

Lauvers Friends and Family,

As you may have heard Governor Wolfe has asked that all non-essential businesses be closed for the next 2 weeks and yesterday President Trump has encouraged no interaction with groups over 10 people. What all of this is telling us, is that we are to stay home so that the impact of the Coronavirus does not overwhelm the health system. Let me address this issue on four fronts: Spiritually, Theologically, Reasonably and practically.

First let me share some of my own spiritual journey. I was really struggling with how to lead the church forward during this crisis and in a conversation with Robin yesterday it became clear to me why. In our conversation I said, "if we were still at Crossroads, I would have no hesitation but to make the decision to not meet physically and meet remotely instead." Why would it have been easier in Maine than here? It comes down to a pride issue. The people at Crossroads knew me and I knew them, we had been through the trenches together and knew each other's hearts. At Lauvers we are still getting to know each other and the fear of how people would have accepted a decision to not meet weighed heavily on me. It ultimately comes down to a prideful desire for others to see me in a certain way and when I realized it, I was able to confess and be freed from it. Let's not be prideful in thinking that this will not affect us or that a physical gathering is more spiritual than being the church scattered. My hope is that through this time of uncertainty that our hearts will be opened and that we will all come to know each other more intimately.

Secondly, theologically speaking Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church; the church is a gathering of individual Christians sharing in the unity brought by the Spirit to hear from God, worship Him and to build up and encourage one another so that we may be better equipped to influence the world around us. Since Jesus is the foundation of the church it is incorrect to say that the church is canceled when we do not meet. The church is made up of the gathered and scattered people and is not about a specific time or location. Furthermore, the church is at most times scattered with the purpose of impacting the world.

Thirdly, we need to be reasonable in our approach during this season of the Coronavirus. It would be incorrect for us to blindly live out our own way of thinking because it is not affecting us, or that we feel it is overblown or even if we feel that the actions of our elected leaders are unwise, to not heed the recommendations given. I liken this to any "act of God" that causes the church to minister differently. For instance, if we had a blizzard and the state issued a "state of emergency" and that no one except essential workers were to be on the road we would have no problem asking people to worship at home. We would make contact remotely with one another to see what helps we could give, and in that we would be doing the work of the church and it would not be a less spiritual work than meeting together.

Fourthly, we will continue ministry as practically as possible. Over this 2 week pause the church leaders have made the decision that we will not meet at the church building for any scheduled group meetings. I encourage you to keep in contact with people from the church and community that you normally would. I also encourage you to be in contact with people that you normally wouldn't and in both cases asking them how they are doing? What their needs are? and how you can pray for them and then leave them with an encouragement from your time with the Lord. On Sunday morning at 9 a.m. we will hold a live stream Sunday School Teaching which is Lesson 4 on Faith and at 10 a.m. we will continue our journey through Zechariah chapter four. Both will be streamed on the LMC News Facebook page. The LMC FB page is a private page and so if you would like to have others participate in the live streaming events, they will need an invitation to join.

In Second Corinthians Paul challenges the people to understand why his plans have changed and he would not be stopping in to see them on his way. *2 Corinthians 1:12-14 (ESV) For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand— just as you did partially understand us—that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you.* Paul is challenging the people to understand that Christianity cannot be compartmentalized and that his inability to come to see them does not place an inferior mark on the church and that someday they will boast in him and he will boast in them. The boasting being that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior! There are many facets and ways the church does the work of the Lord and although we believe that this time of change will be temporary, my prayer is that it will stir our hearts in increasingly great and powerful ways!

Peace to your home,

Pastor Curtiss