

## **ELDER COVID UPDATE DECEMBER 2020**

As we prepare for the close of 2020, we want to take a few moments to encourage you on where we have been and where we are going as a church body. We have come through one of the most tumultuous times in recent history for both our nation and our church. While these times have stretched us as a church family, we are also encouraged at what God has done in our midst.

Some have asked for clarity on our position as a church as we consider the political, social and public health challenges of the last year. While we have addressed these questions over the course of the year (see *COVID-19 Resources* in the [church app](#) for past communications), our current *Sermon on the Mount* series (Matthew 5-7) is foundational for how we are seeking to navigate this time as a church and as individual followers of Jesus. Jesus' words in this series are the best expression of who we want to be and what we want to do as a church body during this and all seasons.

Indeed, we have seen God ministering to our anxiety and teaching us again and again to trust him for our church family (Matt 6:33-34). Here are some specific ways we have seen God at work in our midst:

- God has provided for and protected West Hills during a year of lockdowns and social upheaval. We have not lacked for financial needs and have been able to continue our ministry to our local area and around the world. God is truly the great provider.
- God has given us favor with the City of Morgan Hill as we move forward with our requested zoning change. We are working with the City on being part of an access solution for the El Toro trail system. This benefits our community and helps us meet the requirements for a zoning change to move forward with our building project.
- God has given the churches in the South Valley influence and favor with government decision makers in things like including singing in approved worship activities and having larger outdoor gatherings. These provisions were directly connected to input from West Hills and other local church leaders.
- God provided us with the ability to quickly adapt to this new reality both in our online presence and our ongoing in-person gatherings which restarted in July 2020. Our leadership team has been able to work creatively and prayerfully to continue the ministry God has called us to.
- God has allowed us to minister to significant needs as a church family. Not only has our food ministry continued, but we have increased our focus on youth having added Elliot Goldinger earlier in 2020 to our ministry team. We have been blessed as a leadership team to provide prayer, encouragement and biblical counseling throughout these very trying times.

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As we look to the new year, our desire is to live out the things we are learning from the *Sermon on the Mount*. These will equip us well for whatever we face in 2021...be it a return to normal or continued trials.

Here are some of the areas we want to focus on as we prepare our hearts for the new year:

- Living out kingdom qualities empowered by God as we interact with our government, our culture and each other (Matt 5:2-12).
- Being fully committed to God's kingdom over the kingdoms of this world or our own wants, demands or fears. Fighting for this in humble prayer and submission to our good God (Matt 6:9-15).
- Embracing God's absolute control of our reality, rejecting fear and fighting for faith (Matt 6:25-34).
- Trusting God to be at work in each other's lives and fighting our sinful tendency to judge others and not ourselves (Matt 7:1-5).
- Measuring everything we do through God's Word. There is so much confusion and a multitude of voices that would steal our joy and provide us things to be angry and worried about. Instead, we build our lives on the only safe source of truth, Scripture (Matt 7:24-27).

We recognize we are in a time of extremes that can easily take us into error when we set our eyes on the things of earth and not Jesus. The reality is that the kingdom of God is not built by our opinions about masks, vaccines or political parties. We each must draw our own conclusions about those and other areas, while keeping them subject to God's greater call of humble love for God and others (Romans 14, Philippians 2).

We would love to hear from you about questions you may have and help you process your reality through the lens of Scripture. We would also encourage you to communicate to us any needs you or someone you know might have, whether it be physical, spiritual or financial. We want to be faithful in living out the calling of the church to love one another in the now as we navigate these difficult times.

May we continue to move through this as a church family united in Jesus!

- *The West Hills Morgan Hill Elders*