



July 17, 2020

Sisters and brothers of Ardmore Baptist Church:

In 1913, the president-elect of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, remarked to a reporter, “It would be an irony of fate if my administration had to deal chiefly with foreign affairs, for all of my preparation has been in domestic matters.” A little more than a year after his inauguration, World War I began. We can never know what events will be waiting to meet us around the bend. And in the midst of that uncertainty, leadership is not just about forecasting and visioning the future; it is about the ability to respond to the unexpected events of the present.

This pandemic has certainly been an unexpected event in the life of the church. We have all had to adapt in ways that we had not anticipated and could not have foreseen. And our leaders have had to make decisions without the knowledge of whether or not we are overreacting or underreacting.

Last week I wrote to you all to remind you that our *ABC Re-Opening Team* is diligently and prayerfully considering all of the best steps forward for us as a congregation. I also reminded you that the Team had made the decision to wait until North Carolina had been moved into Phase 3 before we would feel comfortable resuming in-person worship services in our Sanctuary. I know that churches are all across the board on how they have responded to this pandemic, but we continue to feel that this is the wisest course of action for Ardmore Baptist Church. At his press conference on Tuesday, July 14, Gov. Roy Cooper extended our Phase 2 for an additional three weeks (it had been scheduled to expire on Friday, July 17). Therefore, as we continue to consider when to resume in-person worship, our *ABC Re-Opening Team* will continue to meet and monitor the situation as we get closer to the date of August 7.

Despite that news, we also want to inform you about some exciting ministry and community-building opportunities we are working on:

- **Meet in the Park** – Under Phase 2 stipulations, up to 25 people can meet outside for gatherings. We are now encouraging our Sunday Bible Study classes and other small groups to begin to organize opportunities to have these gatherings in large yards and local parks. Social distancing should still be observed, but it is a great chance to be together and to fellowship with one another!
- **Virtual Potluck (Sunday, July 26, 12:00 pm)** – This is a time to gather – simply gather, no agenda – on Zoom. Many of us are able to see the people in our Sunday Bible Study classes but we miss the people we would normally see in the hallways and in the sanctuary. This “Virtual Pot-Luck” is time to see those friendly faces you miss. If you would like to join us, contact Gina Brock for the Zoom invitation – gbrock@ardmorebaptist.org.
- **Missions Project: Project Moore (August 2 & 23)** – As our school partner, Moore Elementary (in the Ardmore neighborhood) begins to work towards receiving students this school year, they are asking for our help with an innovative idea. They want to provide every student at Moore Elementary (597 kids) with a “Maker Box” that would be filled with creative supplies that the students can use in the school year. There are two dates for Project Moore: On Sunday, August 2 (4:00-7:00 PM) you are invited to come to a Drive Thru Pick-up Party at the church as the Pastoral Staff hands out however many boxes you would like to fill. Then on Sunday, August 23 (4:00-7:00 PM) you are invited to a Drive Thru Drop-off and Celebration Party where the Pastoral Staff will be there to receive your boxes (and there may be some surprises!). More information about this event, including a list of supplies for the boxes, will be coming next week. You can contact Amy Gallaher at agallaher@ardmorebaptist.org for more information.

- **Front Yard Chats** – For some of our brothers and sisters at Ardmore Baptist, this pandemic has been extremely isolating. They may be in the high-risk category and human interaction has been minimal. Or they may not have internet access and been unable to join in the Sunday Bible Study classes via Zoom or watch the online services. We invite you to help show these brothers and sisters that they are loved and remembered by going to their houses and having a “front yard chat.” This means visiting them by standing in their front yards at a safe distance. If you would be interested in reminding our most isolated Ardmore family members that they are loved and remembered, contact Gina Brock at gbrock@ardmorebaptist.org.

We are working on more opportunities that you will be hearing about soon including new Bible Study options, socially distanced fellowship opportunities, new live-streaming technologies in the Sanctuary, and more ways that we can continue to be the Body of Christ with one another.

As I've said to you many times before, I know that this has been a difficult time for many of us. I also know that some people may perceive our cautious path as one that is motivated by fear. I respectfully disagree; our motivation has never been fear, but love: Love of neighbor, love of our congregation, and love of our God. It is important for us to remember that when the Bible tells us “do not fear” it does not promise us easiness in life nor does it suggest that we plunge ahead regardless of the consequences. When we are told not to fear, it is to be a reminder that regardless of whatever situation we face we are not alone: God with us, Immanuel. Do not fear.

Finally, I want to share a prayer with you. This prayer was published by the World Council of Churches and it has been on my heart and mind recently. When I find myself grumbling or complaining about how my life has been altered due to this pandemic, I try to remember to take a moment and lift these words up to God:

Prayer for a Pandemic

*May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.
May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.
May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close
Remember those who have no options.
May we who have to cancel trips
Remember those that have no safe place to go.
May we who are losing our margin money in tumult of the economic market
Remember those who have no margin at all.
May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
Remember those who have no home.
As fear grips our country,
Let us choose love.
During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,
Let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.
Amen.*

Peace,



Rev. Tyler Tankersley