

March 27, 2020

Dear Beloved of Valley Church,

By now the reality of our current world situation is beginning to sink in. A couple of times I've thought, "Is this just a dream, or is this really happening?" Yes, it's really happening and we're coming to grips with what life looks like in our new reality. And while I thought working from home during "shelter in place" was going to be quiet and peaceful, I've found myself more stressed, stretched, and frankly overwhelmed than ever.

So, I've asked the Lord to help me see what's really important. Here are three things He's helping me to focus on and a couple of action items for you to consider.

Connection with God

Last week I sent out resources for you and your family to dig into God's Word in study, prayer, and worship. Daniel's message last Sunday from the Sermon on the Mount was perfect timing for us to check our motives for these activities in the middle of the new methods for church that we're all adopting.

At the same time, many of us are feeling the need to cry out to God "together" to hear from Him in these tumultuous days. Next Sunday morning Darren and I are going to share more with you about what we're calling our "Joel Moment", but for now here are some ways the Lord is leading us.

From the Old Testament book of Joel, *"Hear this, you elders; give ear, all inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation."* Joel 1:2,3. That sounds pretty relevant today, doesn't it?

For Joel, the crisis was the locust invasion that destroyed the food supplies. The prophet called for the people to look to God. *"Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God and cry out to the LORD."* Joel 1:14. The COVID-19 invasion gives us an opportunity to turn our attention to God in a fresh, urgent way.

Here is our plan.

1. **Weekly Fasting & Prayer.** Join us to fast and pray Wednesdays through breakfast and lunch along with members from about 30 other Bay Area Churches. We will send out a weekly “Joel Moment Prayer Page” with instructions for your fast on Wednesday as you stretch out your hands in prayer.

2. **Weekly Prayer Zoom.** After our morning and afternoon of fasting and prayer, we’ll have a weekly “solemn assembly” through Zoom. Every Wednesday afternoon from 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM, we will have pastors, elders and other leaders offering prayers and reading Scripture on Zoom. We will end on a hopeful note as we go to prepare food to break the fast.

3. **Gathering Prayer** this Sunday night at 5:30 pm via Zoom. You should just be able to click here <https://zoom.us/j/365557968?pwd=WWRJN2FNMGE5R2szWkFreUgvUmRhdz09> The meeting ID: 365 557 968 and password: 070752. If you join us by phone, call: 669 900 9128.

ACTION ITEM: Would you join us to fast and pray weekly? Please email me if you will and tell me how God is using this crisis in your lives. We want to pray along with you as God reveals Himself and His purifying plans to you.

Community with Each Other

We’re very excited to see so many people joining our virtual communities. Last Sunday we had over 1,100 views of our [services](#) many with multiple people watching. Children, Youth, Men and Women, and Small Groups are all connecting digitally. We’re seeing people care for one another AND for their neighbors in exciting ways.

Several of our pastors and elders will each be hosting a weekly online **Coffee Connection** group. These online group meetings will be offered on various days and times throughout the week. They will last for about 30-45 minutes. Grab your computer and a cup of your favorite coffee (or tea), and join us for fellowship, reflection, and prayer. Look for an email from Andy with details on Monday mornings.

Speaking of “community”, if you or someone you know is NOT getting email details on how to connect to the Coffee Connection or other online opportunities, please contact info@valleychurch.org. You can also let us know about any prayer

requests or needs there, too. (If you'd rather not get these emails, let us know that too!)

ACTION ITEM: Would you send me a picture of you participating in our worship service, children's ministry, or small group that we can use to encourage others? Will you invite someone else to join your circle of community, virtual or otherwise?

Compassion to the Hurting

This Sunday we'll be continuing our study of the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 6:19-24. Jesus warns us, "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...*" With news of hoarding and selfishness, it's a great time for the Church to shine with generosity, both as individuals and as the body of Christ.

Thank you for your generosity to Valley Church. Many of you are transitioning over to giving [online](#) so that we can continue to meet needs both here in Cupertino as well as supporting our partners around the world. I'm also hearing stirring reports of people meeting the needs of those around them with the love of Christ. Keep it up!

A wonderful way to bless and support one another is our **Meals Ministry**! This ministry is for anyone who finds themselves in a difficult season where temporary help with meals is needed. If you have a need, or would like to get involved, please email us at: mealsministry@valleychurch.org.

We're also encouraging folks to help out with food distribution for isolated and vulnerable people in our community.

1. Our **Valley Church Food Pantry** is open and ready to meet needs. If you'd like to get or GIVE canned and non-perishable food, please contact Tim at ShepherdsTable@ValleyChurch.org or call 650.383.8097.
2. **Cathedral of Faith** needs volunteers on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9 am to noon. Their pastor told me you can just show up and work! (With proper social distancing!) Go to 2315 Canoas Garden Avenue, San Jose, CA 95125.
3. **West Valley Community Services** says they have a lot of volunteers but call in once a week is good to make sure all shifts are covered. They have constant need for food donations. Email volunteer@wvcommunityservices.org. 408.956.6115. www.wvcommunityservices.org.

ACTION ITEM - Let me know about a way you have been able to share the love of Christ in a creative, compassionate way. God is opening doors we're not used to going through.

Connect, Community, and Compassion. Stay focused and in all of these, and be Courageous, God is with you! “See” you Sunday!

Grace and peace!

Kurt Jones