

Cottonwood Seventh-day Adventist Church

"Light the World with Jesus Love to Grow the Family of God"

Dear Church Family,

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mt. 16:24).

Jesus offered this advice just after Peter had attempted to divert Him from following through on the plan of salvation that required Jesus to literally take up His cross and be crucified. Jesus sacrificed all the comforts of heaven, all the advantages of Divinity, all the adoration of the angels to take up His cross for the benefit of those in the greatest need, us. It is a call for Christians, those who answer His invitation to "Follow Me" to do more than simply walk after Him and go to the same geographical locations. Instead it is an invitation to let Him live a life of HIS love in and through us. His love sets aside personal comforts and advantages for the benefit of others in need. Jesus challenges us to follow in His footsteps and take upon us His love and compassion for others.

As your pastor, I've witness flashes of Christ's love in this church family. People in this church sacrifice to help others with living space, storage space, pay bills, pray for each other, minister to each other when in need. Our world is changing however, and I have watched many people continue after Christ in this manner, picking up their cross and following after Him. Though it is uncomfortable to wear a mask in church, I've watched people set comfort aside and worn them to protect others. Though it hurts to socially distance ourselves from friends and beloved church family members, I've watched people do it. Though it has created extra work to ensure the church is sanitized and safe, I've seen many go the extra mile to ensure a safer environment.

I am proud to say that your conference officers have also noted and made mention of you to me and to others. I am proud, yet humbled to be the pastor of a church that accepts Christ's challenge to follow Him through self-sacrifice.

I am writing this to bring you up to date on our current situation. COVID-19 is on a dramatic rise again after a brief lull in early Fall. The last 2 weeks of November saw an increase of nearly 2,000 new cases in Yavapai County. Cottonwood itself has nearly 1,000 reported cases as of yesterday. In fact, Arizona overall saw a 90% increase in cases over the past 2 weeks while the U.S. set new records for new cases, deaths, and hospitalizations yesterday.

As you know our church is affected by COVID-19 also. For the past 2 weeks we've been doing a family worship from home to help prevent spread among our members and attendees. Our church family's health and safety is important to us. So, our church board met last night and had a lengthy discussion about the best way to continue worshipping our Father in heaven while keeping everyone safe and preventing further complications from this, or any other virus.

In order to put some distance between us and COVID, we have chosen to hold family worship from home for the next 2 weeks. We will continue to provide a Zoom link for those who



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wish to join us for a Sabbath School discussion at 9:30. Worship will follow Sabbath School at 11:00. These services will be streamed live on Facebook at our church’s Facebook page.

Provided we do not face any setbacks, we plan to resume Livestream Only worship from the church on Dec. 19. This service will include Sabbath School and Church which will be streamed live from our Facebook page and our YouTube page. Our livestream worship service will be somewhat modified due to increased social distancing guidelines. At this time, we have suspended congregational singing to include no vocals or wind instruments because of the increased spreading of aerosols which carry the virus. While the acts of worship may be modified, the spirit of worship is wholeheartedly toward God with love in our hearts.

We will continue with this format until it is safe to move forward. Factors we’ll be watching to determine when it is safe to reopen the church for public worship are COVID-19 reports from Yavapai County Health Dept., CDC, the State of Arizona, and the Arizona Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

We also encourage you to take part in our other services as they are made available.

- Journey with Jesus: Sunday nights at 7 – available on Zoom
- Walking Through Ephesians: Wednesday nights at 7 – available on Zoom and Facebook Live until public worship permitted. Then it will be made available for public attendance.
- Friday Night Vespers (Prayer & Praise): Friday nights at 7 – please enjoy as we reflect on better times by watching archived services which will be reposted on Facebook and YouTube until it is safe for the band to resume live.

I know this is another sacrifice. However, we need to take measures to protect our church family. Our goal is to keep everyone safe so we can reopen our church in an appropriate time and an appropriate manner. In the meantime, I am calling for everyone to take this to the Lord in prayer. He is the Great Physician. He is the Deliverer. He has all the answers. We will do our part, but the bottom line is we need God.

Thank you for allowing me to be your pastor and may God bless you!

Sincerely,

Pastor Vince

