

Later Workers

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Alan Richardson

Instructions for Covid-19 by New Zealand Overseer

March 14, 2020

STATEMENT REGARDING CORONAVIRUS (Covid-19)

By now, we are all aware of the worldwide Covid-19 virus. The virus causes a wide range of symptoms, including fatality. It tends to be more severe in aged persons, especially in those with compromised immune systems or chronic illness. There have been pandemics in earlier years:

1918-19 Flu

This began in Europe and went worldwide. There were more deaths from this influenza virus than from four years of World War I. In New Zealand, public gatherings were banned, movie theatres and schools closed. It's not now known what effect this had on our fellowship.

1947-48 Poliomyelitis

From the time of the government restrictions announced in newspapers, on the Saturday of both 1st Winchester and 1st Pukekohe conventions (at beginning of December 1947), all schools were to be closed, and no child under 16 years of age was to attend any public gathering nor travel on public transport. Children under this age were sent away from those two conventions to private homes that day, and none of them attended subsequent conventions that year. Some schools didn't re-open until the second half of April 1948 – in the intervening period school lessons were available by correspondence or on the radio.

2020 Covid-19 virus

This began in the Wuhan region of China in December 2019 and began to spread more widely. Other countries severely affected to date are Sth Korea, Iran & Italy. For Northern Italy, a government decree on Monday, March 9, banned mass gatherings, closed shopping malls at weekends and stipulated that people at restaurants and bars have to remain at least one metre distant from others. Church services, weddings & funerals were suspended until April 3. Movement of persons in and out of the affected region was banned. In the last day or so, this decree has been extended to all Italy.

In Sth Korea, a church group among whom the virus spread freely has attracted unfavourable attention from the authorities there. In New Zealand, where there have been only five confirmed cases to date, travellers from highly-affected countries have not been allowed to enter New Zealand and New Zealanders returning home from those countries are required to self-isolate for 14 days, as do people who have been in contact with them. Yesterday, the NZ Ministry of Health announced that churches should stop giving Holy Communion on the tongue and stop the sharing of wine in one cup.

Our fellowship

In our fellowship, in regions overseas affected severely by the virus, gospel meetings have ceased and some fellowship meetings also. In one city of New Zealand, the gospel workers no longer shake hands with those who leave the gospel meetings, but just verbally say good-bye to them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are for our fellowship in New Zealand.

Immediately, I request that the recommendations listed on the following page be put into place. Also, that all you gospel workers print off copies of these statements of mine and give one copy to each elder of a Sunday a.m. meeting in your field, today if possible. Each elder can then read this out to his meeting.

The immediate recommendations :

1. That there be no shaking of hands (nor hugging) in any gospel or fellowship meeting. At gospel meetings, the gospel workers can say good-bye verbally.

2. That waterless hand sanitiser be available for use of all entering a fellowship meeting.
3. No person should attend a gospel or fellowship meeting if he/she feels unwell. If someone is sick in the fellowship meeting home, arrangements should be made for the transfer of the meeting temporarily to another home.
4. Regarding partaking of the bread – in general, at all times, it is always good practice for half of the piece of bread on the plate to be covered by glad-wrap. The hand holding the plate should only touch the glad-wrap, while the other hand removes a small piece of bread to be eaten. However, in view of the recent Ministry of Health statement, the only way by which the bread should now be partaken meantime is for the elder to cut the bread into small squares, placed on a plate to be taken around by the elder alone, and for each participant to touch and take one square only.
5. Regarding partaking of the wine – some years ago, our NZ Ministry of Health published a statement that said that if the communion wine consumed has an alcoholic content of at least 15% it is self-sterilising. It is always sound practice to use wine of this strength for the emblems. A 15% alcoholic content can only be obtained by using fortified wine. That is why Port Wine is necessary. However, in view of the recent Ministry of Health statement, the only way the wine should be partaken meantime is in small disposable plastic cups, on a tray taken around by the elder, a separate disposable cup for each person partaking of the wine.
If it be not possible to do it this way, then this emblem should not be made available. However, it is still good to give thanks in the meeting for an emblem, even if it's not made available. The real purpose why we take the emblems is to remember the Lord Jesus, His broken body and His shed blood. The usual suitable hymn relating to the emblems should still be sung at the close of the meeting.
6. Whenever either the bread or wine is passed around the room, any person is free to abstain from partaking.
7. These suggestions apply only as long as there remains a threat from Covid-19.

From a future date, if the Covid-19 virus becomes more serious in NZ, which we could call the **trigger date**, and which will be announced by me at that future time, all gospel and fellowship meetings may need to be cancelled for a period.

As I'm in Otago at present, I'm asking Tim Hamilton to send these statements to all NZ gospel fields, by WhatsApp Messaging service

Alan T Richardson

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