

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus,

Things did not go as we anticipated them on Sunday morning, and we are sorry. We're keeping at it as we try to learn. We anticipate trying to live stream again this Sunday, but may prepare a prerecorded service and launch that if the stream doesn't work. We are continuing to work at it. The story of faith in the Bible is not always (or, for that matter, often) cheery. It is rarely simple. It frequently revolves around persistence in seeing the goodness of God in difficult times. Part of why this book has resonated with so many people for so long is that, as it is divinely inspired narrative about God, it is also a story about us as humans. We see tragedy and joy, hope and loss. We anticipate trying to provide some online gathering spaces soon to continue looking at and studying the Word and what that Word speaks to us today.

That leads us also to announce that **we are planning to remain closed physically at St. Stephanus at least until the end of April**. This is, of course, not what we want to do, but what we feel we must do in order to be responsible citizens and responsible to you, our brothers and sisters in Jesus. As Jesus says in Mark 12:29-31 about the Commandments, "'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.'" There is nothing greater than this. We want to be able to provide worship opportunities as an expression of our love of God, but significantly see our physical distancing as a way express our love to our neighbors.

May the peace of God be in your bodies and minds, may it fill your Spirit with our true hope of life in Him, now in time, and into eternity.

In the peace of Jesus,

Rev. Andrew Thompson

Dan Savard, on behalf of Lay Ministry