



MATTHEW 22:36-40

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

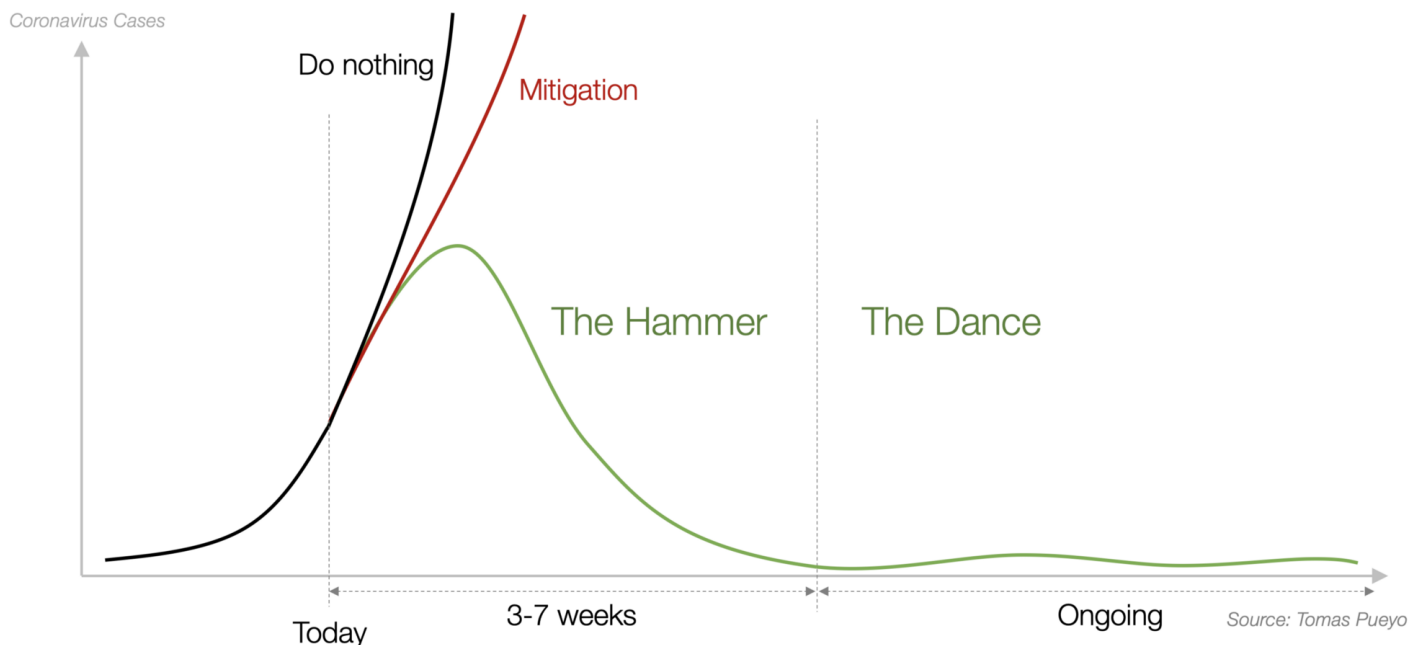
Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

GROWING IN HOPE TOGETHER THROUGH JESUS

As a church community we are committed to growing in our relationship with Jesus. This has looked different for the past year, but we are looking forward to gathering again in greater numbers again. This is not about ‘getting back to church’ since we have been doing church for the past year. We know that there are some people who have grown in their discipleship and who they are in Jesus over the past year and have a renewed sense of the growth that can take place in their household. These people may be eager to serve in new ways. We also recognize there will be some people who are worn out from a year that has been exhausting for a variety of reasons. Our hope is to provide opportunities of service and connection for all at Living Hope.

The following is meant to give a general outline of what we have planned for the summer and then for the upcoming year. It is our hope that this outline gives opportunities to live into love of God and love of neighbour as Matthew 22 outlines. We

want to continue to think of what ways God is calling us to show love and worship of him as well as ways we can be show love to our neighbours. COVID has brought what feels like many set-backs but we have also learned new skills, and changed for the good along the way. A question we want the church to be considering as we look into the new year is: What are we called to carry forward into the next year? Alongside that we can also be asking, What do we want to leave behind?



From [“Coronavirus: The Hammer & the Dance”](#) by Thomas Pueyo. | The Hammer is the quick and aggressive act to quench this virus by the implementing social/physical distancing measures. The Dance will be an ongoing ebb and flow and long-term efforts to keep the virus contained until there’s a vaccine.

