

19 March 2020

Hi ESCC Family

A lot can change in a week! As you all know, last Sunday evening, President Ramaphosa announced significant restrictions in our country when he declared a national state of disaster and triggered the Disaster Management Act in response to the Covid-19 virus.

He did the right thing and we pray his leadership and our response will quickly cause the infection curve to flatten out. However, this decision has implications for us as a church family. Specifically, crowd gatherings of more than 100 people are prohibited. As a church, we will do all we can to comply with the preventative measures prescribed to protect the health of our members and staff.

It's a challenging time for our country and many other countries. There is a lot of turmoil and many people's lives have been impacted. It is important to look back and see how God has been with us through other challenging times. Keep your heart seeking His presence and His peace in this season.

We also have each other. Family needs to be there for each other in challenging times. Yes, it is important to practice social distancing and follow handwashing protocols – but it is equally important to avoid isolation and withdrawal. Find healthy ways to stay in contact with people and with the community.

As a church, Psalm 46 is a particularly meaningful Scripture. Please read it through and use it as a prayer focus. Speak it over yourself, family and our nation.

Needless to say, there are some important changes to our ministry during this time. We have outlined them in this letter for your consideration.

### **Sunday Services**

This letter confirms the messages from Monday on our social media platforms. All our Sunday celebrations will close until after Easter weekend, in line with our President's instructions.

However, we may be closing our services, but the church never closes. Why? Because YOU are the church! The church isn't a place or a programme, the church is a people, united to share the love of Jesus and purposes of His Kingdom! So, the work of the church goes on!

## **Cell Groups**

The majority of the El Shaddai community are active members of cell groups. We will continue meeting in our cell groups throughout this season. You have heard our vision of discipleship and power of churches that meet in homes so many times - now we get to see it working.

We are excited to see how we can grow and develop as a church built around community and in our homes. *Thank you to our Cell Leaders who have overwhelmingly agreed to continue to lead their groups at this time.* We are busy working with cell leaders to ensure they have all the support and encouragement to lead you forwards.

From this week, we will begin a study of the book of Revelation. This remarkable book was written to encourage believers in a time of persecution and isolation. It is a book about Jesus and how to stay faithful. We look forward to sharing thoughts and Scripture with you for your strengthening and encouragement.

If you are NOT in a cell group – please contact Katherine ([katherine@escc.co.za](mailto:katherine@escc.co.za)) and we will find a group for you for the weeks ahead 😊

## **Technology**

We will not be using regular media streams (YouTube | Facebook streaming | Live streaming) during this season to broadcast sermons. We desire for you to find growth and discipleship through the community and structures we have already put in place in our cells

However, we will make a lot of use of WhatsApp and all our social media platforms to be in regular contact with your leaders to ensure they are encouraged and informed throughout this season. They will be your first point of contact for anything you need in this time. This way we know that every person in our family is cared for!

If, for some reason, you are unable to meet in a home or the situation in the country moves to a 'lockdown' status we will then move to meeting in our cell groups using Skype or Zoom platforms. Whatever happens – we will continue to meet!

## **Prayer**

Please continue to pray! Our 366 days of prayer continues, and we will send the guidelines electronically as usual. They will also be available on our website – <https://escc.co.za/>

Our corporate prayer meetings will continue but in smaller groups. If you are part of one of these groups, please message the leader who will advise you how you can still pray with each other.

The 10 days of 24 hours of prayer WILL CONTINUE. We are revising it into a format that can take place in homes and cells. There will be three 5 min WhatsApp videos which we will send to you and each segment will be followed with 15 mins prayer. We anticipate that many more people will join the 10 days of prayer than ever before because of this format.

### **Children's Church**

Zendre and Justin are preparing a Google Drive folder for your children. There will be electronic goodie bags with activity, craft and Scripture focus for your child throughout this period. We want your children to thrive as much as we want you to thrive. Zendre will send you the link. Otherwise, please contact her – [zendre@escc.co.za](mailto:zendre@escc.co.za)

### **Youth and Young Adults**

There is an extensive network of cells that meet in homes. ALL these groups will continue, and we will support the leaders to make these groups meaningful and supportive. Each group will carefully follow health protocols – and social distancing will be ENFORCED 😊

### **Family Centre – Durbanville**

FCD will be fully functional. We are hoping that with a bit more time on your hands – you may consider our GIFTING WORKSHOP on Sat, 4<sup>th</sup> April or the MARRIAGE COURSE starting 14<sup>th</sup> April. Use this time for your personal growth! We will keep the groups small and will follow all healthy protocols. See <https://escc.co.za/events/>

Do you need to talk to someone? Our counsellors are well positioned to listen in this season – either by telephone call or in person. <http://escc.co.za/a-ministries/fcd/>

### **Mercy Ministry**

The work at Klipheuwel School will be closed for the duration schools are closed. However, Bless a Baby will continue. We will be guided by hospital protocols, but we don't want babies going home with nothing in this season. Our bags will be relevant to the needs of mothers in this season. <https://escc.co.za/a-ministries/bless-a-baby/>

### **Office and Communication**

Until our President declares the nation to be in 'lockdown; status, our office will remain open. Your pastors will use the time to build into our cell leaders and ensure we give our best support to each group and to you. Our social media sites will continue to be active so you will be able to keep up to date. We are all available on our email addresses.

## **Kingdom Advance & Support**

We hope you will support all people who feel isolated or distressed during this time. We need to support each other more than ever. Let's extend that spirit of love and care to our family and ALL people. As this situation continues to develop, we believe we will see the needs presented to us and be able to address them accordingly.

Our first hope is to encourage and support you through God's Word and through our community. Equally, our hope is to encourage and support those around us. Please contact a friend in distress. Meet for 20 mins coffee if you can or call them over WhatsApp.

*"A fearful world needs a fearless church"*. This is a moment to advance and see God turn something, intended for evil, to good!

## **Misinformation**

In a crisis like this, it's common for misinformation to spread, and it can be difficult to figure out who and what to trust. Here are some reliable resources that can connect you with accurate and helpful info:

<http://www.nicd.ac.za/>

<https://www.who.int/>

<https://youtu.be/rUbGhlzB7eI>

## **How can we help you?**

If you feel like there is anything we can do more to help you in this season, please email Sonya at [info@escc.co.za](mailto:info@escc.co.za) and we will do our best to assist.

God is using this time to build a movement beyond Sunday services. And this is what will change lives and communities. Stay faith-filled and hope-filled.

Kindest regards

**Bruce, Judy, Eldership Team and Staff at ESCC**