

GREFC Family,

We know that you are aware of the spread of COVID-19 and how it has impacted our cities, nation, and world in significant ways. Closer to home, it's impacted many of you with the next decision by the state to call off school beginning Wednesday.

Our Minnesota governor, Tim Walz, declared a "peacetime emergency" this past week in order to heighten the state's readiness to respond to COVID-19. As a result, it was recommended that all gatherings over 250 people be limited. Because each of our two worship services falls under that number, we chose to not cancel this past Sunday. But I also knew that this situation would be fluid and would continue to develop. That has happened already. The next step is that the **Center for Disease Control** is now recommending that people **not gather in groups of 50 or more.**

That recommendation creates the obvious reality that Sunday morning and Wednesday night gatherings are over that 50-person mark. While there have been no reported cases of the virus in our area, we believe that we have an obligation to follow and respect the wishes of our leaders that God has ordained on this issue. Respecting authority is a mandate in the scriptures which show that we are also willing to come under the authority of God.

So, as of today we will be canceling our Wednesday night programming and our Sunday morning services for at least the next two weeks and then will monitor the ongoing situation to see how we will respond.

For you that weren't at our service yesterday...the temptation is to allow fear to rule our world and avoid asking the question, "what does God want us to do during this time?" I do believe this, God desires that we as a church continue to be a church and not give in to fear and panic. Over these next few weeks, we will be putting our learning caps on to see how we can be creative in continuing to love each other and our community deeply. As we learn, we will continue to spread our thoughts and desires through email, social media and our website. I will be continuing in our sermon series **called "13 questions"** and my goal is to have that sermon online by this Sunday morning that you might keep up to date with our sermon series and other announcements.

As I mentioned yesterday, I do not want this crisis event to drive us to turn inward and only worry about our own life and family. Realize that every crisis needs to be viewed as an open door for giving away Jesus and drawing us closer to our Heavenly Father. So rather than fear and turn inward, now is the time to think creatively as to how we can love like Jesus loved.

So – we must not panic or hide but look to love deeper and broader. Remember, no matter how frustrating this is, **fear doesn't have the final say.** I John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." Our hope is built on the perfect love of Jesus and we ought to heed to the mandate to share that love with the world. That is what we must do in the coming weeks and months as God opens our eyes to people that are in need.

We will continue to give regular updates on events and other church family issues, so please continue to look to your email inbox and the church website.

God is good, God is in control, and God wants us near!

On behalf of the Elder Board and Church Staff

Pastor Ken

P.S. Sites to monitor

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/>