



March 18, 2020

To the church of God which is at Lakeville,  
Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,  
From Dan, pastor of the church by the will of God, and Bill our brother.

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God...For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us [from] Asia.”(II Cor.1:3,4,8)*

In this letter to the whole church I hope to convey what is a considered position on the current situation. We are in the midst of a declared international pandemic. Our state and federal governments, as you know by now, have proposed some new measures and guidelines to contain the virus so as to ‘flatten the curve,’ of new cases. The need for individuals to keep a safe distance from one another is at the top of the list of new measures. That, of course, is bad news for the churches, and puts an effective halt to corporate worship.

Our whole local community is on some version of lockdown. I know that some of you have been sent home from places of business, and are accomplishing what you can for your respective businesses on line. And so the question arises, ‘What can we do with regard to worship?’ Whatever your personal view of how the situation is being managed, whether you believe that our leaders are overreacting, acting wisely, or not doing enough, and I have heard each of these positions articulated by doctors, friends, and close associates the past few days, it becomes our responsibility to establish our own guidelines for response.

Friends, if we intend to be a community church, we have a responsibility to bear community burdens with them. I am trying to navigate through our responsibilities to government, community, God, and the church. And though I sincerely regret the necessity to curtail, to some extent, our ministry services, I have come to the decision that we have to make some temporary changes.

So this is my plan. We will cancel, starting this week, our Thursday evening session at my home. There is no biblical requirement that we meet at that time. Such gatherings are tight and people are close to one another, which is not the optimal situation at this time. We will resume as soon as it seems practicable.

As to our Sunday meetings, I would like to retain a form of them if at all possible. And there are several things to consider here. First of all, our sermons go out almost immediately after the services to our on-line server at [SermonAudio.com/Lakeville](http://SermonAudio.com/Lakeville), or [LakevilleChristianFellowship.org](http://LakevilleChristianFellowship.org). I would like to continue the series we are now in that has brought so much positive feedback, and is so edifying and convicting to so many of us.

I am proposing that we open the doors for a diminished gathering so that prayers and praises and the proclaimed word of God can go out from among us. It is good to keep our distance to protect our physical health and to conform to community standards. It is also good that we bolster our faith and discipline ourselves to partake of weekly worship in order that our spiritual well being does not shrink at the expense of our bodily concerns.

So, I am asking that most of you stay home Sunday mornings. I am also asking that, in order to make an effort to hold to the 'spirit of the law,' with regard to government guidelines, that only a few gather together with the suggested distance between us. The new suggested number of congregants in any situation is ten. It seems to me that just as certain members of society are more susceptible to physical decline, that others are more susceptible to emotional and spiritual weaknesses. I am thinking first of those of us who live alone and who will experience no day to day contact with other people, as do those who are hunkered down with their families. Karen and I have Susan, Kristine, and our boys to keep us company, and many of you are in similar situations. There are others who have no one in their immediate circle to converse with, or to pray with, to laugh with or to dine with. Life for some, apart from Christian fellowship, is very different from life for others. It is my thought that we ought to allow these individuals to meet in the usual way and to enjoy at least a few hours of weekly fellowship with like minded people.

I would like for me and Pastor Bill to come and to conduct worship as usual for a few people, the ones I have mentioned, and for others who feel compelled to attend for reasons of personal edification or conviction. I would preach to these few, and for compliance sake I hope that those who choose to attend are not many in number. I know that some of you have questions as to the real seriousness of the situation. But think of what would happen if we ignore the guidelines and we became some kind of local epicenter of community spread. It would be embarrassing to say the least. Illegal to say more. And deadly if we are wrong.

For the rest of us I would ask that you set apart the time on Sunday mornings to worship in your homes with your loved ones, and to conduct some semblance of organized worship. Pastor Bill's weekly reading continues this Sunday with Psalm 91. I would suggest that you read it together in your homes and in this way we may be spiritually linked together as a congregation. We will put the audio sermon up as soon as possible, and I hope that you will listen to it together as well. In addition, preparations are underway to live stream the service on *YouTube*. Karen will send out a LINK to everyone as soon as our LCF YouTube channel is created. Tony P. and Joe Matta are already at work to make this happen. This will be an opportunity for those at home to live stream and join together in worship.

Remember, also, all those weekly prayer requests. Our needs do not go away by our separation. Prayer becomes all the more a necessary element of our Christian lives. I hope that the quarantine, i.e., 'social distancing,' we now experience will not become a holiday from communal and spiritual obligations. I will be praying for this. We may even find that in a crisis that the nearness of our God is all the more palpable than at other times. If you like you may text in to Karen your prayer requests on Saturday night, and they will be prayed for by the whole congregation from wherever they are on Sunday morning.

A last recommendation. We know that the government is working on a stimulus package for those among us who will lose work hours, and for those of us who live paycheck to paycheck.

Hopefully, this will be a benefit to those among us who need it. However, I have heard of no such stimulus for struggling churches. Our expenses go on whether we meet together or not. And, if I have not emphasized it before let me do so now, our offerings are as essential a part of our participation in worship, the cause of Christ in our time, and the continuance of our local body, as any other part. Our material offerings are necessary. They are the love offerings to God that come directly out of the substance He has blessed us with. They are the firstfruits of our harvest. They belong to the Lord. As He has prospered us so we prosper His church in the world. We can lay them up on Sunday until we meet again (I Cor.16.1-2). Or we may find some other way to contribute during the hiatus.

I pray that we will be together with the whole church very soon. And know that our family will be praying for every person in our church family, members, and guests alike.

Sincerely, And with Christ's love,

Pastors Dan and Bill