

## **Coronavirus Update**

### **Friday, March 13, 2020**

When I released the statement about the coronavirus yesterday, I could not have anticipated the unprecedented moves of the State of Georgia that happened within hours of its release. Things are escalating quickly and the governor has shut down all public schools for the next 14 days. In addition, he shared concerns for even faith-based gatherings because of the risk to elderly and other at-risk populations. I have also been made aware of patients in Bremen and Carrollton who have either already been diagnosed, or are in quarantine as they await the results of the test.

This is a complicated, quickly-developing issue. People have strong opinions on both sides. That is also true of the leaders within our church and the pastors in our area as I have sought counsel with them over the past several days.

There is no way to stay ambiguous about this and it is irresponsible not to respond. After much prayer and deliberation, I have decided to move to an alternative service plan at Covenant Life for the next two weeks. Here is what that looks like:

Wednesday night services will be cancelled until April 1.

Sunday services will be delivered via FaceBook live on March 15 and March 22 at 11 AM. We hope to be able to resume regular schedule on March 29. I encourage everyone to join us online. The live stream will include worship, but because of copyright issues, we will not be able to save or post the music afterwards. The messages will be posted to YouTube and the various podcast platforms as usual.

Student ministry and kids ministry already have plans under way to use technology to stay in touch and provide ministry for their age groups. Please stay in touch with the church on social media or check the website frequently for updates.

All other events and small groups will be cancelled as well. As of now, the men's retreat will go on as scheduled, as it is at the end of that two week period.

This has been a difficult decision for me to make. I appreciate your maturity and understanding, even if you disagree. Some would frame this issue in terms of faith - that people of faith should keep doing what we're doing and trust God to protect us. While I do not doubt the power of God to protect, we still cancel

services for inclement weather because we feel it is reasonable to do so. The same principle applies here.

Some would say that I am caving to political correctness and that the media has blown this threat out of proportion. I have my own personal opinions about that issue, but as a leader, I have to make decisions based on the best information available to me at the time. I don't question the meteorologists when they say a storm is going to be bad because I am not qualified to do so. The same principle applies to microbiology and infectious diseases. I am simply not certain enough to potentially risk the lives of the people I have been charged to protect.

If closing the church for a couple of weeks is the wrong decision, I will have, at worst, inconvenienced and disappointed some people. I don't like doing that, but it is unavoidable sometimes. But if we have church, against recommendations of the state and local government and someone gets sick, that is not something I am willing to live with.

We will, of course, be doing a deep cleaning of the church over the next two weeks so that everything is ready when it is time to return.

Please consider using SecureGive or US Mail to give your tithes and offerings. If you would prefer to drop them off in person at the church, please contact the church office to arrange a time at 770-537-3747.