

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

3/17/2020

First Bible Church

Dear Church Family,

In obedience to our Lord's command to love our neighbors and in compliance with the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control and the Alabama State Department of Health, ***all in-person gatherings at First Bible Church have been suspended until further notice. This suspension includes all of our regularly scheduled meetings, events, small groups, prayer breakfasts, and Bible Studies at both the Decatur and Madison campuses.***

However, the pastors of First Bible Church are on call and the offices at both campuses will maintain their normal office hours. We are here for you during this challenging time.

For a detailed explanation of this decision and what this means for us moving forward, please take time to read the information below.

I make this announcement with a strange mixture of sadness, concern, and excitement. Sadness, because I miss you. Gathering together with God's people on the Lord's Day for public worship has been my habit since my parents began carrying me to church. Concern, for the spiritual health of every person that God has entrusted to our care at First Bible Church. Excitement, because I am confident in God's sovereign reign and kind purposes for his church.

In fact, I am genuinely excited about the new and creative ways that we will need to develop in order to Gather, Grow, and Go as we pursue our mission of glorifying God by helping people know, love, obey, and exalt Jesus Christ. Our mission has not changed. Our strategy has not changed. Our God has not changed. The only things that will temporarily change over the few weeks will be tactical and logistical. But by his grace alone, we can do this. As we learned in our study of Philippians, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13)" Strengthens me to do what? **He strengthens me to know, love, obey, and exalt Jesus Christ in any and every circumstance.** So here's what you need to know:

GATHER!

First, we will continue to **Gather** on Sunday mornings, not in-person, but online. Our initial experience with this "virtual gathering" on March 15 was a great success as hundreds of our families gathered in their homes, went online, viewed the livestream worship service, sang the songs of praise, prayed the prayers, and heard the preached Word. We will continue to make modifications to the virtual gathering experience. In particular, we will be doing more to equip parents to help their children engage in the worship service.

You can join us on the livestream at 10:45 each Sunday morning by going to our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/FirstBibleChurch>. For nearly seven years, First Bible Church has been

one church in two locations. For this extraordinary season, we will be one church in hundreds of locations throughout Decatur, Madison, Hartselle, Huntsville, Priceville, Athens, Toney, and Harvest.

GROW!

Second, we will continue to **Grow** in community groups. For now, we will not meet together in person at the Decatur campus, James Clemens High School, or the Madison office, but we can stay connected through a vast array of technology. Call each other, text each other, teleconference with each other, Facetime one another. Do whatever it takes to stay connected, to encourage one another, to teach and admonish one another, through all of the communication options that are available to us. Also, all small groups meeting in homes or other off-site locations are free to continue meeting at their own discretion, while maintaining the social-distancing instructions we have become familiar with in recent days.

In the next few days, you will be contacted by various ministry leaders in our church who will explain to you how we can continue to grow in community groups while we cannot meet together in person. For example, if you have a child in our children's ministry, you will hear from children's ministry leaders and students will be contacted by our student ministry leaders. If you have any questions, call the church office at 256-353-2711.

GO!

Third, we will continue to **Go** as we serve one another, our community, and our world. Some of you will deliver lunches to the children of Nungester Elementary School through the backpack program, some of you will volunteer more hours at Neighborhood Christian Center or the Downtown Rescue Mission. Others will deliver groceries to the older members of our congregation who are confined to their homes. Many of you will be inviting your unchurched friends to join you in viewing the livestream worship service. The men of the Men's Prayer Breakfast will continue to intercede for our missionaries. The Great Commission is not going to be put on hold just because there is a national emergency. In fact, there may be more opportunities to go with the gospel now than before. This is the time to be creative, resourceful, and proactive for Christ's sake!

ASK!

Ask *for* help and ask *to* help. In the coming weeks of medical and financial uncertainty, there will be members of our church family who will need help. Those with higher health risks will need to self-isolate and will be unable to do their own grocery shopping. Let us help! Some of our members will suffer financial setbacks and be unable to cover their family's basic needs. Let us help! Many of our members are asking how they can help and serve other members. They are offering to deliver groceries or serve in other ways. If you need it, ask us for help. If you can give it, ask us to help. Now is the time to care for one another. To ask or offer help, call the church office for either campus at 256-353-2711.

GIVE!

Just as we are Gathering online, we are also Giving online. You can faithfully support the ministry of First Bible Church by clicking on "Give" in the upper right corner of our website home page and

following the instructions you find there. If you have any questions or difficulty with this process contact the church office for either campus at 256-353-2711.

FLEX!

Be flexible. Since we will be refreshing this update continually, please consult it frequently at our website (www.fbc.org) or First Bible Church Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/First-Bible-Church-113414698692666/>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/firstbibleal>).

The church office hours at each campus will continue as normal. Office hours for the Decatur Campus are Monday through Friday, 8:00–4:30. Office hours for the Madison Campus are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 8:00–4:30. Call either office at 256-353-2711.

TRUST!

A closing thought: On November 3, 1918, after the worst of the Spanish Flu pandemic had passed through Washington D.C., Frances Grimke, Pastor of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church, delivered these timely words to his congregation:

If, as a matter of fact, it was dangerous to meet in the theaters and in the schools, it certainly was no less dangerous to meet in churches. The fact that the churches were places of religious gathering, and the others not, would not affect in the least the health question involved. If avoiding crowds lessens the danger of being infected, it was wise to take the precaution and not needlessly run in danger, and expect God to protect us. And so, anxious as I have been to resume work, I have waited patiently until the order was lifted. I started to worry at first, as it seemed to upset all of our plans for the fall work; but I soon recovered my composure. I said to myself, Why worry? God knows what He is doing. His work is not going to suffer. It will rather be a help to it in the end. Out of it, I believe, great good is coming. All the churches, as well as the community at large, are going to be the stronger and better for this season of distress through which we have been passing.

I share Grimke's concern. I also share his optimism.

We can do this.

Pastor Steve
