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Dear Church Family,

The coronavirus is in the news daily. We are all wondering how this crisis will unfold. The elders and deacons want to encourage the body at Faith BFC to think about this threat from a biblical perspective.

First, Christians do not live in fear even in the face of great danger. Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything..." God, in Christ has conquered the dangers of this world, even death has lost its sting (1 Corinthians 15:55). We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.

Second, Christians live in love. The dangers and even tragedies of our broken world are opportunity for us to minister the grace of God in the power of the Spirit. In China, some Christians instead of fleeing the areas of greatest virus infection, have gone into those areas to serve and help in the name of Jesus. This is walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

Third, Christians do respond to dangers of our world by taking practical steps to avoid the danger when possible. We don't want to overreact but neither do we want to underreact.

What are the practical steps we will take at FBFC?

- (1) First, we must get the best information possible. Recently, Pastor Dennis Cahill from the Bible Fellowship Church in Piscataway, NJ shared the following with us: *"We are fortunate to have Dr. Cecil Mathews as part of our congregation. Cecil is an infectious disease doctor. I have also been in touch with my daughter-in-law, Katie, who is an allergy and immunology specialist at Vanderbilt University and has recently spoken with an expert on the coronavirus. Katie told me that the greater threat "at present" is the flu, not the coronavirus. The flu risk in New Jersey is currently at the highest risk level, meaning lots of people around us are currently sick with the flu. Annually, the flu causes 250,000-500,000 deaths worldwide and 25,000-60,000 deaths in the US depending on the year. Currently, coronavirus is not widespread and many fewer people have died from the coronavirus worldwide. The reason our officials are rightly taking this new virus so seriously is because the coronavirus has the potential to become widespread and be equally as dangerous or more dangerous than the flu."* Therefore, as we care for our FBFC Family and visitors, we are taking the following reasonable steps in an effort to minimize risk.
- (2) The cleaning staff at the church already has a thorough process for making sure that the facilities are clean and sanitized, especially surfaces that are frequently touched.
- (3) The procedure for wiping down the toys in the nursery twice a week is already in place due to our child protection policy, and this will continue to be practiced.
- (4) If you are sick, do not come to church. Do not bring sick children to church. If you miss church because you are sick, you can listen to sermons online at www.faithbfc.org. If you become ill with a respiratory tract illness and have fever, contact your primary physician and wait for further instructions.
- (5) Be cautious about shaking hands and hugging at church for now, especially with someone who has a cold.



- (6) Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds. All bathrooms at church have antibacterial soap in them.
- (7) We have hand sanitizer dispensers at various locations throughout the church, and though there are shortages of hand sanitizer, we will seek to keep these dispensers filled, as best as we are able.
- (8) As you seek to minister to others through loving visitation, be mindful of the fact that our senior citizens are the most vulnerable when it comes to the flu and the coronavirus. Make sure you are healthy before visiting. If you aren't healthy enough to visit, or the facilities where our seniors are living aren't allowing for visitors, please remember our seniors in your prayers and be sure to encourage them with a phone call.
- (9) We will use individually packed communion cups and wafers for our celebration of communion instead of passing the common plate of bread and the cup. Our next celebration of communion is Sunday, March 15.

The good news is these precautions for the coronavirus are the same precautions that are helpful for the flu!

Consider what the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:

2 Corinthians 1:8-11 For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

We do not know what Paul's affliction was. It was probably persecution but perhaps was some form of sickness. Whatever it is, Paul felt he might die from the affliction. I want you to note two things about this affliction:

Through the affliction Paul learned to rely not on himself, but on God who raises the dead. Every affliction is an opportunity for us to learn to rely on God and to serve those around us. In this moment we must learn not to rely on ourselves (not even, ultimately on modern medicine) but on God who raises the dead.

We should also note the role of prayer in affliction (vs. 11). Paul asks the church to pray because he knew that prayer makes a difference. In prayer we cry out to the sovereign God for ourselves and for the peoples of our world. The coronavirus (and all other afflictions) is a call for the church to pray.

We live our lives, we take reasonable and practical steps recommended by medical specialists, we do not walk in fear, we learn to rely wholly on God, we pray fervently, and we seek to serve our community in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is living in Christ and by the Spirit in a broken world.

Let us continue to meet together, build one another up, and encourage one another in love and good deed (Heb. 10:24)

All for the Glory of God!

Elders - Pastor Andy, Pastor Mike, Rick Lutz, Tom Koch & RJ James

Deacons – Dave Pfeiffer, Kerry Lewis, Jarrod Buso, Glen LeSuer, Frank DeVecchio, Harold Crider, Wayne Hillborn