

March 19, 2020

Dear Church,

In the many conversations that I have had in the last week, one of the things that has become increasingly apparent is that we have a wide range of opinions in our church family as to how to respond to the current pandemic that is upending many of our routines. I want to acknowledge that some in our group feel strongly that ministry programs should continue almost unchanged. Others, out of an abundance of precaution, feel that all public and private gatherings should have ceased long before today. Most of us are trying to find our way through the uncertainty that exists between these two absolutes.

I also want to affirm that those that I've talked with want more than anything to attain a clear understanding of God's will for His church in these uncertain times. I suspect God's ultimate plan in all that we are experiencing is something that is yet unknown but will be revealed in the months ahead. God is good and His love endures forever.

Regardless of what is to come, I want to acknowledge that we as a church have non-negotiables. We will continue to honour God through our vision statement which says:

“We exist to give people the opportunity to become more fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.”

This means that we will continue to support one another in prayer, to offer praise and worship to God our Father, to present truths from God's word to one another and to present the gospel to a world in desperate need of the Savior. These will continue to be the unwavering passions of all those who truly are a part of Christ's church. This does not mean that how we are a part of God accomplishing His mission will not change. Or in short, the message will not change, but the mode might. I encourage you to join the leadership team in pondering what our “non-negotiables” are around what we do together and what are simply a reflection of our culture or current practice and are therefore open to change.

This situation has been evolving quickly for some time. For the last week, the board and staff of LFBC has been individually and collectively trying to determine what the best course of action is. Some of our current response has been dictated to us by our government. We acknowledge that where it does not contradict scripture, God's word calls on Christians to obey the laws of the land (Romans 13:1-5) and we are striving to be obedient to that call. We believe that this obedience shouldn't just be to the letter of the law but to the heart of the law.

To that end, the Ministry Management Board has decided to temporarily suspend all church sanctioned programming that involves gathering groups of people together.

I want to be clear about two things:

- 1) We are in the process of setting up alternatives to our traditional programming. For example, this Sunday at 10 am, I encourage all of you to gather around a computer or a TV with your family, or a small group of friends as you're comfortable, to be a part of online church. Pastor

Scott and I are in the process of putting together an online service that will include songs, teachings, discussion and scripture. Please understand that this is our first attempt and that future services may look quite different. Over the weeks ahead, we hope to engage with multiple creative ideas, including age specific Kidspot lessons, youth lessons, recorded music from our own worship teams and small group conversation starters.

This is an opportunity for each of you to step into leading your family or a small group of believers and seekers in worship and in teaching. I understand that it will be stretching for many of us, but my hope is that we can see in this the huge opportunity it is to grow in our leadership and discipleship skills. Please stay tuned to your email account or to our website for more information on how to worship with us this Sunday, and for more ministry ideas.

- 2) The second thing I want to make clear is that we are not banning or forbidding small groups of people from gathering. While I understand each of us has a different level of comfortability around who we gather with or how we gather during this season, I encourage each of you not to neglect the fellowship of believers. (Hebrews 10:25) Perhaps for a time that fellowship will include a smaller number of people, or may be done over the phone, or on a computer, but now more than ever, we need one another. Pray with one another. Intercede for those that are vulnerable and suffering. Seek God's will in your family decisions. Bring comfort and hope to those that are hurting. Glorify God for His continuing providence and grace in the midst of crisis. Praise Him for His goodness. Discuss God's word and meditate together on His decrees.

I understand that many of us are in a season of higher stress. Whether from lost jobs or lowered income, from sickness or fear of sickness, from concern for vulnerable loved ones or a heart of care for isolated individuals, we are all feeling stretched. Talk with one another openly about what you're experiencing. Bring God into those conversations whether they are with believers or unbelievers. If you need help, please let us know. My personal contact information is at the end of this letter.

Someone said to me today, "It sounds trite, but I am thankful that God does not get sick. Today He continues to rule from His throne and to bring about His will." We serve an awesome God.

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

In His service,

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