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March 17, 2020 (11 am)

Dear Beloved Church Family,

One of our elders wrote me this morning, “After all this is over what really will have mattered is how we treated each other.” These are true words and are reflective of our Lord’s command to love our neighbor as ourselves. Let us be the most loving, gracious people in the community right now.

Yesterday, a small group of us were handing out food at the Parker Elementary School. We did a drive through set up and we ran out of food in record time. One of the mothers who went through the line told me that she had just been laid off from work. I asked her where and she told me a local restaurant because they were closing down due to government regulations to only provide drive through or take out. We loved on her, gave her food, and told her “God is with you.” She was encouraged. Our neighbor was loved by Jesus through FBC!

Also yesterday, FBC was called upon to help a family in our community. We shopped for them and brought them some groceries and a little financial assistance. They have a complex medical situation and they cried as we brought the love of Jesus to them and prayed for them. Our neighbor was loved by Jesus through FBC!

These are just two quick stories from yesterday. People from our church are being the hands and feet of Jesus! Thank you!

The elders will be meeting on Monday, March 23 to determine our next steps. I am anticipating a decision that partners with and aligns with the requests of the Henry County Health Department, state, and federal health organizations, as well as our community, state, and federal leadership. We are servants of Jesus Christ, first and foremost, but in our calling as servants of God, we are partners with our communities to bring about thriving to the glory of God. We exist to proclaim Christ in word and deed. Therefore, while it is not yet official as your pastors, elders, and leaders are praying daily for you and our church, I anticipate a decision that will very much affect how we do church for a lengthened period of time. Please pray for us and we are praying for you.

With that decision before us, I am calling all Christians to be the Church. We can no longer say that being a Christian means we go to a building once a week. For a short season before us, that may or may not be an option, at least for 50 (10) or more people at a time. Being the Church means being the hands and feet of Christ to our neighbors right now, right here. It means calling on people, sending emails, text messages, posting God’s Word to your social media platform. If the mail continues to be delivered, sending cards and hand-written letters to people who do not otherwise get communications, because they don’t have email. It means helping close the effects of social distancing and isolation. It means being a friend to anyone who is in need.

I pray that as faithful followers of Jesus, we will see the opportunities ever before all of us to share the hope and security of Jesus Christ in this time of fear and insecurity. The Lord is with us! May Psalm 91 be ever on your minds and hearts as you walk with people through this time. This is a unique time in history, as I said on Sunday—a 9/11 moment for this generation, but the Lord has not/is not/will not forsake us. Dwell in God! Abide in Jesus! Get in His easy yoke and find rest for your soul.

The world needs faithful followers of Jesus right now! In the easy yoke of Jesus, we learn from Jesus how to rest in the promises of the God who is both sovereign over all things and sufficient to meet any and all needs. Often, He does this through us—we are His hands and feet to this world. May we submit to His goodness and grace, knowing His mercies are new every day. Be the solution in our community!

I call upon the Church of Jesus Christ, in this day and for the rest of our lives, to remember who we are: Church, you are the Citizens of Heaven, upon this earth, as witnesses of a Kingdom that has come and will one day come in fullness for eternity. My prayer for myself and all of you, as we seek the Lord for His presence: May we respond to this current crisis from a place of peace, in His presence, as we cast all of our anxieties upon the Lord. The Lord is with us!

There is an enemy at the gate of our community, but remember that in Christ we can cast all of our anxieties and fears upon Him. That doesn't mean we won't have moments of fear and anxiety about the things happening in this life or even of death, but remember this: the Lord is with you! Remember Paul's pastoral words to all Christians in Philippians 1:21, "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." I reminded you of this passage last week, but it is worth saying again: the reason we are not yet in Heaven is for "fruitful labor" for the sake of others. We are here, in this place and time, to serve in the name of Jesus Christ from a place of security in His resurrection from the dead. As long as there is breath in our lungs and life in these bodies, our calling from God is to proclaim the gospel message of faith, hope, and love. We are the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. We are His Body and He is our Head, let's listen and obey Him!

Your pastors, elders and leaders are praying for you. We love you. Call us if you need anything. Call us if you feel lonely or isolated or scared or any of those feelings. We will listen to you, then help you bring all that to the Lord in prayer. Remember the words of Jeremiah 29:11 that were given to God's people at a time when they felt very scared and isolated and cut off from their normal way of life: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This is a sacred promise of God—cling to it and pray it over yourself, your family, our church and communities, our nation and the nations. We are all in this together!

Your church has resources from the Henry County Health Department about COVID-19, as well as information for food assistance in East Central Indiana, posted on our front door and on our homepage at [www.newcastlefbcc.com](http://www.newcastlefbcc.com). Listen to past and present Sunday sermons over and over again through our media links. Stay tuned for more information coming your way, real soon.

With the LOVE of the Father, the GRACE of the Son, and the FELLOWSHIP of the Holy Spirit,  
Pastor Jerry Ingalls, Lead Pastor