It is important that as we begin to gather that we recognize that as a community we will need to build trust, grieve losses, and celebrate accomplishments and new life together. This has been a major disruption for many of us. Not just for our social rhythms but for our Spiritual lives and how we connect as a church. While it may not be a trauma for most of us, I have found this graph (pictured below) to give a helpful image to consider as we look towards gathering in greater numbers again.

Where would you place Living Hope as a community?

Where would you put yourself?

If you consider yourself amongst the thriving – what might you be able to do to help those who are struggling?

If you are struggling – how might the church community be able to help you through?

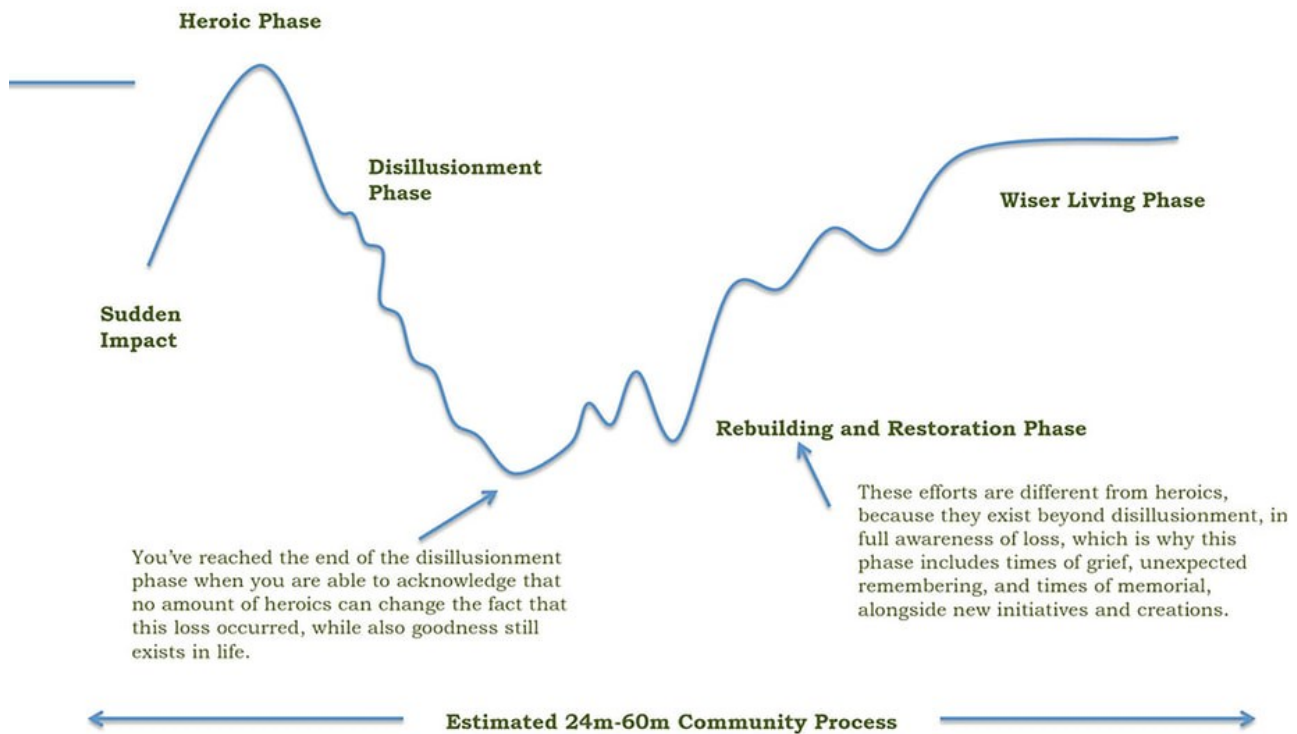
Throughout this time, we have suggested that we have had a collective disruption at the very least – and that this will take time for us to recover from. Our target is to work through this well so that we can truly be a thriving congregation as we move forward.

PLAN FOR THE SUMMER

Beyond the Sunday services, we have a target of having one extra event per month, as we did last year. This will be through our Lord’s Supper services, Worship Night, and a Canada Day celebration.

We also have begun Sanctuary Mental Health Sessions which will run into the summer. This is because mental health is one of the things we have identified as a priority in caring for church members and the greater community. Sanctuary Mental Health is an organization geared towards equipping ourselves to have more conversations around what it means to care for and love those with mental health challenges.

