

Dear APC Friends in Christ,

As we move through this Advent season, we all are aware of the continuing spread of the coronavirus and the hard lockdown measures that the government is taking to reduce the number of new cases and hospitalizations that are putting stress on the nation's health care system. In the midst of this pandemic, we believe it is our responsibility as a Christian community to support these measures with our prayers and our actions.

Therefore, by a unanimous vote, the Council has taken the following actions which go into effect immediately and will remain in effect until 16 January 2021, or longer, if necessary:

- 1) All groups must meet virtually. There are to be no face-to-face group meetings in any location.
- 2) Starting on Sunday, 20 December, we will have Live Stream worship services at 10:00 with no worshippers in the church sanctuary. The only persons in the church building will be the Tech Team and a few people leading the worship service.
- 3) Starting on Sunday, 20 December, there will be no Children's Church.
- 4) On Christmas Eve there will be no worshippers in the sanctuary, except for the Tech Team and a limited number of persons leading the worship services.
- 5) On Christmas Eve there will be two worship services that will be streamed at 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm.
- 6) The Christmas Eve worship opportunities at 2:00 pm and 9:30 pm are cancelled.
- 7) The New Year's Eve Service in the church sanctuary is cancelled. In its place, a pre-recorded worship opportunity will be posted on the church's YouTube channel on 31 December. Also, a Zoom Prayer Meeting will be held on that same evening, beginning at 20:30.
- 8) All music groups must pre-record their songs by 23 December for usage in worship services through 31 January 2021. Groups may, of course, use recordings made for previous services.

Of course, we all want to be together as an APC family of faith on Christmas Eve and on all Sundays for worship and fellowship. Being together as the body of Christ is in our spiritual DNA. But, sadly, the realities of the pandemic have led us to make these difficult decisions.

In this past Sunday's Town Hall Meeting, the Council was asked to provide some of the reasons for our decisions during the COVID crisis. Two key reasons for the decisions the Council is announcing today are:

Sacrificial Love – At a time when the hard lockdown in Germany is causing people to close their businesses, children to stay home from school, and many people to make significant sacrifices to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, we think that it is important for us as a Christian community, and as a matter of Christian witness, to stand in solidarity with our community and the nation by actively supporting the government's measures to protect the health of people and reduce the spread of disease. Our intent in taking these actions is to reflect the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ.

Using Our Freedom to Do What is Beneficial, not just what is lawful. We are blessed with a constitutional right of freedom to worship. However, in the midst of a very serious public health crisis, we believe that we can choose to use our freedom not as a source of privilege, but rather as a way to take actions that are highly beneficial and constructive for the greater good of our neighbors. (1 Corinthians 10:23-24)

Please know that you are in our hearts and our prayers during this Advent and coming Christmas season. We trust that, by God's grace and power, we will come through these dark winter days with the light of Christ's love burning brightly within us and among us, as we journey with Christ into a hope-filled 2021.

May the Light and the Love of Jesus Christ be with you this Christmas and always,

The APC Council