

Dear Congregation,

Recently, an anointed reverend within ABC, a humble man of God has encouraged pastors to refrain from opening this week and wisely asked, “Should not we who follow Jesus, see this as a time in the wilderness with Jesus, a time to rethink our calling and commission, a time to recommit ourselves to the way of God which is the way of love?”. He sent this in the spirit of love and concern for the people who might seek to rush back into their churches, without counting the cost, or respecting the still present danger for the weakest of us within and without the body of Christ.

I completely agree. This is a time when I should remember to follow the One who ministered to contagious lepers, to the blind and impoverished, those who were grieving, mired in sin, hungry, or lost.

I should use this time in the wilderness of my seclusion to recite the Word of God before the adversity set before me that seeks to offer me food, kingdoms, and salvation through means other than the daily provision of my loving, almighty, Father God.

And I am indeed rethinking my calling and commission, and have recommitted myself in prayer, “to the way of God, which is the way of love”, and not the way of fear, routine, or self-preservation.

As I said, I completely agree with of this most respectable man of God and respect his concerns.

Barring any new concerns, or changes to the current health trends within our church, I will unlock the doors of the First Baptist Church of Fitchburg on Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020 at 10am.

We will not be resuming what are considered to be “regular services” for some time. As the disciple Peter came out of that upper room on the first day of Pentecost, being led by the Holy Spirit, to offer words of encouragement and the message of Christ to those nearest to him in the crowd below (*Act 2:14-21*), a message that would take his lifetime, and that of all others whom have followed Christ from that time until now, to fully share with the world in fulfilment of the Great Commission, so too do I feel led to come out of my room to be present, listen and speak words of encouragement to those who are able, nearest and most in need of support and solace at this time.

I am no Peter. I am a simple woman trying to follow the leading of the Spirit within me with fear and trembling. I am confident that each pastor of each individual church is seeking the will of God and the good of each of their congregants at this time and in so doing, many will be making vastly different choices, based on their particular ministry needs. I fully respect and support the decisions they make and ask that you do as well, without any comparisons to other churches. No two are the same, not even within denominations, and no two have the same people or concerns. Let us pray for and support them in their difficult tasks in the time ahead.

I will be in the sanctuary on May 31st, standing apart from every other person, and asking that any that do venture out on that day, or any other Sunday to follow, will strictly do the same, for their sake and the sake of their neighbor.

On this Pentecost Sunday there will be no traditional bulletins, or hymns. Many of the structures of fellowship that so many, including myself enjoy, will not be performed again for some time to come, and some may never return. Only God knows. The deacon board will decide, based on results from this gathering, and latest health updates, when and how to proceed as a church after this time. You are most welcome to share your thoughts with members of the deacon board and have your feelings heard, respected and considered.

All who enter must wear a mask to fully cover their mouth and nose and must remain, at all times, as distant as possible, more than the required 6 feet wherever able, from others not part of their household. We have a limited amount of paper masks for those who do not have one. Purell dispensers can be found on the walls near the entrances.

There will be rows and indicators to direct the steps of those who enter, which must be respected, whether it feels frustrating, silly, unnecessary, or not. There will be no bibles other than the personal ones that are brought and kept with individuals at all times. Each household must wait to be dismissed in succession and may not tarry in the hallways or parking lot before, during worship time, or dismissal.

All children must remain with their household members at all times. There will be no Sunday school. All must remain seated, unless use of the facilities is necessary, at which point the direction of traffic must follow the markers. No person of any age will be allowed to walk up and down the aisles during the service. Offerings may be left in the secure box provided in the narthex.

These are the actions and things necessary for anyone who chooses to enter the building in Fitchburg. I pray that before entering, each of you pray earnestly that the Lord instruct you on whether or not you should go to or enter the church building.

Those of you who are elder, immuno-compromised, in any way ill, or not “feeling quite right”, or uncomfortable in Any way please, ***please*** stay home for as long as you are led too, for the sake of yourself and others. If you or a family member have tested positive for Covid-19 **you are required** to quarantine for 2-4 weeks as recommended by your doctor.

Please ask yourself if you are choosing to attend out of habit, ritual, curiosity, or boredom, and if so, ***please stay home***. This is not a time to be flippant with our behaviors. The church will be there in a while, however long that is, awaiting our safe return.

We are being financially sustained, thanks to the will of God and all of you. The Lord is present with you and does hear your prayers from the safety of your homes, and they count for just as much. Services will still be emailed, mailed and if the Lord allows, recorded for you to read and view until further notice. You will not be “missing out” by remaining safe under the guidance of your God, doctors, and beloved family members.

The purpose of unlocking the doors and allowing a small portion of people to enter safely is so that those who are broken in spirit, or struggling with trauma may find a quiet place to reflect on their situation, share their grief, worship and pray in the presence of others, and perhaps share or receive a word of encouragement or hope.

This will be more of a memorial service and acknowledgement of the goodness and mercy that the Lord has shown even now, in our time of great need. This type of sharing can be done via phone, or in many other physically distant ways, but for those who require physical presence, it being a personal right to take the risk, I will be there, as unskilled as I am, to offer what I can to the Body of Christ in Fitchburg. I am confident that the Lord is already with you, and that I will see you soon, however long that takes. Our God is patient, and we that are in Christ are called to be patient as well.

I offer what I hope will be an encouraging song:

“It Takes A Little Time” by Amy Grant (Click on the link->) <https://youtu.be/reUc-YighZQ>

May the Lord bless and keep you.

Regards,
Rev. Meredith H. Christian

Pastor of The First Baptist Church of Fitchburg Ma.
1400 John Fitch Hwy
Fitchburg, MA 01420
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