

March 17, 2020

Dear church family,

I want to keep this email short. Please look for another update email later in the week. For now, let me say just two things:

1. As a church family, we have entered into what we call "Phase 3" of our response to the CoronaVirus. This means that our campus is shut down for typical ministry with very few exceptions. WE WILL NOT MEET IN-PERSON FOR WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, MARCH 22. INSTEAD, OUR 9:30 A.M. SERVICE WILL BE LIVE-STREAMED HERE: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBELaivdMmoO63r_3PqbEnw. Please read the list below for specific cancellations.

2. We are continually working on creative ways to communicate. Please go to our YouTube Channel, log-in to your account and "Subscribe." In doing this, you will see regular update videos that will give you timely, helpful, inspiring, edifying and sometimes funny videos that will keep you up-to-the-minute with regard to your church family. Please go to our Facebook Page and "Like" the Sheboygan Evangelical Free Church. We will sometimes be offering videos (watch for one this afternoon), post songs, and again, sometimes light-hearted posts. Here's a link to the Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/SheboyganEvangelicalFreeChurch/>

God positions us to be used for his honor and glory during difficult times. As we honor God and love our neighbors, we believe that these times will be redeemed by God for good and eternal purposes. We are here to pray and serve you! All the church staff can be reached via email. Use their first name and last initial and the "@e-free-family" address. My email address is "jon.m@e-free-family.com." I'd love to hear from you, pray with you and think with you about any concerns you might have.

You are loved!

With you,
Pastor Jon MacDonald

Wednesday, March 18

Men's Prayer Meeting - cancelled
Women's and Men's Bible Study - cancelled
Quiz Practice - cancelled
Awana - cancelled until after Easter
Youth Group - cancelled until after Easter
Adult Choir - cancelled

Thursday, March 19

HEARTH - cancelled until after Easter (reassess at that time)
GriefShare - still holding, but cautioning those at risk

Dear Church Family,

Our Sovereign God is all-wise and imparts wisdom to us as we seek him in prayer (James 1:5). With the outbreak of Coronavirus, we have been presented with a very fluid, ever-changing dynamic. To address this situation, I have proposed four phases for the church leadership to adopt pertaining to our worship services, depending upon the severity of the circumstances within our church and county.

The Four Phases:

Phase One: Encourage those who are at risk to stay home.

Phase Two: Encourage everyone to stay home but give freedom for those who desire to gather for worship to do so.

Phase Three: Close the campus with the exception of technology/worship personnel, and offer worship services via livestream to our home settings.

Phase Four: Broadcast from my office with pre-recorded worship and announcements, but live teaching.

UPDATE: We are currently in Phase 3. We are noting carefully what is being communicated by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), The World Health Organization (WHO), and the Wisconsin Health and Human Services (HHS). We are noting what the governor has recommended regarding the number of people gathered at any given time. With these venues for worship (8:00; 9:30, and 11:00) combined with our livestream for those unable /unlikely to attend, we are able to make adjustments with our Four Phase strategy.

The Needed Perspective

The Evangelical Free Church of America is circulating perspective statements for leaders around the nation. The perspective listed below are a blend of EFCA and Dr. Hylander's thoughts:

We are praying, not panicking.

We are treating this situation as dynamic, not static.

We will adjust strategies as needed, and communicate accordingly.

We offer online worship services.

We encourage those feeling sick or appearing symptomatic to remain at home.

We are honing our cleaning processes.

We can greet one another without shaking hands.

We welcome online giving, so as to continue funding our ministries.

We encourage good hygiene, and in particular, thorough hand washing.

We are constantly evaluating our ministry activities.

We will monitor the health needs of our church community, proactively and reactively.

We will make necessary adjustments in matters concerning our approach to communion.

Conclusion

Times of heightened anxieties over health-related matters contain both objective and subjective elements. Our church is approaching this fluid situation proactively, wanting to minister simultaneously to those within this church fellowship as well as to our region. Times such as these should be seen as opportunities, not obstacles, for the advancement of the gospel. Let's be Christ-centered, demonstrating love to believer and unbeliever alike, as we seek to bring glory to our risen Savior.

Love in Christ,
Dr. Gary Hylander