

# YOUR CHURCH IS CLOSED

# YOU MUST BE CHURCH

## BE THE CHURCH@HOME

Your church building is closed.

Places of worship in most countries in the Pacific have now been closed to slow the COVID-19 pandemic.

**CHECK the most recent government advice for your country, as some of the ideas may no longer be permitted.**

## THIS IS NOT OPTIONAL—CHURCHES MUST BE CLOSED

Follow these precautions.

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water frequently (or use hand sanitizer).
- Avoid touching your face.
- Sneeze into your elbow or use a tissue and discard.
- Practice social distancing—1.5 meters and 4 square metres in enclosed spaces.
- Check the latest information on your government's Coronavirus website.

How will you respond?

It is okay to be afraid and wonder what will happen next. Remember God's promise to never leave or forsake us. Each week there will be a Facebook post [@SPDdiscipleship](#) of encouraging Bible passages. You could discuss the passage using *Discovery Bible Reading*.

What will you do?

If going to church, enjoying worship music, praising God, listening to a sermon, catching up with friends, and enjoying fellowship around a shared lunch has been your routine, the closing of your church for whatever reason will be a big loss.

Perhaps for you, going to church has been your weekly outing—to get out of the house, to see others. For many young adults, church has been a place to connect socially. For you, it may have been your lifeline to escape—to

find support, encouragement and warmth from fellow believers. Perhaps church has been your opportunity to enjoy a safe, peaceful place—to experience God’s embrace with some who understand? For many, having church close is a disaster.

### Church in the New Testament

Going to a church building for a church service was not what happened in New Testament times. All the early churches met in homes. They were small, based in *households*.

There were no church buildings until the 4th century. It was Constantine who financed and gifted the first church buildings—changing the very essence of church.

Just months before His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus used the word *church*—which means a *gathering*, without buildings or political and religious connotations. Early believers did not go to a church building, but were the church in their homes and communities. So, if your church shuts down, you can be Church.

### What might it look like?

It might be very small, but Jesus spoke of church as “where two or three come together in (His) name” (Matthew 18:15-20; cf., 16:13-21). And, think of the positives of being the Church.

Here is a description of the church, just after it was birthed by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost day—

The believers, described as the church, “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching (of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection), and fellowship (with each other and the Spirit), sharing in the Lord’s Supper and prayer” (Acts 2:42 NLT).

They “shared everything they had ... with those in need.” At that time, they could also gather in the temple courts but they “met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.” And, “there was a deep sense of awe”—and many miracles (Acts 2:43-47).

It will be different. There will not be the excitement of a worship team, but maybe the sense of “awe” with the Spirit’s leading in quiet prayer and Bible reflection will be more dramatic. It will not be the fellowship lunch like at the church building, but shared conversations with family, or by FaceTime on your phone as you have a hot drink or a little food—and the Agape Meal—that will fill you with a sense of God’s presence, and fill you with peace, encouragement and comfort.

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## A GUIDE TO BEING A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHURCH OF “2 OR 3”

Keep it simple and enjoyable. Some may wish to simply sit and watch a Bible lesson and/or worship service online. Others want something more interactive and focused.

### BIBLE READING GUIDES—FOR BIBLE CLASSES

#### **Bible reading using *Discovery Bible Reading*.**

Download the PDF outline of the 13 x reading guides at [disciple.org.au/resources/how-to-interpret-scripture-q2-2020-sabbath-school-videos/](https://disciple.org.au/resources/how-to-interpret-scripture-q2-2020-sabbath-school-videos/)

#### **Watch the Sabbath School 3-4 minute video for the week.**

Follow the suggested guidelines for reading and discussing the key scriptures. View these at [disciple.org.au/resources/how-to-interpret-scripture-q2-2020-sabbath-school-videos/](https://disciple.org.au/resources/how-to-interpret-scripture-q2-2020-sabbath-school-videos/)

### OPTIONS & IDEAS FOR WORSHIP AND BIBLE READING

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#### **Bible reading using *Discovery Bible Reading*.**

Download a Discovery Bible Reading bookmark from [www.following-jesus.com](http://www.following-jesus.com) (multiple languages available).

