

Dear Northfield Family

I hope and pray that you are blessed and that you have known God's presence in this season. I wanted to give everyone some feedback as to what the situation at Northfield is currently.

As I look back over the last 6 weeks there is one verse that stands out for me more than any other verse:

*Ephesians 3:20 "Now to Him (God) who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us".*

At the beginning of the lockdown I shared some of my anxiety with a close friend of mine. I told her how concerned I was because of all the staff salaries we pay at Northfield, John Wesley Community Centre and John Wesley Pre-school. I shared my anxiety of how would we ever be able to continue feeding over 300 people a day when the church's doors are closed. I was anxious about our finances, knowing that at Northfield we have struggled financially for years and last year we hit "rock bottom". Through all of this anxiety and fear there was one thing that was clear for our ministry team at Northfield. We are called by God to serve the most vulnerable and to spread the gospel. So we decided we would do "whatever we can, to the best of our ability, for as long as we possibly can". That is what we decided to do.

It has been an interesting journey, and if you have followed us online I'm sure you would have seen the videos, the photos, the comments, the sermons, the cycle challenge, the children's moments, the worship and so much more. It hasn't always been easy (one day we will release a video of the many recording mishaps), but today, over 6 weeks later, I am astounded at how wonderful and faithful our Father is. I am overwhelmed, and He has done immeasurably more than I could ever have asked for or imagined. The story of the feeding of the 5 000 has come to mind. God has taken the little we had to offer and He has multiplied it ten-fold. Now we still cannot gather, but we can worship, we still cannot come to the office every day, but we can feed thousands. We have had more unity with other churches and organisations than ever before, and we have received donations for Covid-19 relief from people and organisations far and wide. God has been so, so GOOD.

Financially we expected to struggle in the months to come for number of reasons:

- Not being able to gather as a congregation has meant a loss of income through weekly offerings.
- There are members in our church who have not received full salaries, many have not been able to work, and some have been retrenched, which affects tithing.
- The uncertainty of the future has made people more careful with their spending. Which is wise in this season.
- Some of our members have been unable to give online or have no access to online payment methods.

Having said this though, I have been tremendously moved by people's generosity. March was one of our best months financially that we have had here at Northfield for a long time. In April, people have found ways of giving through EFTs or Snapscan. I have been moved by people who have tithed more than usual, I have been moved by people who have tithed whatever they can, I have been moved by the many donations of food, clothing, and money that has come through the gates of Northfield. One example is that we received and distributed over 1.5 tons of mushrooms. I was particularly moved by the initiative of Courtney Kerr who cycled 1 000 kms in his living room, to raise funds for Covid-19 relief at Northfield. I often thought that if I was to cycle 1000 kms (which wouldn't happen), it would be over months, and I would want it to end at some remote beach... People have been so generous, and some have gone through the effort of donating a few rand online. It reminds me of the widows mite, and how they gave all they could, which is worth more than all the gold in the world. God has done immeasurably more than I could ever hope for or imagine.

We made some drastic decisions over the month of April, and stopped as many payments and expenses as we could. We have had to take some payment holidays on previous debts and gone into debt on some accounts. All of these measures, together with your generosity, has meant that for April we were able to pay our staff their salaries. We are aware that these are temporary measures and that we will have to make some more decisions as time goes by. We are also aware that the longer restriction impact church life, the greater the financial challenge will become. Finally we are aware that the more the economy of South Africa declines the more this will affect all of us, as an organisation and as individuals.

Therefore I ask that if you are able to give to Northfield, please continue. We have various ways in which you can give including:

- EFT
- Snapscan

I ask that you would also continue to pray for us at Northfield. Pray for our leadership team and ministers that we would make decisions that are “God honouring, people growing, and fully surrendered to Christ”, especially as the need continues to grow.

I ask that if you know of any needs within our community that you would pass these on to us. The ministry we are currently offering is:

- Ministry of food distribution. If you know of someone who needs food, please let us know and we can see what we can do. If you have food to offer, please connect with us.
- Ministry of care and connection. If you know of someone who is lonely or isolated, please let us know.
- Ministry of counselling and pastoral care. If you know of someone who needs counselling or prayer or a pastor, please let us know.
- Worship services. These are still going to be online, please join us as often as you can, share our services and engage with us online. Let us continue to be church even when we aren’t “at church”.

Please watch your neighbours and your families (in a loving, not creepy way). Reach out to those that you have seen at Church and are missing, even if you hardly know each other. Let us continue to worship God in Spirit and in Truth in whatever way possible.

Love and blessings

Louise Wernich