

Utica Family,

Let me warn you this is a long email but please read all the way to the end.

Obviously we are certainly living in uncertain times right now. But like I said in Sunday's message we are not to live in fear because we can put our trust in God and rest in the fact that he knows about everything that is going on. However, keep in mind that we are to be light and salt in these dark days.

However, as each day brings about new information and updates on COVID-19, it is important that we as a congregation consider how we respond during a situation like this. As stated in Sunday's service #1 Remain Calm, #2 View this as an opportunity to share Christ and as an opportunity to spend more time with family, #3 Respond with loving care to those who do not have the Lord to give them peace, #4 Pray and take heed to what Philippians 4:6 says, "Be careful (anxious, worried) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

So as your Pastor I am tasked with some very difficult decisions that I am not taking lightly in fact very seriously. Some of those decisions may be met with criticism, although I hope not. I hope and pray that I have done enough to earn your trust. Because I do love and pray for each one of you. So please understand, I am trying to protect the flock and also our testimony.

So the question is how do we manage the tension between being cautious and being faithful? Allow me to jump to the end and tell you what we are doing, and then back up and tell you why. We will be canceling face to face worship at the church building for at least this coming week. There will be no service on Wednesday night and sadly we have to reschedule the Family Life Conference for a later time. I will however be giving a message via Livestream on our churches Facebook account on Sunday morning at 10am. I know that some of you do not use Facebook however, if you are able perhaps you could find a family member who does and watch it with them. Because we won't be meeting together we will not be able to give as our normal part of worship. If you would like the online giving will be up and running and you can use that avenue. Otherwise, you could just wait and save it up its your choice.

Now here's how I have come to this decision. 1). Through ALOT of prayer and counsel. 2). Medical professionals recommend this by advising social distancing especially in regards to larger groups. Mostly this is for the reason to limit the spread of the virus, allowing people to receive the treatment they need and not to overrun the health care system. 3). Our Federal, State, and Local governments are recommending this and in our case mandating this. So, I believe for our testimony's sake, we should use this as an opportunity to live out Romans 13:1-7 and "let our souls be subject unto the higher powers." My concern would be if we neglected the local governments heeding and God forbid one or several of our church members get this virus. Then what kind of testimony would that be? Plus, understand that we do live in Dane County and it would be all over the media. And at that point would we be salt and light that Bro Aaron Wilson was talking about just the other day.

Just know I love each of you very much and don't let this thing get us down. But rather lets remember Psalm 91 and have confidence that God will protect us. Please understand my heart in this matter and let's be united as a church over this. Let's see what God can do with us through this!

With Much Love,  
Pastor Paul