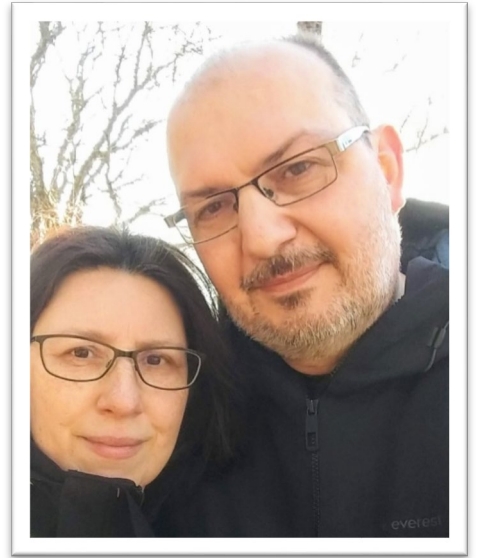


SEPTEMBER 2020



'And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.' Acts 2:42

Dear friends and mission partners,

At the beginning of the year we finally moved to Åkersberga, just in time before the pandemic lockdown. Even though the lockdown looked a little different for us in Sweden, we still could not go to church, couldn't see our friends and family and all our ministries moved to Zoom. Both of us had to work from home but luckily we have a spare room that we can use as an office. We thank God for his provision.

'They were devoted to...fellowship'

We started our online services in March and, as we were preaching through the book of Acts, some interesting questions came to us concerning church and fellowship in these troublesome corona days. The early Church was devoted to fellowship (amongst other important things). The words 'being together, breaking bread and caring for each other' are repeated throughout the passages, showing us that fellowship and care is important and is a characteristic of a healthy church. So how should we go about these days, as this might still be difficult for a while longer?



Zoom/online ministry

Though technology is a blessing to us, we still need to tread carefully and wisely in how we are going to use it and how much. Even now, as Emmaus church slowly picks up its meetings in person, will everyone feel safe to come to public worship? And the even bigger question is for long-term outreach and evangelism, as people might not feel safe to come. We came to the conclusion that from now on we need to do both: worship in person and continue a live broadcast of the service. We chose to do this through Zoom and to provide further fellowship for those that are staying home. Online ministry is here to stay, whether we like it or not.

We talked to several other ministers about how they felt about the whole situation and the online services and we asked them how it was affecting them and their churches. Some were quite cheerful and didn't mind being online and thought it was exciting. Some already had an online presence even

before corona so for them it was just business as usual with minor adjustments. But we quickly realised that not every minister feels comfortable being online – most were not so positive.

One minister said they were live broadcasting through YouTube but did not know how many people were actually listening to the services as they did not have any personal contact, nor received any feedback. They had difficulties staying in touch with members of the church and in meeting people's actual needs during lockdown. Other ministers did not do any online ministry at all and asked their members to follow the online services of their partner churches.

Some leaders fear that their members might not want to continue to come to services in person as they feel consuming worship online is better and more comfortable. Also, some churches are blessed with people that are into technology and can serve in those ministries but others are not. Then there is the question of getting the right equipment, which might overburden the church budget. Many also are facing a decline in giving. It is not so strange then that many ministers have been burned out through this crisis.

What about Emmaus Church?

For many reasons we fared well. Firstly, we do not own our own building so we could quickly adapt to doing worship services online through Zoom and save money on rent. We even added new members during the online period and got new visitors. Praise the Lord!

Since we are less than 50 people, we could start meeting in person early in August. We did not really have any real online presence before COVID-19. We did record our sermons but those were uploaded onto our sermon library behind a password, for our members and frequent visitors to listen to if they missed a Sunday. We still think church is crucial and we encourage our members to be part of the local church and attend Sunday services, rather than only listening online. Sadly this is becoming more and more popular and convenient these days.

Post-corona

What the future will look like, post corona, is hard to tell. We do not yet know when it all will end. But as a church our mission is clear: to preach the gospel, to not neglect our fellowship, to be wise and to adapt to the situation, so that the gospel is not slandered. Our prayer is that the Lord will give us the wisdom to do it right.

Praise points:

- **That we got new members during this period.**
- **That we got new visitors online.**
- **For all those visitors who faithfully keep coming.**

Prayer points:

- **That God will grant us wisdom in this time of pandemic and that we learn to fully trust him.**
- **That during this crisis (as long as it lasts) we do not lose our momentum but find ways to grow in number.**
- **That we'll stay healthy.**

Yours in Christ,

Chris and Lotta

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