

A photograph of empty wooden pews in a church, viewed from a low angle looking down the aisle. The pews are dark wood with curved ends, and the floor is covered in a light-colored carpet. The lighting is soft, creating a quiet and somewhat somber atmosphere.

# Church Ministry During Covid-19

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A close-up, artistic rendering of several Covid-19 virus particles. The particles are spherical with a light-colored, textured surface and are covered in numerous small, red, triangular protrusions representing the viral proteins. The background is a soft, out-of-focus purple and pink hue.

**The Story of  
Parkdale Evangelical  
Free Church  
in 2020**





- “Best kept secret” – located in quiet neighborhood near city center (see map)
- Revitalization – small congregation like a church plant, becoming diverse
- Also hosts a large daycare, AA groups and Mandarin church





The background is a painting of a vast desert scene. In the foreground, a large, diverse crowd of people is shown, many wearing traditional robes and head coverings. They are moving across a sandy, hilly landscape. In the distance, a large, fortified city or fortress with high walls and towers is visible on a hill. The overall color palette is dominated by earthy tones like browns, tans, and blues, with some brighter colors in the clothing of the people.

February-May

Into Exile

# Observations

## February

- Few from the Mandarin church showed up for our joint potluck for Chinese New Year

## Friday, March 13

- restrictions issued in BC
- Cancel Spring Break travel
- Schools and stores closed
- Playground & provincial parks closed
- Gatherings of 50 allowed





# Perceptions

Virtually all churches voluntarily stop meeting  
(we're all in this storm together)

**Various church responses** (but we're in  
different boats)

- Large churches – livestream, fairly consistent
- Medium churches – recording, small groups
- Small churches – less prepared; sink or swim

**Various individual responses**

- Weather the storm – submit to restrictions  
(we'll get through this)
- There is no storm – resistance to change,  
even in the short term

**Ethical struggle – love for one another  
redefined**



# Reflections

## Ecclesiastes 3:1

There is a **time** for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens...

*What is it time for?*

## Jeremiah 29:4-7

<sup>4</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into **exile** from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup> “Build houses and **settle down**; plant gardens...Marry and have sons and daughters...**Increase** in number there; do not decrease. <sup>7</sup> Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will **prosper**.”

*How can we learn & grow in new ways?*



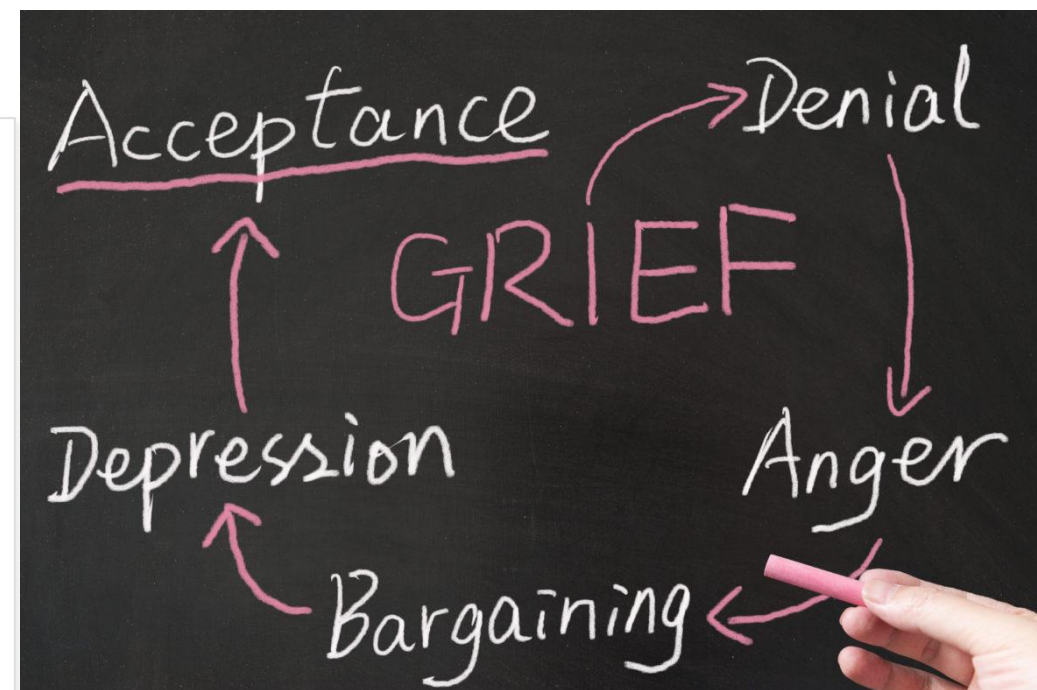


# Response

Time to **process** – 5 stages of grief

**Parkdale** – recognize who we are, do what we do best, why people are here

- Like an extended family
- Zoom – see each other, interact, simple to operate, connect from afar
- Emphasize connection, rather than quality product or quantity reached
- Start using **breakout rooms** – interaction!



