

March 13, 2020

Living Hope Church Family,

This is a difficult time for our community, our nation, and our world. Yet, we have a powerful, loving Father in heaven who we can trust to lead us forward! At this point the coronavirus outbreak has already impacted most of our lives in numerous ways: school closings, working from home, financial uncertainty, empty store shelves, and increased anxiety.

Some of us are merely inconvenienced, while others are hurting in more significant ways. Some of us are frustrated at what may feel like an overreaction, while others are dealing with a very real fear. As followers of Christ, we need to stand in faith, be gracious, avoid prideful criticism, and seek the Spirit for peace and joy in this uncertain time.

Let's be steadfast to pray that God would give our government and medical leaders wisdom and insight to end this quickly. Pray also for God to protect the elderly and those at high risk of impact from the coronavirus. Additionally, while we need to heed the requests from our leaders and practice appropriate social distancing, we must also follow the command of Jesus to love and serve our neighbors. Be discerning about appropriate ways to bless and serve those in need around you.

And so, as with any minor or major hardship, we turn to God. In the midst of these circumstances, we lift up the cry of Psalm 62:5-8:

“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.”

With these things in mind, after much prayer and discussion, the elders and deacons have decided not to have our Saturday night youth meeting or our Sunday morning worship gathering at the YMCA on Sunday, March 15. Given the announcements yesterday from the governors of [Pennsylvania](#) and [Maryland](#) and the closing of SYC schools today, we felt pressed to do our part to help curb the spread of the coronavirus. This will also relieve the pressure from the dozens of volunteers required to hold our Sunday worship gathering. Our decision was also impacted by the reality that we meet in a YMCA with over 4,000 members.

Despite the current public health concerns, we also take seriously the Lord's call for us to regularly gather to worship him and receive from his Word. And so, we are encouraging all of you to gather for worship and time in the Word on Sunday morning in your home. In addition to gathering with your family, please prayerfully consider inviting others who live near you, to join you. Life Group Facilitators, you may consider organizing something with your groups at your own discretion. Please be sure to reach out to our singles and those not in a Life Group, so that no one is left out.

We would ask that anyone with a sickness in your home not participate in these home gatherings. Older adults and those with preexisting health issues, please be very careful and err on the side of caution. As you gather, please be considerate with the basic recommended preventative measures: wash your hands, cover coughs and sneezes, avoid handshakes and hugs.

While you are free to worship and study however you are led, we will be providing some resources for your Sunday morning worship. We are still working out the specifics, but we'll either have a pre-recorded message and worship or access to a live stream video online. Links for these resources, along with any future updates, will be emailed out and posted on www.findlivinghope.com and www.facebook.com/findlivinghope. We hope that you'll join us Sunday morning as we study the "The Shepherd Ruler" from Micah 5!

Regarding regular Life Group meetings, youth Core Groups, women's Arise & Shine, accountability groups, and all other small groups, you are welcome to continue meeting at your own discretion as you feel comfortable.

Let's pray together that God will use this season of difficulty and adjustment to strengthen our faith, build up his church, and draw in the lost! Be steadfast in prayer!

In God's Grace,

Living Hope Church Elders & Deacons