

# A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

March 12, 2020

My dear Friends:

This past week has been unprecedented in our lifetimes with the spread of this novel coronavirus, which is being called COVID-19. On behalf of our leadership, I wanted to touch base with you, both to give you my own best sense of things and to offer a pastoral word as we navigate the next few weeks together.

First, you need to be aware that we have been paying a great deal of attention to this developing situation over the past weeks. Robert Browning and I have been consulting with a number of our medical professionals within our congregation as well as monitoring the advice of the Centers for Disease Control. In addition, Mike Malone earlier this week had already communicated with his community to offer them some guidance on how to proceed in the coming weeks. Your church's leadership has been on this and has taken it seriously.

Second, while this is a novel coronavirus, many of the suggested precautions are the ones that we implement each year when we experience a significant flu outbreak, which means that we've already been doing these protocols. Our nursery facility is cleaned daily, but usually starting in January, our team goes into hyper-drive with bleach-based disinfectants and daily deep cleaning. Since we've been doing this already, we feel good about the cleanliness of our children's areas. Likewise, we've put out lots of hand sanitizers throughout our campus, of which many of you have been taking advantage. And as always, when we have communion, it is prepared by those wearing gloves to ensure that it is sanitary.

Third, as with our general cold and flu season, the best preventative for spread of this novel coronavirus is your own self-monitoring and common sense. In terms of self-monitoring, that means washing your hands, "vampire coughing" (sneezing or coughing into the crook of your arm), and staying home if you feel poorly. Our medical professionals tell us that those who are taking medications that suppress the immune system are at an increased risk, so please exercise proper caution. And in terms of common sense, that means if you feel uncomfortable being out and about, then staying home and participating in the worship services via our livestream ([ipcmemphis.org](http://ipcmemphis.org)) is the best option. If you decide to come to church, then general common sense should prevail—fist bumps or waves are entirely acceptable right now; let communion pass by if you've been sneezing; etc.

Now, all of this means that for right now, we will be proceeding with our regular activities this coming Sunday. Likewise, we presently plan to hold our women's conference at the end of the month with Paige Brown, Lord willing. But part of the reason we usually say, "Lord willing," is because our plans might change (James 4:15); if they do change, we will communicate with the congregation to make sure you know what is going on.

Finally, a brief pastoral word: it is so striking that this past Sunday, I preached on Romans 8:28 and this coming Sunday, we will look at verses 29-30. God planned these texts for us—even in this situation, even if we contract this virus, somehow God will be able to work this together in such a way that it will work for our salvation and his glory. Further, God's purpose is unstoppable—he certainly will bring us to glory and not even this virus can stop God's sovereign purpose of salvation. Let's remember this as we walk through these next days.

But let's also remember that when we are anxious—and it is natural and normal to be anxious right now—that God calls us to take our anxieties to him. "Trust in him at all times, you peoples; pour out your heart before him, for God is a refuge for us" (Psalm 62:8). It does little good to tell people who are fearful to stop being afraid; but it does a great deal of good for us fearful people to take our hearts to a God who is a strong refuge for us. So, let us pour out our hearts, our fears, our anxieties to our God—he cares about us!

And who knows? Maybe our prayers will be part of a worldwide revival that God might bring as a result of all of this? God has done more amazing things than that, after all. Praying for us all!

In the grip of God's grace,

