

To the South Main Family:

Unprecedented. That is the word best used to describe the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting circumstances. In three days, we have witnessed the closing of the largest rodeo and livestock show in the world, universities and public schools, college and professional sporting events, museums, Broadway theaters, and Disney theme parks. Unprecedented.

Medical researchers and other medical professionals declare that there is so much we do not know about it, how widespread it is, and how to combat it. While as Jesus followers we value faith over fear, we should also be aware of the concerns about this particular virus. Public health officials have determined that “social distancing” or reducing the times of large groups together in one place may be one of the best strategies to control the number of cases in order not to overwhelm completely our health care delivery system.

Thursday night during a conference call with many faith community leaders, Dr. Peter Pisters, President of the MD Anderson Cancer Center; Dr. David Callender, President of Memorial Hermann Health Care System; and Dr. Umair Shah, the President of the Harris County Public Health, urged the temporary suspension of live gatherings in churches, synagogues, and mosques across the area as a way to help. I understand their request and the rationale for making it and believe that we should respond positively to their counsel.

As a result, I am announcing that we will cancel all of our worship and ministry activities for the week of March 15-21, including our normal Sunday and Wednesday schedule, the Learning Center, the Family Life Center, weekday ministries of South Main, and the groups that use our campus during the week.

We do this not out of a sense of panic or fear, but we do it as an obligation to our members, our neighbors, and the communities in which we live. Dr. Roger Patterson, Pastor of the West University Baptist Church, expressed it well when he said, “We, the faith community, were great at recovering from Harvey, but if we could have prevented Harvey, we would have. This [cancellation of worship] is a way that we can try to prevent the next big storm that’s about to hit our city.”

Here are some things that I urge you to do during this unprecedented time:

- Pray for God to extend his mercy and grace to his world.
- Pray for the expertise and wisdom of medical professionals, governmental servants, and public health officials.
- Pray for ones most vulnerable to the virus, Senior Adults
- Although not through the “taking of an offering,” give your financial gifts faithfully through South Main either through the Shelby App, the SMBC web page, mailing them, or bringing them to the office in person (The church office will remain open this week.)
- Make telephone contacts within your small group. Isolation can be lonely.
- Be sensitive to the needs of others. If you know of one of our members that needs something but does not want to leave their home, let us know. We will seek to help provide transportation.
- Due to the closing of PISD, we will be seeking to provide food assistance with the families we serve through our Rooftop Ministry.

Unprecedented, but what is preceded because it has happened repeatedly, is that God walks with us through this pandemic crisis. He never leaves us alone. He has been with us through every previous circumstance, and He is with us now. Praise be to God.

Dr. Ron Lyles
Senior Pastor