Choose a Bible book to read over the coming weeks. Mark is a great place to start.

#### **Read the Gospels, Acts and Paul's epistles using *Discovery Bible Reading*.**

**Gospels:** *Desire of Ages* (White), *Messiah* (Thomas), *Following Jesus* (Roennfeldt), *Following Jesus* videos at [disciplemaking.online](https://disciplemaking.online)

**Acts:** *Acts of the Apostles* (White), *Following the Spirit* (Roennfeldt), *Following the Spirit* videos at [disciplemaking.online](https://disciplemaking.online)

**New Testament epistles:** *Acts of the Apostles* (White), *Following the Apostles' Vision* (Roennfeldt).

#### **Use the *World Changer Booklet* to explore the teachings of Jesus and learn to live as His disciple.**

Downloadable booklet and supporting videos available at [disciple.org.au/resources/world-changers-bible-resources/](https://disciple.org.au/resources/world-changers-bible-resources/)

#### **Loving Your Neighbour During COVID-19 Season**

Look out for the elderly and families quarantined by offering to shop, etc. See it as a time to also share your Hope in Jesus. Visit [disciple.org.au/blog](https://disciple.org.au/blog)

For those in your neighbourhood that may need extra support, simply download the card, fill in the name of your church, print and distribute! [disciple.org.au/resources/calling-cards/](https://disciple.org.au/resources/calling-cards/)

#### **Livestream & Hope Channel**

Some will enjoy viewing a live-streamed service from a local church or Hope Channel. Remember, interaction and self-discovery will be best.

Visit [disciple.org.au](https://disciple.org.au) and click “resources: for details of live streams.

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In many countries you can no longer invite others to join you at home. However, think of creative ways to be connected with others online or by phone.

With those isolated with you:

- 1. Meal.** Plan a simple breakfast, brunch or lunch together, but try to do something a little special. Eat outside or in an open space if you need to maintain social distancing.
- 2. Agape Meal.** If you're with family members, perhaps plan an Agape Meal to make Sabbath special. What would it look like to link with other people online at some point for prayer? (Acts 2:42-47)
- 3. Set times work best.** If you're co-ordinating an online get-together, a set time is essential. If you are able to invite others, maybe sit outside in a garden—with space to protect all.
- 4. Plan for an offering.** Encourage all to continue to return tithes and offerings to their churches through e-giving. ([egiving.org.au](http://egiving.org.au) or [egiving.org.nz](http://egiving.org.nz))
- 5. Music.** Great if you have some—but don't feel it is absolutely necessary.
- 6. Encourage neighbours.** Write encouraging cards and drop them in the mailboxes of your neighbours—especially if they work in healthcare at this time.
- 7. Outdoor activities.** Talking a walk or a visit to a park is still allowed (most national parks are closed). However this can't be in organised groups and social distance must be maintained.
- 8. Connect with others by social media.** Use FaceTime or Zoom conferencing to connect your small [Church@Home](#) with others doing the same thing.

## IDEAS FOR TEENS AND CHILDREN

### The Tuis Resources

These resources have a family worship workbook, colouring in pages, videos and activities that kids with parents can do together. Visit [thetuis.tv](http://thetuis.tv)

### Families & Small Groups with Children

Families and Small Groups could also spend a Sabbath afternoon working on a Pathfinder honour or Adventurer award. [pathfinders.adventistchurch.com/resources/category/honours](http://pathfinders.adventistchurch.com/resources/category/honours) and [adventurers.adventistconnect.org/adventurer-awards](http://adventurers.adventistconnect.org/adventurer-awards)

Keep it simple, easy to do, relaxed and enjoyable. [Be the Church@Home](#).  
Need more? contact [SPDdiscipleship@adventist.org.au](mailto:SPDdiscipleship@adventist.org.au)



*South Pacific*