

March 20, 2019

CHURCH OF TEN



ASHFORD COMMUNITY CHURCH

Get Connected . Grow in your faith . Stay Encouraged

DON'T FALL ASLEEP

MONDAY MORNING,

the church staff sat down at our usual conference table, at our normal Monday meeting time. We small talked, sipped coffee, waited for each employee to trickle in and then turned to Pastor John for his lead.

"Alright" He said, noticing the eyes on him. "Let's open up staff minutes so we can go through everything we are NOT going to be doing this week."

Wednesday night prayer, youth, kids ministry...canceled.

Saturday outreaches....canceled.

Sunday service....canceled.

We all rearranged our weeks to include only events with less than fifty people. And in less than fifty minutes, changed that to events with less than eleven people. Servers in our congregation got the news that their restaurants are closed until April. The Moms of some of our high school seniors posted news about their kids missing prom, senior trips, and most likely walking the stage to receive their diplomas.

Tuesday morning no one rushed into the office. No one hit the gym, or went out for breakfast. Everything was closed and canceling. Amongst the endless online stream of thoughts, tips, updates, anxieties, frustrations and encouragements, there was a message some had chosen to take up about taking this time for 'self care', making the most of the situation, and finding things to do that are not fear based. These are all good directives and ones we should all follow, but between Monday night and Tuesday afternoon **three Ashford leaders heard a similar word from the Lord** that challenged us to take it one step further.

"Don't sleep through this."

We already know the enemies plans for this time. A lot of people are using the word unprecedented and it's true that outwardly, we've never seen something quite like this. But his plan is always the same. Fear, division, idolatry, and, let's not be naive, death. With infinite creativity, the Lord's plans are also always predictable, to redeem, to save, and to bring in a harvest.

CAN THE CHURCH RESPOND?

The choice to take this abnormal hour to rest, is definitely closer to the Lord's heart than following the temptation to fear. **But, Ashford is pressing in for more.**

"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." Genesis 50:20

When what the world needs most is isolation, is there a way for the church to respond?

This question arises because the modern American model of the church is to gather in mass. In another type of crisis we would rally. We would go, or invite. We would use the words connect and unify. Though this is the structure that is most familiar to us, it is not the only one we know.

Jesus preached in the temple, and to gatherings of four and five thousand,

but that's not what he is most known for. **The great work of His life was His disciples.** The ones he called, taught and left with the great commission to go and spread the good news of his death and resurrection.

This will pass. We will get through and we will rebuild on whatever damage is done to families, businesses, and the economy. We will look back on these days of uncertainty and we will either see a time of fear, a time of rest, or a time of restructuring.

Jesus took twelve. **What if we each took nine, and started a church of ten?**

Specialist have been desperate for people to understand about this virus that the spread of it is exponential. That if you have the virus you don't just pass it to who you come in contact with. But with who they then come and contact with. 2 becomes 4, becomes 16, becomes 256, become 65,536. Which is also exactly how Jesus' model of discipleship worked. He started with twelve and told them to go and make disciples and they told their disciples to make disciples and on and on it spread.

THE COMMISSION

The goal now is not to spread, but it can be to position ourselves for it.

Jesus spent three years with his twelve before he sent them out to make their own disciples. We all of course feel that the world has slowed down. That progress in many different areas of our life has come to a halt. However a short time of deep investment could be exactly what is needed for us to be able to say like Joseph did in Genesis, that God is working on a future plan to save lives, even while the enemy is scheming to destroy them.

The leaders of Ashford have met and prayed together for the strategy and wisdom from the Holy Spirit. **In order to protect our community and honor our government, we will follow the restriction to not gather in large groups and postpone all church events and gatherings until official updates are released.**

However, The Church, as in the body of Christ, all of you, saints and worshippers, are not canceled.

"You are commissioned."

"Even if we are not able to meet in person, the pandemic has happened at a time where we can still stay connected."

We are encouraging all church members at this time to connect with nine other individuals and support each other through this time by keeping up with each other's situations, offering encouragement, and agreeing in prayer.

Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings we will be live streaming service and encourage you to get together with your group to watch, or connect afterwards over the phone or video calls to discuss, encourage, and build one another's faith.

You are all constantly in our prayers.

We love you and are here for you!

The Ashford Leadership Team

HOW CAN WE CONNECT?

To get in a group of ten you can:

1. Start with your household
2. Reach out to people you are already connected with in the church or who you think might not know who to reach out to
3. Get in contact with a church leader by calling the church office at 281-558-5683 between 10am-2pm, Monday through Thursday or send an email to office@ashfordcc.com anytime

To stay connected with your group you can:

1. Meet in small groups (unless stronger restrictions are released in the next few days)
2. Have an ongoing group message with texting or GroupMe
3. Use Zoom to do video calls
4. Group phone calls or FaceTime

If we are no longer able to provide church office hours we will send out contact information for a few of our pastors who will be available for phone calls and emails. We want to hear from you!

Ashford Community Church

281-558-5683

office@ashfordcc.com

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@ashfordcchouston
