



## **A Message from the Interim Pastor and Deacon Chair (March 17, 2020)**

To the Congregation of First Baptist Church,

Given the ongoing situation regarding the Coronavirus, upon the recommendation of the ministerial staff and deacon chair of First Baptist Church, on March 16, 2020 the Deacons voted unanimously that **all programming of the church be suspended indefinitely, effective immediately, except for the Community Café ministry on the third Saturday of each month and a weekly online worship service.** At this time, there are also plans for Wednesday evening online devotions in addition to the Sunday morning worship service available online.

Adoption of this recommendation by the deacons in no way prohibits any committee of the church or the deacons to meet as necessary, utilizing recommended safety precautions, Zoom, or other similar means of communication, in order to assist the church in the coordination of its ongoing ministry.

The ministerial staff and deacon chair are authorized to terminate this suspension of programming, in whole or in part, when they deem it prudent to do so. The Deacons retain the right to revisit this issue at any regular meeting or special meeting called for such purpose. Any subsequent meetings may be held either in person or via Zoom or other similar means upon notice duly given.

This is new territory for us all, and it is a serious situation. It is unprecedented, but as the news of this pandemic continues to evolve, it was apparent to all the deacons that this is the necessary and prudent thing to do. As of March 15, the church suspended public worship services. As of March 16, the ECM was closed. As of March 17, the church office will not be open until further notice.

The Finance Committee, Deacons, and church leadership will be monitoring the situation in the coming days and weeks as it evolves, and the ministerial staff and deacon chair will be in touch with you via email. We encourage the congregation to worship via the church Facebook page where possible and to stay in touch with each other via telephone, email, text messages, and other ways that are safe and encourage social distancing.

In these challenging times, we need to stay connected, yet in new ways. Jesus said that where two or three are gathered in His name that He is with them. Those words have never been truer than today. Gather together as you can in these new ways, and continue to BE the church. More than ever, we need to think of the church as a family of people who love one another, not just a building.

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