Unless you’ve been living under a rock, you are well aware of the Corona Virus pandemic. While we’ve been aware of it in foreign countries for months, most public health experts predicted it would be worldwide before April. Indeed, their predictions were correct. It is here in central Kentucky. And while there are only eight confirmed cases in the state at this moment, we haven’t tested very many people. There are likely many, many more we aren’t aware of.

There is much we still don’t know about Covid-19. Public health experts don’t think EVERYONE is going to come down with it, but many people will because none of us have had a vaccine for it or prior immunity to it. The good news is that of those who contract the virus, estimates that 80% or more will have symptoms no worse than a common cold. So there’s no reason to be anxious or to panic or to hoard.

At the same time, the best way we can love our community is to follow public health guidelines. So I’m announcing that we will not have live, in-person worship services or Sunday school this Sunday, March 15. Why would we cancel church services and avoid other places where people are meeting together? To limit the transmission of the disease. It’s called “public distancing.” & in the countries that have done this, the rate of the transmission of COVID-19 was reduced significantly enough for the healthcare system to handle the stress. [See the chart below at the bottom]. We want to be in the blue area like Korea, not the red area like Italy where hospitals have had up to 200% capacity.

So again, I hope you know that we are doing this in the best interest of the wider community. Sure, my risks are limited, but not everyone in our congregation, not everyone in your family is immune to the risk. The CDC is warning people 60+ and people with underlying lung or heart disease, diabetes, or compromised immune systems are especially vulnerable.

I think it would be irresponsible to not heed the advice of our local health department. If you don’t know Cassie Prather, she’s the Public Health Director. She has been in direct contact with me during this time. According to her, right now we are in the “minimal to moderate rate of transmission. That is defined as widespread and/or sustained transmission with high likelihood or confirmed exposure within communal settings with potential for rapid increase in suspected cases.” I’m not willing to take the chance that any of you might be critically ill or dead because we didn’t cancel a service or more if necessary. I would prefer not to do a funeral of someone in our church family ever again.

I hope I’m wrong and that years from now we can laugh and say that we overreacted. That would be much more preferable to looking back years from now and ask why we didn’t do what was asked of us.

In times like this I trust God even more. I know He is in control. I also know that He made us in His image. While it is a fractured image because of the Fall of Adam and Eve in the world and the consequences of sin in all of our lives, nevertheless we still carry His image with us, all of us. And because of that he wants us to use our brains and to understand the world scientifically.
The church isn’t a gathering on Sunday morning. I’ve been saying that for years! Let’s prove we are the church by how we respond outside that one hour a week with how we manage this issue. WE are the church, you and me, the body of Christ in the world. How do we show this world what it’s like to follow Jesus? Is it by showing up for that hour to try to prove the experts wrong? No, it’s being a good citizen. It’s checking on each other and helping each other get things from the store or pharmacy or wherever. It’s checking on our neighbors and seeing how we can help them.

This has always been true but let me make it clear. You can call me anytime, day or night. I will pray with you and for you. I will give you counsel as best as I can. I will come to your house or wherever to bring you any resource you need. I know most of us would do that for each other. Let’s do that. If you’re struggling with this or anything during this time, reach out. If you’re not struggling, reach out to someone you think might be having trouble.

So what is the church going to do during this time? Remain being the church! Practically speaking, this means (1) that we will have a service that will live stream online this Sunday and any Sunday we are not open to the wider public. It might be simple. It might be shorter. I’ll probably reiterate some of the things I’m saying here. Sunday morn. will still have an hour where you can get fed by God’s word and worship through music. We’re still working out the technology so please show grace but the current plan is to go live at 11am on Facebook and shortly thereafter on youtube. If that doesn’t work live, then it will go up as soon after as we can so that you can be part of a corporate experience of worship.

(2) I’m asking the elders to check on their shepherding lists as often as once a week for prayer concerns or other needs you might have.

(3) Our community dinner on Monday nights will continue with delivery and take out, but not dine in.

(4) It’s essential that those who contribute to the church financially continue to do so. If you aren’t giving online, then consider doing so or at least mail your checks or even ask for us to pick them up. We still have utilities and salaries to pay and outreach ministers that depend on us.

(5) We’ll be looking for creative ways to help those in our community most effected by the economic consequences. For instance, we have many in our community who were already facing food deprivation. How can we help them? In a time like now, Christian neighboring looks less like fearful self-preservation and more like servanthood toward the elderly, those with autoimmune disease, and those fatigued and under-resourced healthcare workers. Wash hands for sure. Then, let’s wash someone else’s feet.

If you have suggestions or ideas or concerns, please contact me directly by email, text, or phone depending on the severity of the need.

Our theme verse during this historical time should be Colossians 4:2-6. “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains
(or maybe in our day, "social distancing"). Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

Again, stay tuned for future communications from me or other staff.