A close-up photograph of a hand wearing a grey work glove, resting on a red brick wall. The hand is positioned on top of a brick, with fingers slightly curled. The background shows more bricks and mortar, slightly out of focus.

May-August

Return & Rebuild



# Observations, Perceptions

## **BC a “success case”**

- In BC – Covid cases plummet, none on Island
- Only 1 death/day for first 8 months of pandemic
- Restrictions lift in May/June – schools, stores, parks
- Still a limit of 50 for church gatherings

## **People slow to reengage – fear has set in**

- Now, with choice, divisions of opinion begin to form

## **New stats about rising overdoses, unemployment**

- Spiritual hunger – loneliness, searching for hope

***How to love, in these times?***



# Reflections

## How to love: sins of omission & commission

- “do no harm” vs. “love is a verb”
- Government tells us what not to do, but Jesus tells us what to do

## Series through Acts – learn from the Early Church

- Changes – settling in, not want to go back
- Can't imagine giving up new online connections, interactive style

**Ephesians 5:15-16** – Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.





# Response

## **Early adopters of opportunities given**

- Recognize needs – people desperate for connection
- Worksafe plan - studying health orders, do all we can within legal limits

## **Hybrid model of church – something for everyone**

- Complicated – preaching to live audience & laptop
- Zoom projected on screen – still “all together”


## **Time to rest, equip others**

- Felt like a one-man show for months, now train others
- Bring guest speakers, vacation with family

## **Rebuilding and preparing for the fall**

- Re-introducing coffee, live singing, Sunday School with new health measures





September-November

Fruitful & Multiply





# Observations, Perceptions

**BC – most kids return to school, people to work**

- More churches beginning to reopen

**Parkdale – “up & running” after preparation in summer**

- Small groups, recovery ministry, Sunday school, music
- Feels like we’ve gained during the pandemic

**Time of harvest: 3 baptisms**

- One – a result of time off to study with husband
- Two newcomers to town, finding community with us



# Reflections, Response

## **Feeling good, starting to compare to others**

- Concerned for some churches who struggle to reopen
- Feeling fortunate to be small

## **Offering help & support**

- Local ministerial
- Tenants in church – getting them restarted
- Welcoming in a “homeless” church

## **A time of busyness – season of harvest**

- Teaching a class, taking a class
- Time for doing, less time for reflection



# November-Present

*Now, What?*



# Observations

## **November – second wave hits BC (cases & deaths climb)**

- Restrictions begin in Vancouver, then temporarily everywhere
- First time gatherings are fully banned (in churches and home)
- Masks were "expected," then "required"

## **Confusion with inconsistency – about masks, gatherings**

- Churches closed here; open in Washington, Alberta
- Schools, restaurants, recovery groups remain open





# Perceptions

## **Frustration – hard work not rewarded**

- Felt lack of trust from government & for them
- Basic rights of assembly & speech
- Sense of loss – no options given – from safety guidelines to total shut-down

## **Fear – of the virus or government?**

- Rising cases and rising restrictions; elections bring controversy to forefront
- Some defy orders, some protest, write letters
- Division is incarnated – obey or not

## **Despair – Stats Canada & stories**

- More overdose deaths than Covid in BC, 2020
- Stories of suicide (young men) and elderly people giving up



# Reflections

## *What hill should we die on?*

- **Acts 5:29** – “We must obey God rather than human beings!”
- Hebrew midwives (**Exodus 1**)
- Daniel & friends (**Daniel 3, 6**)
- **1 Peter 2:13-15** – Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority... For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.

## **Culture Making – conflict/conform vs. create/cultivate**

- Fight/flight – but called to be in world, not of it
- Let go of Christendom – called to create own culture – *but what should it be like?*





# Response

## Creativity with Community

- World, future can be overwhelming; not responsible to change it
- Focus on local – create culture here & now
- *What has God given me to do, where I'm planted, with what I have?*
- Finding ways to minister, fellowship – walks, serving together, recovery groups
- Caring for family, friends, most vulnerable
- New partnerships with other churches

## EFCC Motto – Unity, Charity, Jesus Christ

- Focus where it matters most, on what brings us together
- Create space for diversity, show compassion for other side
- Series on **1 John** – Walking as Jesus did



*And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace.*

*"The virgin will  
be with child  
and will give  
birth to a son,  
and they will  
call him  
Immanuel"  
which means,  
"God with us."  
matt 1:23*

*Wise men still seek Him*

HOPE

JOY P





# Questions

- How have you and others around you **dealt with grief** during this time? Has it resulted in any new perspective?
- How was **love redefined** during the pandemic? Was it difficult? How have you and others adapted?
- Overall, do you feel that you and your ministry have **lost or gained** during the pandemic? What is the most significant way?
- How have your people related to their culture during this time? Has there been any **polarization or division**? How have you responded?
- What has been **constant** for you through this time? Do you have a sense at this moment of where God is calling you to **focus**?

