

March 13, 2020

Dear Bereanites,

In the 24 hours since I last wrote to you, the ground underneath us has continued to shift mightily. I have been in constant communication with our Board and medical experts and want to communicate an update on what we have decided is most prudent moving forward in light of the most recent events.

First, let me start by letting you know that we will not have a formal worship gathering on Sunday mornings through April 5 in keeping with the governor's ban announced earlier today, and we will be creating resources for you to be able to worship at home. The reasons for this decision are driven by three factors. First, as we communicated yesterday, those most vulnerable to the effects of this virus are those over 60 years old and those with underlying conditions. Second, we need to consider our testimony to our community. 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 undermining the community's attempt to mitigate the spread of this virus. The reason events over 250 people have been banned is to slow the spread of the virus so that healthcare facilities are not overrun by a rapid escalation of cases. Finally, we think it is best to err 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."

We are encouraging the following:

1. Worship in your home on Sunday, and consider using the resources that will be available via email (you should receive this by Saturday evening). Feel free to invite others to join you in small groups as you feel comfortable and appropriate.
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 Berean Baptist Church during this unprecedented time. If you would like a member of the church leadership to visit you for prayer, fellowship and encouragement, or for help accessing the worship resources, please let us know by contacting a staff member or the church office (office@bereangr.org).
4. Because we are not gathering together on Sunday mornings, it makes giving a bit more challenging. However, let me suggest a couple of options:
-----You can give online (www.bereangr.org/give).
-----If you do not feel comfortable giving online, you can send a check to the church:

Berean Baptist Church

1574 Coit Ave. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

I also want to communicate what our plan is for the other ministries that we and others conduct at Berean. It has been our policy to cancel midweek events based on school closings. We felt it was best to maintain that policy. 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 church office will remain open, and we as staff will continue with ministry work as we're able.

As we communicated yesterday, 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 it beyond his 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. As we have been seeing in John's gospel, it is we who are the light sent into the world expressly for dark times such as these. Let us pray we shine brightly!

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

In Christ,

Pastor Marcus