

Dear Northfield Family

I am sure that many of you are wondering what is going to be happening at Northfield, particularly next week, Sunday the 7th June.

The ministry team, together with Northfield's leadership, had an online meeting yesterday to discuss what the president's address on Tuesday meant for us at Northfield, and I would like to give as much feedback as I can at the moment.

We are all torn by the decision of whether or not to open up our doors for worship. We are all filled with excitement at the possibility of worshipping together, and at the possibility of seeing those that we know have been plagued with loneliness, isolation and heartache. We are excited about the prospect of being together in this time when togetherness is so desperately needed. We are excited about the prospect of praising God together, praying together, and entering our beloved sanctuary together.

On the other hand, we are overwhelmed with the sense of whether or not this is responsible. We are plagued by the "what ifs" and the reality that we are called to do no harm, to do good and to love God. We wrestle with whether or not opening our doors is going to do more harm or more good, especially considering that we are living in Ekurhuleni where the infection rate is dangerously high. We wrestle with the question of how to manage the opening of our doors, knowing that many of us cannot wait to go back to worship, yet worship wouldn't be what we know. We wouldn't be allowed to greet, sing or embrace, yet the temptation would be to take the risk for the sake of our love for friends we haven't seen in so long. We also wrestle with the concept of meeting people's needs, knowing that many people have suffered deeply from isolation, depression, hopelessness and loneliness. We know that to live with these does great harm to one's wellbeing, and we are aware that corporate worship creates a sense of togetherness, oneness and connection with God and others, that helps ease the burden of these realities. These are some of the issues that we are engaging with deeply as a leadership of Northfield. I have to admit that we don't have all the answers yet, we are still in a process of discernment. We are waiting for official communication from MCSA as well as other confirmation around the exact rules and regulations.

So I need to say that we do not feel that we at Northfield are quite ready to open our doors on 7 June in a responsible way. This does not necessarily mean that we will not be meeting indefinitely, it simply means that this is still a work in progress. We cannot take this decision lightly and so we humbly request that you give us more time to pray, plan and implement a way forward.

The one decision that we have made, however, is that we will continue with our online services even when Northfield does gather in person again to worship. We have found a tremendous gift given to us by God's grace in this season, that many of our family who are far and wide across the world have been able to connect with us through our online worship. This has been an unexpected gift that we will continue with. God has been so good to us.

In the meantime, may we be reminded that God's presence fills every space. This week, may we take an opportunity to walk outside and feel God's presence. May we take the time to contact someone we love and feel God's presence. May we take the time to listen to a song and feel God's presence. May we take the time to read the Bible and feel God's presence. May we take the time to listen to someone's words and feel God's presence. May we take the time to be still and feel God's presence. May we take the time to pray and feel God's presence. May we take the time to laugh and feel God's presence. May we take the time to cry and feel God's presence. May we know the truth of the words of Paul in Romans 8:35-39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep



to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

Love and Blessings,
Louise Wernich