

# YOUR **CHURCH IS SHUT** YOU MUST **BE** CHURCH

Church@Home

## Your church building is **SHUT**

Local church buildings are NOW closed to slow the covid-19 pandemic.

Last week many were choosing to self-quarantine to protect themselves and others—but, now church buildings in Australia and New Zealand are closed.

At times places of worship are closed by natural disasters, civil unrest, terrorist attacks, state decrees or negative social media campaigns—but this week ALL church buildings are closed to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

**This is NOT optional—church buildings must be shut.**

## Specific government announcements:

### **Australia**

<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/update-coronavirus-measures-220320ia>

Many facilities are now “restricted from opening”—including religious gatherings and places of worship. Weddings are restricted to 5 people and funerals to 10—and for both, the 1 person per 4 square metre rule applies.

### **New Zealand**

<https://covid19.govt.nz/government-actions/covid-19-alert-system/>

- New Zealanders who are outside of essential services must stay at home and **stop all interactions with others outside of those in your households.**
- You may go for a walk or exercise and enjoy nature, but keep a 2 metre distance from people at all times. You can take your children outside.
- All **indoor and outdoor events cannot proceed.** This does not include workplaces of people undertaking essential businesses.

- These requirements apply **to family and social gatherings** such as birthdays, funerals, tangi or weddings. These gatherings **cannot go ahead**.
- We are asking you **only spend time with those who you are in self-isolation with**, and keep your distance from all others at all times.

### **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.

For many, faithfully going to church to worship and honor God has been a lifetime commitment, duty and practice—and it is disorienting to find ourselves isolated from the fellowship of believers.

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**

Of course, 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*—but knowing that does not entirely alleviate your sense of loss or disorientation today.

However, do remember what Jesus said. Just months before His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus used the word *church*—meaning *a gathering*, without buildings or political and religious connotations. Speaking of church,

**Jesus said:**

**“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them”**  
(Matthew 18:15-20 NIV; cf., 16:13-21).

### **What might it look like?**

Because of the regulations placed on us this week, church will be small. It may just be you and God—with perhaps phone, FaceTime or Zoom contact with a few others. But, try to reflect on the positives of you, maybe those with whom you are isolated—with God—and 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** (Jesus is alive!), 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. Unless you have the facilities to connect to a livestream or a television worship service, there will not be the excitement of a worship team, but maybe to experience the Spirit’s leading in quiet prayer and Bible reflection may be more dramatic. There will not be the abundance of the fellowship lunch like in the church hall, but shared conversations with family or by FaceTime or phone as you have a hot drink or a little food—and the Lord’s Supper—will fill you with a sense of God’s presence, peace, encouragement and comfort.

## 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

Download the PDF outline of the 13 x reading guides

<https://disciple.org.au/resources/daniel-q1-2020-sabbath-school-videos/>

If you are online, watch the Sabbath School 3-4 minute video for the week.

Follow the suggested guidelines for reading and discussing the key scriptures.

### Options for Worship & Bible discussion

Download a **Discovery Bible Reading** bookmark—and checkout the videos

<https://www.following-jesus.com/resources/>

1. **Bible reading**—using *Discovery Bible Reading*  
Read the Psalms to find messages of encouragement, hope and salvation in these distressing times.

Choose a Bible book to read over the coming weeks

—the Gospel of Mark is a great place to start.

2. **Read the Gospels**—using *Discovery Bible Reading*  
Journey through the story of Jesus in sequence—reading through the Gospels.

Videos x 5 <https://www.following-jesus.com/videos/following-jesus/>

Books: Peter Roennfeldt, **Following Jesus** (Signs 2017)  
Background reading: *The Desire of Ages* (White) or *Messiah* (Thomas)

Plan to read one guide each week, and journey through the life story of Jesus, discussing, sharing and applying. A transformational experience.

3. **Read Acts**—using *Discovery Bible Reading*  
Experience the excitement of the early church—reading through Acts.

Videos x 5 <https://www.following-jesus.com/videos/following-the-spirit/>

Books: Peter Roennfeldt, **Following the Spirit** (Signs 2018)  
Background reading: *The Acts of the Apostles* (White)

Plan to read one guide each week, and journey through Acts, discussing, sharing and applying. An inspiring journey.

4. **Read the New Testament Epistles**—using *Discovery Bible Reading*  
Rediscover what the early church was like—as you explore these letters.

Books: Peter Roennfeldt, **Following the Apostles' Vision** (Signs 2019)  
Background reading: *The Acts of the Apostles* (White)

Plan to read one epistle during each week with the guide/chapter. Challenging and inspiring.

## BE THE CHURCH@HOME

Here are some ideas for you and those isolated with you—

1. Meal. Plan a simple breakfast, brunch or lunch together, but try to do something a little special.
2. Agape Lord's Supper. Have flat bread and grape juice on the table to celebrate the Lord's Supper as an *Agape Meal* together—something all early believers did, really keeping their faith in Jesus on-the-path-of-life during times of great trouble
3. Set times work best. It could be 10 am, and plan for how long. Don't go on-and-on—don't weary your household—but plan this worship time for each week.
4. Connect with others via social media. Use FaceTime, Zoom or phone to connect with others—inviting them online to join your worship time, but do not have others come to your homes. Many will be needing encouragement and support.
5. Plan to give an offering. There is much for which to thank God. Continue returning

tithes and offerings to your churches through e-giving. (egiving.org.au and egiving.org.nz)—but, also collect an offering to support some vulnerable neighbors.

Phone neighbors to see what is needed, purchase the item and let them know when you will leave it at their door. Look after those around you.

6. Music. It is great if you have some—either live or streamed—but, don't feel it is absolutely necessary. And, if you can't sing—don't. Maybe read a hymn or song.
7. Outdoor activities. Plan to walk—but keep at least 2 metres from others and DO NOT meet in groups to socialize.

## IDEAS FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

Involve your children, teens and youth. Engage all with age-relevant activities—stories, crafts, songs; and involve all in the *Discover Bible Reading* discussions.

- **The Tuis Resources.** These have a family worship workbook, coloring in pages, videos and activities that kids and parents can do together. Visit [www.thetuis.tv](http://www.thetuis.tv).
- **Families and small children.** Spend an afternoon working on a Pathfinder honour or Adventurer award:

[www.pathfinders.adventistchurch.com/resources/category/honours/](http://www.pathfinders.adventistchurch.com/resources/category/honours/) and  
[www.adventurers.adventistconnect.org/adventurer-awards](http://www.adventurers.adventistconnect.org/adventurer-awards).

**KEEP IT SIMPLE, EASY TO DO, RELAXED AND ENJOYABLE.**  
**Be the CHURCH**

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