Phases of Collective Trauma Response



From [The Institute for Collective Trauma and Growth](#). | According to the ICTG, “this chart is a visual guide, designed to aid conversations about collective trauma response. For some, it reminds them of a ‘heart beat.’ For others, it provides initial language for beginning to articulate their own personal experience, which may or may not be similar to what is depicted here. “

“Generally, the four phases listed on the charts tend to take 24-60 months for a community to process through. It is important to recognize that the healing of each group is a unique experience, and that this visual aid is simply a tool to see general patterns. It is not prescriptive, but simply a guide.”

4 STEPS/STAGES

In our previous document we had 3 steps that we expected to be working through throughout the pandemic. We called it “3 steps (plus one)” because we planned to be ‘dancing the three step’ between the three main steps for a long time with the anticipation that we would work to the fourth step eventually. On May 25, 2021 the province gave us an updated 4 step plan of opening the province. The 4 step plan below outlines how the church plans to respond to each step. This coincides well with our previous 4 step plan and it gives an estimate of how long it will take as long as there are no setbacks.

STEP 1 | JOINING WORSHIP AT CHURCH



Joining the Livestream provided by the church, if able.
50 people for in-person services.

STEP 2 | GATHERED DISCIPLESHIP



Joining the Livestream, if able, and 50 people for in-person services.
Mid-week events and gatherings may be possible at the church.

STEP 3 | INCREASED ATTENDANCE



Joining the Livestream, if able, and **more than 50** people for in-person services.
Continued possibility of mid-week gatherings at the church

STEP 4 | THRIVING AFTER THE COVID-19 DANCE



Full congregation invited back to sanctuary with some people still meeting at home if they have a need to continue physical distancing.
Ministries begin to transition into full and regular gatherings.

- 1 JOINING WORSHIP AT CHURCH** | This is the one we are currently in. We are allowed to have 50 people for our indoor gatherings.
- 2 GATHERED DISCIPLESHIP** | The second stage, according to the documentation, does not show any changes. There is the possibility that the numbers would increase for indoor gatherings. This will allow events like council meetings, and small group gatherings to happen once again provided they follow the protocol.
- 3 INCREASED ATTENDANCE** | During this stage there is an increased numbers permitted to be gathering. We would adjust our attendance procedures during this time, transitioning to a new sign-up system. This sign-up system would have a small number of people still invited by the district, but would rely largely on the members of the congregation to sign up through the form provided.
Provided facilities staff are around and the room is available, this would also be a time where small groups could book a room.
- 4 THRIVING AFTER THE COVID-19 DANCE** | This is a return to the option of full attendance in our sanctuary and resuming children's ministry for our services. There will still be guidelines to help us transition well. We recognize that there will be families and individuals who will continue worshiping online for a time because of health concerns.



THE YEAR AHEAD

As we noted earlier, some people will be needing to rest and recover, yet we also see that there are exciting opportunities as we move forward. Gatherings like GEMS, Cadets, Youth, and Young at Heart will be able to happen and there will be opportunities to serve in these ministries. There will also be the possibility for having events like the Harvest Party and Christmas Carnival again. We look forward to the range of opportunities ahead of us: from hikes and bike rides, to community skating, and the church campout. For now, here are three major things that we are looking forward to in the new year!

1. SEPTEMBER KICKOFF

The next major events that we have planned will be our kickoff service on September 12. This will be followed by another big kickoff event on September 19, the following Sunday evening. This evening event will be put on by the same group that put together Worship on the Mountain Event, and we are hoping to have people in attendance for a time of outdoor worship together.

2. SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

We are planning on having two set times in the church year where we encourage new small groups to form and equip existing small groups with material. During these set times we will provide materials that coincide with our sermon series. Existing small groups will have the option in joining this discussion, and new groups will be encouraged to form to join this conversation. The main goal is to provide a space for people to gather in fellowship together. This will happen in a context that also gives a space for deeper engagement with what we are learning together as a church family.

We will offer one session in early October, right after kickoff. The other session will be in late January, right after the new year. Each set of small group materials would be set for 4-6 sessions. We will have more to announce about what the topics will be as we get closer to those dates. We look forward to small groups being able to meet again and hope that this will be a rich part of life at Living Hope!

3. GROWING TOGETHER SESSIONS

Looking even further ahead - in early May we are planning 4 Sunday evening sessions. This is a time where we encourage small groups to be put on hold, and we can meet together as a church community! Our hope is that we can offer a range of topics that people can engage with on these evenings. In addition, this can be a time where we get to know people in the congregation better as we have a time to mix our regular groupings. We hope this can be a place where we can exemplify what it means to be a congregation that is growing in hope together through Jesus!

If you have any questions or concerns – you can contact Pastor Steve at steve@livinghopeccr.ca

LIVING HOPE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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