

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

Dear Mountain View Conference Members,

Things are developing rapidly with the Covid-19 or coronavirus pandemic. The good news is that Jesus is still on His throne, so we do not have to panic or fear. Now is the time to turn our eyes on Jesus and know that the things of earth will indeed grow strangely dim. With that said, we must be vigilant and prayerful. We need to be responsible citizens and take steps to protect the most vulnerable among us and do our part to help slow the transmission of this virus.

This virus is very problematic because some who are infected do not know it, and others experience no symptoms at all while they are infected, but may possibly spread the virus to others. That is why the President of the United States has set new guidelines that groups larger than 10 should avoid meeting for the next 15 days to try and slow the spread of the coronavirus. The President's counsel affects almost every one of our congregations and we need to take it seriously as many of our members are senior citizens and this virus impacts them the hardest not to mention those with preexisting health conditions. We love and care about our people and their safety and wellbeing are paramount. With this in mind, we called an emergency meeting of our Mountain View Conference executive committee to counsel with them. The decision was made to cease meeting in our churches for the next 2 weeks; we will then reevaluate where things are after that time. This pause includes all meetings, such as prayer meetings, board meetings, outreach events, etc. Our goal is to limit the "in person" contact we have with each other for a two-week period. These meetings can continue via video conferencing or a traditional conference call. We now have at least one confirmed case of the virus in our territory and I have counseled with several doctors who are convinced that there are others that have not yet been detected because of a shortage of tests.

Please remember that we are the church and we can keep the Sabbath holy and worship our Savior without meeting in a church building. Several of our congregations around our great conference are offering live streamed services over the Internet that you can watch on your computer, smart phone, or smart TV. I will be sending out a list of these congregations and the corresponding connection information. You can, of course, also tune into 3ABN or Hope Channel and watch a worship service there as well. You may also consider video chatting with other families from your congregation or call them on the phone and activate your speakerphone and enjoy the Sabbath School lesson and a worship service together. Some video chatting software like Apple's Facetime allows for several different families to connect at the same time. Many phone plans offer conference calling which allows 3 callers to join on a phone call at the same time. This is not a time to stop studying and worshipping together but rather a time to intensify our worship and focus on Jesus and each other through modern technologies.

As I mentioned earlier, your health and safety are our first priority but please remember that this situation can create a financial nightmare for our conference and your local church. We must continue to be faithful in returning our tithes and offerings. There are several ways to

return your tithe and give offerings. If your church has set up Adventist Giving on their website you can utilize it; it is safe and secure and works very well. You can also utilize bill pay through your bank. Bill pay allows you to schedule a payment to be delivered to your local church and they will be able to process it like normal. You can also mail your tithes and offerings to your church as well. Never forget that we must still pay our pastors and meet other expenses regardless of whether our churches meet or not. Our people in the Mountain View Conference are some of the most faithful in the entire North American Division and we are appealing to all our members to please continue giving faithfully during this very difficult time. Never forget that returning tithe and giving offerings is a form of worshipping God. The current pandemic should also remind us that Jesus is coming soon and now is the time for us to prepare to meet our Savior.

Finally, if you are sick or have health conditions that make you vulnerable and you need food or medical supplies please don't hesitate to reach out to a fellow church member or your pastor and ask for help. We will do our very best to care for each of our members during this time of crisis. We are a family and we need to care for each other like a family. This is a difficult and unpleasant time, but it should be a powerful reminder that we are living in the time just before Jesus returns. Jesus promised His disciples and us that He would be with us until the end (Matthew 28:20). He is coming soon; please make whatever changes are needed in your life today to prepare for His soon return. Yes, soon, and very soon, we are going to see the King. Today is the day of salvation!

Courage and peace to you,

Pastor Mike Hewitt