups go, we thought we might be able to get by with them as "Support Groups" but found the provincial definition: "**support group**" *means a group of people who provide support to one another with respect to grief, disability, substance use, addiction or another*



psychological, mental or physical health condition,” so a 'LifeGroup' doesn't really fit in under that definition with integrity.

It is our opinion that the health measures being taken today are NOT about oppressing Jesus followers as it is not only against the Christian church but also against Muslims, Sikhs... Jewish synagogues as well as everybody else in the Province. In fact, this year our church has been the beneficiary of generous financial support from our government because of these exceptional circumstances. Nor was this money accompanied by any demands with respect to our message. It would not make sense for the government to actively fund groups they are also seeking to repress and silence.

The Romans in the time of the NT writings (the context of the scriptures) were not trying to oppress every religion back then as they had a pantheistic or polytheistic view and didn't even mind the Christians for the vast majority of its history. Persecution was not the normal state of affairs but came under a few emperors who wanted the Christians to proclaim "Caesar is Lord," which they would not. "Jesus is Lord" is still the dividing line upon which to stand, or the hill to die on, so to speak.

During those exceptional times of persecution, civil disobedience largely came down to being commanded to not worship Christ as Lord. That is not what we are seeing here in our present context.

In 1998 in Kazakhstan there were hundreds of Christian men slaughtered in a single massacre and nearly 100 Christian women raped. THAT is persecution against believers. This is not that. Just as recent as two weeks ago in Indonesia, two Christian men were beheaded, two others burned alive and the Christian Church was torched to the ground as well. THAT is persecution against believers.



The Roman government was, in many ways, worse than our present country's government. Yet even in the NT writings, Christians are exhorted to serve God within the boundaries of the law and to seek to live in peace with all men as much as it depends on them; they only moved outside of it when it was impossible to remain within its boundaries. The government is not demanding anything that requires us to be silent with respect to the gospel, and the restricted personal contact is not commanded because the government desires to isolate and repress Christian practices. They are seeking to preserve the lives of the most vulnerable members of our society, and expecting the residents of BC to be willing to make personal sacrifices toward this end. None of this renders our obedience to God impossible.

(Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2).

The CCLF elders believe this is a wonderful opportunity to follow the example of our Lord Jesus our Lord, who sacrificed that to which He had a right in order to save and transform us with the love of God (1 Pet 2:23). He took on the form of a servant. (Phil. 2) **Should we resist these health measures, we take the greater risk of being perceived by our community as resisting those very measures which they see being implemented to seek to save and preserve the lives of the weak and vulnerable among us. We believe that this would be devastatingly detrimental to our church's credibility going forward.**

In this sense, the elders do not want to take a stand to win a particular victory regarding certain personal liberties in particularly exceptional circumstances but then lose the larger battle of credibility, something which we have worked diligently for 40 years to build. The risk of disobeying the government far outweighs the wisdom and blessing of following the clear commands and assumptions of scripture that believers will obey the governing authorities - whether they make sense, or deserve it or not.



We believe that this decision is in line with the Spirit of our Lord's own voluntary ministry as a servant to all and with the kind of heavenly wisdom James describes (ch.3).

The dividing line in the sand, as it were, would be if we were told it is illegal to worship Christ.

As we move forward with continued online services and help for the broken and the needy, the widows and orphans, we would like to encourage you with the following:

First, an important point of Christian theology is to remember that God precisely DOES NOT dwell in buildings. After Jesus, God's presence was (and is!) in His people, even when two or more are gathered in His Name.

Jesus' last words to his disciples were "Go... and surely I am with you always." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Second, Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God, and that the second-greatest was to love your neighbour as yourself. Let's spend our energies as individuals on finding creative ways to love our neighbours and supporting one another within the present health mandates.

There are no orders that stop us from helping the poor, being compassionate to the dying, to widows and orphans, which James call "pure and undefiled religion" (James 1:27).

Third, these are exceptional circumstances. We are in the midst of a pandemic. We have had pandemics before. The 1918 flu pandemic claimed the lives of 20-50 million people. But the quarantines and isolation ended eventually and so too, we should expect the same. As one of our elders said



the other night, “this will not last forever; we need to keep our eyes on the big picture.”

This in itself is enough to give us cause to pump the brakes on making decisions which carry the rise of immense and lasting consequences.

Finally, we would also like to make you aware that we have had documented cases of COVID 19 flash through within CCLF people. There are also members of our own family who have suffered as a result of contracting COVID. This is an issue that hits closer to home than is sometimes apparent.

In all such cases we have followed all of the steps required of us to ensure that the illness does not spread farther.

We know this is not the best situation. We know in fact it is temporarily deficient, but we are growing and learning to do our best with what is happening right now.

These are serious times in our history folks, serious times, and, as I am sure like many of you, the elders are literally weeping over these decisions in prayer. It takes strength and courage to submit to the governing authorities out of reverence for Christ in such trying and wearying circumstances. Let's be courageous.

The world needs the Gospel message more now than ever and our calling remains unchanged to proclaim Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace in a very chaotic world. What we say and act toward outsiders is as much a priority for Paul as other moral imperatives.

This is not a light matter.

Bringing reproach on the Name of Christ is serious - we want instead to proclaim His Name and His fame in our community and continue to prepare



ourselves for when we are back together again and reaping in a harvest of righteousness.

We continue to covet your prayers for wisdom as a leadership team and hope our congregation can continue to be an authentic Christian community in 100 Mile, thereby presenting a compelling case for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Oh see how they love one another!"

Let that be our trademark around this community, the mark of genuine love toward God and love toward others as the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth and shows us things to come.

God be with you.

On behalf of our eldership team, Gary, Pat, Ryan, Mike, and Dave, if you find yourself needing any special help or just someone to talk to - or some extra prayer – just give us a call or let us know and we will be there for you...

In Christ
Rick