



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH ATHENS

March 16, 2020

Dear FBC Athens Members:

I hope that this communication finds all of you well. The deacons and ministerial staff met on Sunday morning, March 15, to discuss our strategic plans for the church during the Coronavirus pandemic. We opened our meeting with a unison reading of the following verses from Jeremiah 17: 7-8:

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when the heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

We are living in times in which these words from scripture are both comforting and instructive.

To communicate with clarity, the church's operational plans are in bullet point form below:

- All public activities of the church activities are cancelled through Sunday, March 29. Online worship experiences are planned for 11:00 a.m. on March 22 and March 29. However, the situation is fluid and the church will remain flexible. (Following yesterday's deacon meeting, the CDC announced that it is discouraging gatherings of 50 or more people for the next eight weeks. The staff and church leadership will continue to inform by email and through the church website.)
- The church office will be closed to the public at least until March 30. Staff will work in the office and remotely as needed. Phones will be checked during regular office hours. However, the congregation should use cell numbers if warranted.
- The hospitals have asked that clergy not visit except in dire situations.
- Our Daily Bread has communicated their schedule. Breakfast will not be served. Sack lunches will be served at noon each weekday. Since breakfast is not being served, these sack lunches will contain more food than a typical meal. Since the church is closed, guests will not enter the church and will instead be served at the entrance to the Fanning Foyer. If the group providing lunch does not want to prepare sack lunches, they can provide funding to purchase lunch from a local restaurant. Regular ODB service will return when UGA returns to a normal schedule.
- Youth Sunday, scheduled for March 29, has been rescheduled for May 17.
- The ministerial staff will continue to monitor the situation and will decide on the youth mission trip to Slovakia by April 25.
- Staff is working to plan alternative worship and Bible study plans. Please look for emails with further information over the coming days.

As people of God, our faith should promote trust in God and calm in the face of troubling circumstances. Trusting God does not preclude us from washing our hands, avoiding crowds, and following the instruction of our medical experts. If you are able, please reach out to another member or two and check on their well-being during this crisis and beyond.

Finally, I must include a paragraph about stewardship. While we may not pass an offering plate at a live service for a few weeks, the church's ministries and mission will continue. Please continue with your tithes and offerings.

If you have any questions about this schedule, please contact any member of staff or member of the diaconate.

In Christ,
Bill Hopper
Deacon Chair