

March 12, 2020

Dear First Grand Haven,

By now you have heard much about the coronavirus (COVID-19) and so much has developed in the last 48 hours: from the WHO declaring it an pandemic, to travel restrictions being placed, universities closing, and more. At this point it is in our collective consciousness. Many are now asking, “What do we do?” and “What should churches do?”

A Weighty Decision

As a community of believers in Grand Haven we believe that we have an incredible privilege of gathering to worship our awesome God, to spend time in community, and to deepen our relationships. That is something we are passionate about and it's a responsibility that we do not take lightly. Tonight the Executive Team gathered to pray, look over collective wisdom from government agencies, health organizations, other churches, and we consulted with our staff and leadership. Based on that prayerful discernment, we have decided to not hold in-person gatherings between now and March 22, at which time we will reevaluate. This means we will not have corporate worship the next two Sunday mornings March 15 and March 22. We also will not be having regular ministry activities as well for this 10-day period. There will not be Ignite, Elevate, Cadets, team meetings, etc. The Metal Recycling Ministry has also decided to take a break in receiving drop-offs for a 2 week period and Online Garage Sale will also go on hiatus for this time period.

Ways to Connect

We are working to bring you online teaching. It is our hope to be able to record sermons and offer up resources in the coming days. Please stay tuned for more on that. We hope to make them available on our YouTube channel and will deliver the link through email and social media.

Perfect Love Drives Out Fear

Please rest assured that this decision was not made out of fear or angst, but out of a deep desire to love our neighbors as Christ would. We believe we are thinking especially of those who are most vulnerable. While many may have symptoms that only amount to that of a common cold, we know that by spreading this disease we may be putting others at risk (especially the elderly or those with other conditions that make them especially susceptible). We believe in this moment this is a way to show love, care, and concern by taking appropriate and recommended precautions. We take seriously the advice of experts (which we are not) when they discouraged any gatherings of 100 or more. If these precautions end up being overboard, perhaps we will never know. By God's grace, it may mean that the spread of COVID-19 never spread like it otherwise would have and this thing blows over. We pray this may be the case. However, if it does not blow over, we will have wished that we had taken more precautions—and taken them sooner. Therefore we are choosing to take the cautious route.

Action Steps

There are some steps we would ask you the congregation to take.

- Continue to wash your hands, resist touching your face, self isolate if you are not feeling well, and follow the [Michigan Department of Health](#) and [CDC recommendations](#).
- As a member of First Grand Haven we want to encourage you to continue your giving. Please mail in your giving envelopes to 516 S.Ferry St. Grand Haven, MI 49417. Without your

continued support we can't provide the staffing and ministry that will continue to move God's mission forward in Grand Haven. We are looking at possible online giving options as well at this time, but mailing in your giving would be a great gift to the continued work of God and a way to give back to our generous God. You may also mail in your elder/deacon nomination forms, or email your elder your 4 deacon and 3 elder nominations, or take a picture of both sides of your form with your phone and email it to firstcrcofgrandhaven@gmail.com. Please do so by **March 15**.

- Philippians 4:6-7 reminds us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, present your requests to God." Let's join together to Pray! Pray for healing for those affected, for those grieving, and for those who are gripped by fear and anxiety. Pray for a peace that only comes from the Lord and healing that he can bring. Pray for health officials, that they will have wisdom in stopping this spread.

Our Hope is in Him

One thing is true of God's people in anxious and uncertain times, they look to him as a ballast in the storms that surround us. No matter what those storms might be God is still seated firmly on the throne. This too shall pass.

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear...
Psalm 46:1-2

Another thing that is true is that God's people step up in uncertain times to offer comfort to those who are living in fear, who are paralyzed by the news, and wonder what all of this will mean for them. In the midst of this there are opportunities to minister to your neighbors. To offer to get groceries for your elderly neighbor who probably should not be in public spaces. God's people do not react with fear, but they react with hope and generosity. Thank you for your generosity of spirit as we move to err on the side of caution during this time and seek to reach those who need Jesus.

We plan to stay in constant communication with you—the church—as things develop and as decisions are made. Be on the lookout for those communications. In the meantime, if you have any concerns or questions please contact me (Pastor Cory) or any member of the Executive team. If you are struggling with anxiety, worry, or fear or just need some to talk with because you are feeling isolated, please call Pastor Cory, Care Elder Art Tuls, or your district elder. We would be happy to listen, to talk with you, and pray with you.

Blessings,

Pastor Cory
(on behalf of the Executive Team)