

Surprise Church

 Imagine a church that leaves the building...

March 16, 2020

Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

On Sunday night, Governor Doug Burgum endorsed the CDC recommendation that organizations nationwide cancel gatherings consisting of fifty people or more. This obviously will impact every family and organization, including churches.

In light of this news, **Surprise Church Bismarck will not gather for Sunday worship until further notice.** We cannot say exactly when corporate worship will resume, but we will reevaluate our plans each week in light of changing conditions and publish updates consistently. We will also provide ways for our church to meet together for worship and support both in homes and online.

1) Why are we aligning with the CDC's recommendations?

While North Dakota has only one confirmed case of COVID-19, the CDC looks at global data points about the containment processes in nations that have been effective as well as those that have proven unsuccessful. These recommendations aim to align all fifty states to the strategies that have proven to limit the spread of the virus around the world, regardless of whether a given state has had a high number of confirmed cases up to this point. We believe that we can best honor Jesus' call to love our neighbors by cancelling gatherings that may pose a health risk.

2) How will we BE the church in the coming days?

Surprise has always been a church that leaves the building, in particular by opening our homes and lives to one another outside of Sunday morning and by loving our neighbors. This is therefore an incredible opportunity to bring that vision to life as we shift to a "micro-church" model, which closely resembles the early Christian church in the Book of Acts.

Our home-based **Missional Communities** and **Community Groups** will continue meeting, and we will also form new Groups, since gatherings of ten or less are much safer than larger events. We will also be forming **Virtual Community Groups** so that you can connect with others and grow spiritually from anywhere. If you're on a volunteer team, your team will shift into a virtual or in-person Community Group to support one another, or you may gather with friends or family on Sunday Morning to watch worship online and discuss the questions afterwards. The great news is that Surprise Church continues to thrive as people gather in homes and online to grow spiritually.

We are currently mobilizing an army of Group Leaders who will help to lead or host in-person or online Community Groups. New group leaders will be **trained online this Sunday, March 22nd at noon** and begin meeting with their groups thereafter. We are praying for a number of new leaders and assistant leaders for the Community Groups that will be forming, please pray about becoming one of them.

Surprise church will now literally leave the building, and we want you to be a part of this movement. To participate in or volunteer to lead/host one of our Community Groups, visit SurpriseChurch.com/Groups.

Timeline of events:

- Sunday, March 22 at 9:30 & 11 AM – Worship online (On our website, Facebook, & Youtube)
- Sunday, March 22 at noon – Community Group Leader Online Training
- Monday, March 23 – Community Groups begin meeting in person and online

Ongoing Communication:

- We will communicate closely with Community Groups and Group leaders to make sure that they stay connected and supported as a Surprise family.
- We will post updates at SurpriseChurch.com/COVID-19 to share news, updates, future plans, and opportunities to meet the needs of our city.
- We will also send weekly updates and spiritual resources via email, Facebook, and text.
- Download our Surprise App by texting the words SURPRISE APP to 77977.

10:02 Prayer Alarm:

- Please set your prayer alarms to pray every day at 10:02 AM to pray with us! Pray according to Jesus' guidance in Luke 10:2 that God would send the leaders we need to love and serve His people, and pray for the needs of our families, community, nation and world.

Digital Giving:

- **If you have not yet done so, please set up a digital giving plan** by texting SURPRISE to 77977 or on our giving page at SurpriseChurch.com/Give. Now that we won't be collecting offering on Sundays, your digital giving plan is essential in helping us fund the staff and ministries that will fuel our mission and bless our city.
- As part of our "March Match," as donors have pledged \$2000 to match 100% of all new and increased digital giving plans. Thanks in advance for setting up your plan!

Scripture constantly calls us to not be afraid, but courage dies in isolation. Make sure you take this time to soak in God's promises with loved ones, sit prayerfully in God's powerful presence, and stay connected to the Surprise family through one of our Community Groups.

Moments like this are why we started Surprise Church Bismarck. Let's be there for each other! Together, we can share the healing love of Jesus with a frightened world and watch God's power working through us. Throughout history, Christians have shined at times like this, because they stood up to care for others, and we endeavor to do no less.

Let us leave the building together to carry forth the legacy of Jesus.

Stay Surprising,



Matt Anderson
Lead Pastor
Surprise Church Bismarck