

May 13, 2020

An Update for the Trinity Church Family on When & How We'll Meet Together Again

I want to begin this letter by letting you know how very much I and the rest of our staff team miss seeing you and being able to meet with you. Inherent to our roles as shepherds and leaders, we love to be with our flock and to walk with you through both the hilltops and the valleys that you face.

We want to communicate clearly, lovingly and in a timely fashion about the concerns and confusion that we face about when we might be meeting together again. And what I'm about to share with you is not merely from my own perspective, but with the united support of Trinity's Directional Team, Elder Board, Pastors and Ministry Directors.

Though the tensions are mounting for us to be able to meet together again and for pastors to shepherd the people that God has entrusted to them, I want to exhort you that we are to submit to the human authorities that He's placed over us. I want to simply remind you of what you, the Trinity Church family, already know – that "God's in control of who's in control."

When the effects of the pandemic began to cause us to not be able to meet together for worship services, I paused the teaching series that we were in and thought it best to begin a series going through the book of 1 Peter. I knew that it would be helpful for us regarding its themes of HOPE, HOLINESS, and HARMONY, but what I never anticipated was how timely Peter's directives would prove concerning HUMILITY toward governing authorities (I know that you're appreciating my use of alliteration right now . . .).

Remember, these words written 2000 years ago were received by new followers of Jesus who were living in what is modern-day Turkey as they were being persecuted for their faith and followership of Jesus. **Most of the challenges and restrictions that we have experienced so far are simply because we're Californians, not because we're Christians.**

And remember what Peter writes to them:

1 Peter 2:13-14

¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

The restriction of not being able to meet together is challenging, to say the least, but I want to remind you of how God is working in and through Trinity and the church worldwide during this time:

- millions are being influenced with the Gospel via online platforms that they never paid any attention to before the pandemic

- thousands are reportedly responding to the Gospel because God is “shouting in their pain” (C.S. Lewis)

- American Christians are gaining experience of how to communicate Jesus **when, not if**, we face greater governmental restrictions and persecutions in the future

And though we may not be meeting for worship on our campus yet, our property and buildings are being used to host blood drives and have been made available to local government leaders for whatever needs arise. And through Micah House, our people are being unleashed to give away food and supplies to those in need exponentially more than we did when we were able to meet together, just like Peter said we should:

1 Peter 2:12

¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

And let me be sure to acknowledge that like Peter when he and the other Apostles opposed the Jewish religious leaders of their day, there is a time to stand up in respectful civil disobedience when we are forced to choose between honoring God and obeying human laws. **I'm just trying to communicate that this isn't that issue.** But when it comes, I plan to be there shoulder to shoulder with you and to respond as the Apostles did when they faced the consequences for following God's mission over man's mandates:

Acts 5:41

⁴¹ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Though we as Trinity Church's ministry leaders are evaluating how to best begin meeting as a community again in the future, all of our factors are subservient to the “authority umbrella” of human government presented in the New Testament.

Along with submitting to our governing authorities, some of the major factors that we've identified to help us discern how and when to meet again on campus include:

- health risks for all, especially concerning the elderly and those with pre-existing health issues (we have enlisted some of Trinity's own from the medical community to help us wisely navigate these issues)

-what the actual experience of our gatherings will be like regarding current restrictions of social distancing, wearing masks, etc

-positioning our small groups to be a great source of community initially for us when we can begin meeting together again

In the midst of unprecedented problems, let's continue to consult our timeless answers – the Word of God and the Spirit of God – for direction, unity and love for our God who has not been surprised by these times. And as He so clearly communicated through Peter's letter, let us "*Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor*" (**1 Peter 2:17**).

Rooted & Reaching,

Todd Arnett
Lead Pastor
Trinity Church