



<https://www.wevideo.com/view/1700790712>

What will our “new normal” look like for our community?

Part 1 ***"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Is 43:19).***

Across the globe much is closed, including churches, but there are signs that this will come to an end soon. But for now, millions of brothers and sisters have been unable to physically take part in the celebration of coming together for weeks and may not be able to again for some time. In the middle of this frightening pandemic, it is a good mental health exercise to think about life after it is under control as we in every aspect of our lives have experienced massive changes, uncertainties and loss of control. What will the "new normal" be? After all, there is no moratorium on our Gospel responsibilities.

At the end of Albert Camus' *The Plague*, the remarkable Dr. Rieux realizes that as the plague recedes, the survivors will honor their dead and return to normal life as if nothing happened, even though the virus could come back anytime.

What will be **our** "new normal" shape be? I hope the value of church ministries will be much clearer. I hope the value of church life together will become much clearer. After all, the COVID-19 pandemic response of the different governments will not bring the 70-plus million forcibly displaced people in our world home. Those responses, as important as they may be, cannot derail the church's mission of dignity and full human life for our neighbours and ourselves.

Simply put, although the coronavirus pandemic is fundamentally changing how we do church, at least for now, it can bring clarity to us what it means

to be church, to be a person of hope, to be an Easter person. That is to say, the church, as the body of Christ will not fundamentally change but will we look different to the world?

Other related questions are; What could this new look, this reshaping mean for us in the long-term, this “new normal”? How will it affect us in the years to come, well after the initial threat of the pandemic has passed?

The coronavirus pandemic has literally stopped us from our usual routine of close physical presence, from shaking hands and the occasional hug. It even silenced our singing. That lack of physical presence to each other may become even more obvious when we read Scripture ... Jesus and his followers belong together, they are in close proximity to each other. They express their hope, their faith in community. I miss this aspect of the life of the church deeply. But this time has allowed us to stop and think, to stop and listen, to stop and just be.

This time can still become a gift to us, and by that, a gift to the world, if we listen and are open to a new future. However, what we think we know about the past can make it difficult to see what is actually here, right in front of us. And so the question; What would it take for us to break out of the box of our own false imagination? Perhaps it is the word that was spoken in the past that can be heard afresh, and so opening us up to new thoughts?

A new thought; We would all be starving if not for the grocery-store stockers. The farm workers. The maintenance staff everywhere. The nurses, the intake staff at hospitals. Without the support people be it nursing homes or hospitals. Suddenly the value of the migration worker as asset becomes obvious, but what about as equal? The coronavirus has cast the mighty from their offices and hopefully not just for a short moment lifted up the dignity and irreplaceability of those we thought were “lowly” workers, yet we found them to be essential.

This lesson about who matters — those in need — and whom we admire [or is it what we admire?] — those who serve — can have lasting impacts on the church's social life and therefore its mission.

In more ways than I could have imagined, our present crisis has revealed what and who is essential. Our confinement and anxiety have also revealed how much of what we thought was essential to our well-being was supplementary, decorative or even detrimental. How will this new view of the essentials affect the church, or to be clear how will it affect our lives as God's people as neighbours? the question of; "Who is more important than

what is more important!" And so the what is important for the people of God differs or should differ from the world.

My hope for the church as it emerges from the era of COVID-19 is that we rediscover and learn to value what is essential to the faith: whom we love.

Church of God at Camrose • 780 672 3461 • ccog@camrosechurchofgod.ca • 4722 55
Street Camrose, Alberta T4V 2B6
Don't want these kinds of emails? [Unsubscribe](#).