



August 13, 2020

Sisters and Brothers of Ardmore Baptist Church:

I want to start out by simply saying how proud I am of you. On Sunday, August 2, I was part of the Pastoral Staff who were present to hand out boxes to be filled for the students of Moore Elementary. Our church set the goal of filling 300 boxes and, admittedly, when I first heard that number I wondered if we would be able to reach that goal. But, through the grace of God shining through you all, we were out of boxes in only 45 minutes! The generosity and kindness of our congregation continues to amaze me.

Participating in that event gave my heart the added benefit of being able to see many of you. It was such a joy. And I know that we are missing that in our lives right now. We long to be together as a church family, to gather in our building, and to sing together about the goodness and grace of God.

Our *ABC Re-Opening Team* continues to meet and deliberate about the best path forward for our church. As a reminder, the Team made the decision several weeks ago to wait until the state of North Carolina was moved to Phase 3 before resuming in-person worship. With the governor's decision on August 5 to extend Phase 2 for a further five weeks, we feel it wise to continue abiding by our original decision to wait until Phase 3. The *ABC Re-Opening Team* continues to consult with the Pastoral Staff and the Safety/Security Team in order to prepare our facilities for in-person worship when the time arrives.

However, just because we are not meeting for in-person worship does not mean we are refraining from reflective and important ministry. Here are some upcoming opportunities I want you to be aware of:

- **Open Sanctuary Prayer** – Unless you have been filmed to help lead in worship, you have likely not stepped foot in our beautiful sanctuary since March 8. Since simply being in that space can be a balm for our souls, we would like to begin opening our sanctuary for a time of contemplative prayer and meditation. This will be offered on both Tuesday mornings, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (beginning on August 25) and Thursday evenings, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. (beginning on August 27). This will be an open-house style opportunity in which you can drop by for a time of spiritual reflection. There will be a mix of reflective music and holy silence. We will continue to abide by the Phase 2 guidelines of no more than 10 people gathering indoors. If possible, we kindly ask anyone attending to stay for a maximum of 15-20 minutes to allow others to enjoy the sanctuary, too. A volunteer will be in the narthex to assist with any questions or needs.
- **Sermon on the Mount Bible Study** – Rev. Ralph Stocks and Dr. Gina Brock will lead a six-week study on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount beginning Sunday, September 13, at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom. Please contact Gina at gbrock@ardmorebaptist.org for more information and/or to receive the Zoom link.
- **Moore Maker Boxes Drop-Off Event** – Remember to bring your filled Moore Maker Boxes by the church building on Sunday, August 23, 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. The ministers will be available to take them from your car. Then, plan to drive down to the lower lot for free Kona Ice. We look forward to receiving those 300+ boxes back to deliver to Moore Elementary along with the story of your generosity and care.

Finally, I want you to know as we enter into the Fall, we will engage in a congregational emphasis on neighborliness. We will focus on loving our neighbors who live near our homes, our neighbors who live near our church, and our neighbors (both locally and globally) who are our missional partners. To explore

what it means to love our neighbors, we will explore Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) both in worship and, if you so choose, the Sunday afternoon Bible Study. It is, in my opinion, the most important sermon ever preached in history; it serves as Jesus' manifesto for what life in the kingdom of God should look like. And as I've read and reread the Sermon on the Mount over the past few months, I think it is exactly the message for this time. It was addressed to a group of worn out and frustrated people who were looking to know how best to live their faith in a rapidly changing world.

Perhaps it would be best to let Jesus have the last word:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:1-12)

Peace,



Rev. Tyler Tankersley