



18 March 2020

**RE: Pastoral Letter for the Congregation at Boronia Park Uniting Church and its families (1st letter in March 2020)**

Dear my sisters and brothers in Christ,

I would begin this letter by singing this tune you may be familiar with:

*Don't be afraid, my love is stronger,  
my love is stronger than your fear.  
Don't be afraid, my love is stronger,  
and I have promised,  
promised to be always near.*

(John L. Bell)

After spending some time struggling and hesitating to take action, I am writing to give you this pastoral message that as the global pandemic of COVID-19 continues to unfold, we are called to be Church wherever we live faithfully and whatever our preparation looks like. I have been contacted by a number of congregation members face-to-face or online, finding that we seem to go well in the difficult times. However, according to the important information update regarding COVID-19 outbreak (18 March), the Synod of NSW-ACT strongly recommends that **we should not be meeting in person in any gathering**. Soon or later, I would believe that we will face a moment to make difficult decision for our worship service and church activities. I would call upon all of us to hold each other in prayer and thought. We should pray for the well-being of our congregation, our families, friends and neighbourhood and being a community of Christ whom focuses on health, spirit, and people. I am for sure that we, Boronia Park Uniting Church will go well until the last moment of the difficult times.

To be honest, I have seen myself as a person whom desperately needs Christ and the love and care of God. I have prayed for Christ's Hope that may lead us into a deeper level of relationship with Him. I had been challenged by the news about panic buying, numbers of those tested positive and a very personal challenge as to how best to respond to this unfolding situation. Seeking Christ's Hope was not an easy task for me, so I had struggled and hesitated to go through it. However, I was able to find a sign of hope, which is very little but strong, from many other people in our world who make society liveable and sustainable. There are some people who share their resources with others by giving, some people who make a call to those in self-isolation, and some people who continue to be faithful, encouraging each other by word and deed and working on the congregation's mission and ministry. Can you imagine that they are all near us just as the Spirit of God is with us so closely? I give thanks to God for calling us to be Church and faithful though it is little.

Alongside of it, I have been learning and establishing new, creative, alternative ways to worship and caring for each other in sustaining community connection from home and online. To be able to make it happen, I, hopefully with those who may have passion and skillset in it, will work to provide worship resources via various means such as, mail posted, email, message, Facebook, Instagram and hopefully our website, so that we can continue to pray, sing and take this faith journey together.

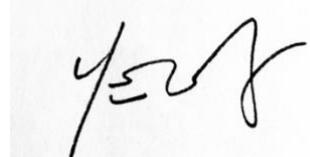
Pastoral care is important in our ministry. No doubt! Thus, I call upon all of us to provide pastoral care for one another during this time of uncertainty and physical isolation. Especially our Elders, members of the Church Council and I will do this thru phone calls, letters or cards, messages and emails. I am particularly concerned for those who reside in any nursing home environment which is being locked down or who live alone without spouse or children. Please call each other regularly and let me know of any concerns. Remember that we are one body in Christ no matter whether we break bread together or we are isolated with anxiety. You have called me as your minister who serves so please let me reach out with heart, reach out with God's word, reach out with practical compassion that I have learnt from all of you.

Adam Liaw, celebrity chef has shared a story of his grandmother who sowed vegetables in her garden rather than going to the market when troubled times came. She was right. She would have had a hope of life and humanity in growing vegetables in her garden. I believe that it is time where God wants to see our heart and integrity as followers of His son Jesus Christ. Once again, remember who we are as Church, and continue our faith journey with Christ and each other. The love of God is stronger than our fear. You, I and we are a body of Christ so we will never fail.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch by email or phone if you have concerns you wish to discuss.

Blessings.

Rev. Seung Jae Yeon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seung Jae Yeon".

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