

August 20, 2020

Dear Ohana,

The apostle Paul wrote in Romans that *“God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* He then wrote in Philippians 4, *“The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

During this season of COVID-19, these words have become more and more meaningful to me. I am encouraged to think on the fact that 1) God loves me, 2) Nothing surprises Him, and 3) I can make my concerns known to Him as a form of worship. I trust that God is making Himself known to you in similar and powerful ways during this season.

This past Tuesday the governor and the mayor’s office communicated some stricter guidelines for how we, in Hawaii, are to gather. There are two BIG changes that bring up questions for how we as a church will continue to operate:

- CHANGE 1. Social gatherings, outside of immediate family, are to be limited to 5 or less people.
- CHANGE 2. Singing is prohibited unless people are at least 10 feet from one another and behind a physical barrier.

The question I’d like to answer first is, “Are we able to meet together in person for Sunday services?”

It is stated in the bulletin from the mayor’s office dated August 18th that “In-person spiritual services may be conducted” as long as we continue to follow the guidelines we have been following and add the 4-week moratorium on “singing.” So, we will continue to hold Sunday morning services at 9:30AM which will be Live Streamed.

The second question I’m certain people are asking is, “Are we going to sing at our gatherings?”

Continuing with our two-pronged approach to the recent orders given by our local government we will not sing in our services for the next month. The Beyond COVID Committee determined from the onset that our compliance with our State officials will be based on two major biblical truths found in Matthew 22 and Romans 13.

“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40

We believe that our adherence to the restrictions being outlined so far have been made out of concern for the quality of life for our community. We know that our greater Honolulu community views the guidelines as

what is best in light of our current situation. Our decision to comply is an act of our love for our neighbor that supports biblical teaching.

“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.” Romans 13:1-2

We believe that our local and State officials' position have been established by God. And we don't feel that the decisions being made in response to COVID are an attack on our faith, but rather an attempt to do what they believe is right. So, out of respect for their authority given to them by God we choose to submit.

Finally, the third question people are most likely asking is, “What will Sunday worship look like without singing?”

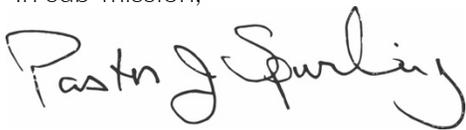
It will be different for sure. We will miss the expression of worshiping God through our corporate singing. However, referring back to the verse in Romans, I am sure that God is going to work this out for our good. Tony and I are praying for God's guidance and brainstorming for creative forms of worship. You can expect background music being played as Psalms are read and responsive readings are being led. We will focus on the liturgy of the Lord's Prayer and introduce the Nicene Creed of 325AD for corporate reading. A four-week fast from something that we desire (like a fast from food) could actually strengthen our spiritual lives rather than detract from them. It is important that we enter into this period with the right attitude.

I hope that this letter answers most of the questions that have arisen because of this recent proclamation. If you have any more questions, I want to encourage you to reach out to the committee by sending an e-mail to info@kapahulubible.org with “Beyond COVID” in the subject line.

As always, know that we love you and miss those of you who have not been able to re-engage at our Sunday gatherings. We are depending upon your prayers for us as we seek the Lord in the decisions we are having to make in these unprecedented times.

May God richly bless you.

In sub-mission,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor J Spurling". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor J Spurling