



September 18, 2020

Sisters and brothers of Ardmore Baptist Church:

In his book *Reinventing Sunday*, the pastor and worship leader Brad Berglund tells the story of how his young son was diagnosed with a brain tumor. After one of his son's treatments, he found himself wandering into the doors of a large, downtown congregation in Denver, Colorado near their hospital. Brad had preached countless sermons and had led worship musically for hundreds of services, but in his moment of crisis, he says he sat in that Sanctuary and whispered the only prayer he could: "Help me."

Brad's son eventually recovered, but he says that family crisis caused him to view worship itself in a new way. He realized that, before that moment, he had always viewed worship as a consumer. He chose whether or not to go to worship based on whether he enjoyed the music or whether he thought the preaching was interesting. After that crisis, he began to view worship differently. Brad says the crisis helped birth a new understanding in his life. It is the same for congregations: "It may be that churches also need a crisis to re-frame their approach to worship. Rather than merely consuming our preferences, a more mature motivation for worship would be a desire for worshippers to be mature, deeply spiritual human beings."

Our church (and all churches) have been in the midst of a crisis over the past few months. We have faced a situation unlike any in our lifetimes and we have had to creatively reconsider ways of being church together. We've adapted to online community, virtual worship, and flexible forms of community with one another. Now we are beginning the process of resuming many of our in-person gatherings.

In this packet you will find a lot of information about the logistics of the relaunching of our in-person worship. We want you to know the various procedures that will be enacted to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all who may attend our services. This is all vitally important information. However, I wonder if we are brave enough to wrestle with the bigger questions of: How will we be different because of this crisis? How will we walk into the doors of our Sanctuary with a changed perspective on the role of worship in our lives?

My hope and prayer for all of us (including for myself) is that we will re-enter into our Sanctuary with a newfound appreciation for the grace that is found in gathering together. I pray that we will not take that for granted and that we will not allow ourselves to be bogged down or easily annoyed by the logistics or our preferences. Instead, we will be people with open spirits to the things that God wants do in and through us all.

And as we enter into this time, please reflect on these words of Benediction that so capture my prayers for us all:

*May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you, wherever he may lead you.
May he guide you through the wilderness; protect you through the storm.
May he bring you home rejoicing, at the wonders he has shown you.
May he bring you home rejoicing, once again into our doors.*

Peace,

Rev. Tyler Tankersley