



March 24, 2020

Dear FOL,

I write to you today from the home office. It's always been a multi-purpose space for prayer, meetings, and the daily flow of staff. Now it has also become a classroom for the kids and the backdrop for our Sunday services and Wednesday Digital Discipleship. My how things have changed in a short amount of time.

God is at work in the midst of the chaos and uncertainty of our daily lives. It's an important moment for FOL, and for the Church as a whole. Will we take on a bunker mentality? Or will we take opportunities to love our neighbors whether they are next door or online? Will we respond with grace as we adjust to the new reality of the next few months? The Holy Spirit will help us and give us wisdom.

As we begin to settle into a new normal, I wanted to update you on what we are doing as a church and offer a few ways for you to respond.

- **Mobile Life Groups:** At the moment, we have more than 80 people signed up for Mobile Life Groups, not including many people from our Spanish-language Life Groups. (Benny, Caroline, and Claudia are reaching out directly to sign people up.) We plan to begin the groups this week, so if you have not signed up, but would like to participate, please go to: <http://bit.ly/FOLMobileLG> as soon as possible.
- **Food and Supplies for Neighbors:** West Long Beach has been hit hard by early layoffs, loss of income and a shortage of food and supplies. Many of our neighbors don't have the resources to stockpile food, toilet paper, diapers, and other essentials. I'm grateful to those of you who have responded by giving monetary gifts and giving food and supplies.

If you would like to donate, you can [give online](#) and mark your gift "COVID-19 Compassion." If you would like to donate in other ways, please email [emily@folcov.org](mailto:emily@folcov.org). Emily and our team have done an outstanding job of creating a system to evaluate needs and meet those needs quickly.

- **Sunday Service:** My heart is filled with a great ache as I think of our Sundays. I deeply miss our community worship, hearing from God together, and encouraging one another in person. Thanks for joining us on [Facebook Live!](#) I wish I could see you in person and hear Chef Julie's "amens." Thank you for your patience as we work out details, especially the quality of our video stream. We intend to have that fixed by Sunday. Thank you also to Hannah, Claudia, and the rest of the translation team for helping in this crucial ministry.
- **Evangelism:** I cannot remember a time when the evangelism door was open wider. Our friends can respond and experience Word and Worship by clicking on a link. But more importantly, they are afraid. They are asking profound questions. They are surrounded by bad news. They need good news. Will you boldly and broadly proclaim the gospel light? I have been so encouraged by West Long Beach neighbors, and more than a few of my friends from high school, who have been eager responding to the good news. Be bold, FOL!
- **Digital Discipleship:** We will continue our Wednesday night meetings at 7:00 pm. This week, we will continue our time in the Lord's Prayer.
- **Youth Groups:** James and the team launched Zoom meetings complete with at-home scavenger hunts for high school and middle school youth groups. They are also exploring ways to continue ministering to the Cabrillo High School students who are part of the 5000 Pies Club.
- **Family Center:** The priority for the first week of school closures was to serve as a hub for food distribution and delivery, and informing Tutoring and ESL families about local resources, such as Chromebooks from LBUSD and free WiFi from Spectrum for 60 days. We will announce new online learning opportunities for Tutoring and ESL students.

- **5000 Pies:** Business is slow and large catering events have been canceled. We are exploring ways to offer low-cost staples (such as eggs and tortillas) to our West Long Beach neighbors. Please pray for us as we navigate the perilous waters of being an inner-city social enterprise in the middle of a viral lockdown.

These are difficult times and our regular lives have been disrupted. I fear that this is only the beginning. There will likely be great pain and loss ahead. The days ahead may prove to be among the most challenging in our nation's history.

But whatever is in store, the Living God is sovereign. He has never promised his people easy or safe lives. To the contrary, he has promised us narrow and difficult roads, filled with a cross that promises pain and suffering. We are uniquely positioned to live out our faith in the week, month, and years ahead.

May we follow the Light closely. The darkness will not win.

In Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John', written in a cursive style.

Pastor John