

Dear Church,

What a whirlwind we have been on over the past week. I am sure many of you are concerned about the events that are so rapidly unfolding before our eyes, and perhaps you are confused about what you should think or where this will lead. Our elders have been discussing how to respond given all that has transpired over the last 24 hours. I am writing this letter to communicate several important matters to you.

First, let me start by letting you know that we will be live streaming our service and not having a formal worship gathering on Sunday morning. The reasons for this decision are driven by three factors. First, the most vulnerable to the effects of this virus are those in our church over 60 years old. Before last night's news conference we were going to already encourage our elderly to stay at home and watch the service online if they can. Second, we need to consider our testimony to a community. The reaction as a community has been quite drastic, but it is what it is. We do not want to be perceived as the church that doesn't care about what is happening, nor do we want to be seen as the church that is railroading the community's attempt to mitigate the spread of this virus. The reason events over 100 people have been encouraged to cancel is to slow the spread of the virus so that the healthcare facilities are not overrun by the rapid spread of this virus. Finally, we think it is best to error on the side of caution. We would rather look back three weeks from now and say, "Yeah, that was a bit of an overreaction" than to say, "We wish we would have canceled our services." Given these bits of information, we have decided to cancel our formal gathering and live stream our service with a simple worship set, Scripture reading, prayer, and a message. We will decide how to handle the worship service on a week to week basis. We are encouraging the following:

1. Worship from your home with us at 9:30am on Sunday. We would even encourage you to gather together with your Life Group to worship in smaller groups. You can watch the service live or watch it later in the day, but spend time seeking the Lord on Sunday. You can watch the Live Stream by clicking the video on our YouTube Channel... [CLICK HERE](#).
2. During this time, maintain good hygiene by washing your hands often, cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, and avoid skin to skin contact. If you are sick, stay home and self quarantine.
3. Our desire as leaders is to serve the body of FBC during this unprecedented time, so if you are in need of anything, please let me know.
4. Because we are not gathering together on Sunday mornings, it makes giving a bit more challenging. However, let me suggest a few ways you can give. You can give online by [CLICKING HERE](#). What you give will go straight to our general fund to help pay the bills. If you do not feel comfortable giving online, then you can send a check to the church. The address is:

First Baptist Church of Lowell
P.O. Box 157
Lowell, MI 49331

I also want to communicate what our plan is for the other ministries that we have happening at FBC. It has been our policy to cancel Student Ministry and Awana based on school closings. We felt it was best to maintain that policy. Some of the smaller groups that meet together will we leave up to that group. We will be canceling Prime Time for the month of March as well. I know that this causes some disruption to these ministries, but disruption is already upon us. We ask for flexibility and grace as we navigate these waters together.

The last thing I want to communicate is how we, as believers, should respond to these troubling times. Someone shared **Psalm 46** with me this week and I thought it was just fitting for us to consider.

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. 6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. 7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. 10 "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

This Psalm reminds us that the Lord is our very present help in times of trouble, and it is because of this reality that we can face such times with courage and peace. We do not need to fear and our hearts can rest in the plan and purpose of God in the midst of all this. God is not surprised by this, nor is He out of control. He has promised His presence with us, and we can trust in Him. I know that those receiving this letter are all over the map in terms of their reaction to what is going on. Some see it as a complete overreaction, and some are in the grips of fear. Regardless, we can and should trust in the sovereign purposes of our God, who is fully in control in the midst of these troubling times. You may even consider the fertile ground that these times may present relative to sowing seeds of the Gospel. Be ready and watch for opportunities to give the reason for the HOPE that you have in Jesus Christ. Let us shine like stars in the way that we love and care for others during these times. Let us shine like stars in our interactions at work and on social media.

May the Lord bless each of you and make His face shine upon you, showering you with His grace and kindness.

Blessings,
Pastor Jon