

E-READ

The General Conference of the New Church **Articles and Letters**

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A Community Response

by Revd Jack Dunion, Spiritual Leader

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’”

Matt. 9:36-38 (NIV)

By now there will be very few people under any illusions regarding the seriousness of the situation the world is facing right now. A virus, which started off as a problem in the far East, travelled around the world and gained a foothold in Europe, has now become a clear and present

danger for each and every one of us. There are deep and highly treasured theological and doctrinal reasons, known and fully explained to our ministry, and thereby known within our church, as to why the Lord in His Divine Providence would allow such a thing to happen or be unable to prevent the circumstances we see unfolding before us today in our world. There will be a time and a place for sharing such treasured and important knowledge with a world which, for a time at least, and in the future, will become highly receptive of such wonderful knowledge.

However, I ask you to consider that now is not the time for people to hear such deep and profound knowledge but rather a time in which they need to see it in action! I am here in Glasgow and I have joined a Facebook group which has sprung up out of my hometown of Dumbarton and Vale of Leven, and which has gained 5800 members

within 48 hours. There are organisers, administrators, taxi drivers, teachers, local business people and many, many ordinary people who are helping the sick, the elderly, those with young children and those with underlying medical conditions. Some are delivering medication, some seeking out and delivering food and baby formula, some are visiting and reassuring and others are poised to respond to whatever situation they are called to respond to. There is sharing of information which is extremely reassuring for many people. Some of the comments on that sight are literally bringing me to tears, I will quote here just a sample of what is being said: *"thank you so much to all you good people, my neighbour just had some home-made soup delivered by a complete stranger, thank, thank you thank you so much"..... "I was frightened and didn't know what to do before I found this site and it's giving me such a warm feeling to know you are all doing this".....*; just a couple of examples of the impact that community action is having in my area. One of the founding members commented: *"I am overwhelmed by the support and good wishes"*.

One of the advantages of people not being able to go to work is that the community then becomes full of people who have all the skills required to set up and mobilise a huge relief effort. A management committee has been organised and they have met for the first time yesterday. I.D. badges are being produced, an emergency fund is being set up, local food banks are being utilised and topped up with food as they are already organised and equipped to properly vet and regulate fair distribution; it's incredible! And it is moving very fast. There is a will within the management committee to form a template which be rolled out over the country as this initiative will be transferable and able to be set up in other communities, with one perhaps giving rise to another.

IF and when our churches are unable to meet and we find ourselves having time to spare, I suggest that linking with such a group in your own area, or in any other area for that matter, would provide a temporary focus for our faith, and enable it to be seen in action. Those who are unable to be active can facilitate in other ways, even if it is in presenting opportunities for others to help and feel useful to help them find a way through this current crisis and feel they are contributing. So even if we are unable to get involved in an active way, we can provide strength and inspiration to others in some small way.

I know the above is perhaps an unusual call to action, but these are not ordinary times. The time will come when explanations will be sought and a time will come for answers to be given. But for now I feel that it is a time for action. I ask you also to consider the Lord's life on earth and the way in which He responded to the needs of His people and how they responded to Him. If we feel compassion for people it is like a gentle nudge from the Lord to respond in some way, one which we should never ignore. May the Lord truly be with you in the coming days, weeks and months ahead.