

Dear Congregation: The elders met on Monday, March 16 – here are a few of the highlights and important updates

- As you may have heard Governor Tony Evers had ordered the Department of Health Services to ban gatherings of 50 or more statewide, in an effort to flatten the curve of the spread of COVID-19. The recommendations are expected to remain in effect for at least eight weeks.
- As you can imagine we have a tough call to make. But we have considered this matter prayerfully and it seems right for us to comply for the time being. **That means we will not be having church services til at least May 17.** Let that sink in for a few moment....That also implies that the programs and ministries (Coffee Break, Men's Life, Friendship, GEMs, Cadets and such) will be suspended. Be assured- **We will continue monitoring the situation** and if the Lord is willing we will regather earlier if the situation allows.
- **These are unprecedented times:** Though this news sounds terrible – We understand that we serve a God who is Sovereign over this situation. He is not at all surprised by our times, the spread of this virus nor the decisions that have brought us to this point. As a council we are confident that on the other end of this challenge, He will still be there and we will be stronger!
- **This is new terrain for all of us.** It appears that we have paddled up to a very large mountain, – wondering “how we are going to *canoe up this mountain?*” (to use the title of a book by Tod Bolsinger on leadership). And so the challenge for us moving forward will be – *how do we continue being the church in the midst of this?* For now we will need to put the canoes aside and learn how to be mountaineers. We will have to make some adaptive changes, get creative, think outside the box. God will give us wisdom! We just need to ask God who gives generously to all who ask (James 1:5)
- **Immediate Steps.**
 1. Pastor Anson along with the Media people are exploring alternative ways of communicating. (Such as blogs, phone calls, emails, telegraph and passengers pigeons) Pastor Anson is determined by God's grace to stay in contact with the congregation. (respecting social distance and washing hand regularly of course!). He will continue to be available for pastoral visits if needed, and will have regular office hours: (At the church Tuesday- Thursday especially in the morning, but also everyday I am basically at home in my office) I am just a phone call away (715-688-9849) – One Call That's All.....
 2. We are planning to have one sermon available each week. We are still working through the possibility of recording a video sermon (stay tuned for more information). At the very least we will have an audio sermon recorded and available each week.
 3. The elders have been encouraged to make more frequent phone calls to check in with people in their districts. (on the flip side of that – don't hesitate to call your elders and let them know what is going on in your life and what a great job they are doing!)
 4. Small groups are encouraged stay in touch and encourage one another.
 5. Individuals members are encouraged to practice the Christians Disciplines of prayer, giving, service, study, simplicity, meditation, confession, fasting, worship and of course – solitude. If you don't know what these are or are looking for ideas to explore these further – Just ask Pastor Anson.
 6. A reminder to all of us: In the midst of this upheaval may we, as God's people, take to heart the words of God from the book of Hebrews 13:16, “*do good and share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God*”. Do what you can for your neighbors. Represent Jesus well and don't forget the ministries of this church. The offering we received on a regular basis is a vital part of our response to God and God's word. It helps us connect our adoration for God with our life of discipleship. It is a token and symbol of our desire to devote our whole selves to God's service in response to God's faithfulness. The deacons invite and encourage you to consider on line giving. Feel free to contact any one of them if you have questions or need help with setting it up.

Be Encouraged: These are challenges that we can face, with God's grace and in His strength.

I leave you with the words of James 1: 2-5. This is the JB Phillips paraphrase that speaks volumes to our situation: *When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends. Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed and you will find that you have become folks of mature character*

*with the right sort of independence. And if, in the **process**, any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem he has only to ask God who give generously to all men without making them feel guilty.*

To God be the Glory,

Pastor Anson and Your Elders.