



UPDATED: Berwick AG Coronavirus Response

The last week to ten days has been filled with so much uncertainty and fear. Sometimes panic and hysteria have even reared their ugly heads. No matter the perspective any one person has on recent events, we can all agree that our lives have been fraught with unexpected and significant change. And change, generally speaking, can often trigger fear, anxiety and worry. What we know as Christians is that change, while it is inevitable, does not apply to God's nature. He is constant, an ever-present help in times of trouble.

In order to be fully submitted to the Lord, we must also maintain submission to authority. Romans 13 speaks of this when it says that we are to be subject to the governing authorities, which are indeed established by God. Paul says that it is a matter of conscience that we honor and submit ourselves to their leadership; to do otherwise would be to rebel against God (Rom. 13:2).

Last week, we shared that there are three aspects we consider as we make decisions during this ever-evolving scenario surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic:

- 1.) Information that is known to be accurate and up to date
- 2.) Scripture and its role of informing not just our *faith* but also our *practice*
- 3.) Available wisdom and knowledge concerning best practices to serve both our church and our community well

Among the information which is both accurate and up to date is Governor Wolf's mandated closure of all businesses that are not "life sustaining". This was effective at 8 PM on March 19th. A closer examination of this mandate reveals that **churches** (religious organizations) **are permitted to continue normal operation**, but religious leaders are encouraged to exercise abundant caution in the course of doing so.

We appreciate the Governor's recognition of the value of religious organizations to the communities they serve - especially at a time like this. With that freedom granted to us, **Berwick AG will have service** on Sunday March 22nd @ 10:30 AM. Hosting Sunday's service means that we will continue to take extra precautions to help ensure the building is clean and sanitized in all high traffic and common areas. Please know that if you're an "at-risk" individual, aren't feeling healthy or aren't comfortable attending service this weekend, you have the freedom to stay at home without judgment.

At the same time, we want to do our best to honor the spirit of the Governor's mandate. As a result, **all Berwick AG services will transition to online-only effective March 25th**. This will impact the way men's and women's ministries as well as Spanish, student and children's ministries operate **but it will not prevent them from continuing**. We're asking for your patience in the transition; there will be a lot of moving pieces and much to communicate. Our Core Leadership Team has developed an initial strategy for online ministry that we will share this weekend and the days following.

We are also making a change to the accessibility of the office during this time. Our staff is able to continue in-office operation, but in keeping with the spirit of the Governor's mandate, we're **closing the office to the general public effective March 23rd**. Please understand **we are not preventing access to our Pastors!** We are presently implementing a strategy that allows the pastoral staff to be accessible and responsive in spite of the office closure. You can reach the Pastors by e-Mailing the office (info@berwickag.org) and we've created a **dedicated phone line** that will receive texts or calls and will serve as our primary contact point during this time ([570.520.0844](tel:570.520.0844)). Our staff will monitor this line and respond promptly and accordingly.

There are many, and varied, opinions being expressed at this time. Our request is that, no matter your opinion on the decisions that Berwick AG and its leadership makes, you **show extra grace during this season**. We are *all* working from a playbook that hasn't been fully written. We'll keep doing our absolute best to grow and improve in our communication and execution as we move forward TOGETHER.

Lastly, please remember to join with us in **being the hands and feet of Jesus to those around us**. We continue to dialogue with school and community officials in an effort to identify ways that Berwick AG can serve those who have needs arising from local and state responses to COVID-19. But the most effective way for the church to *be the church* and serve our community will always be YOU. Check on your neighbors - especially those who may be elderly. If they have a need, **let us know!** We as a church would love to be able to help meet practical needs in practical ways the best we are able. We continue to work to mobilize willing volunteers from the church to help serve and love on our community during this time; let us know if you're willing to join this movement.

Pastor Scott, Bekah and the Berwick AG Leadership Team