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November 13, 2020

Dear Friends & Family of FBC,

We pray that you are well and remaining faithful to your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Lord is with you, so please press into your relationship with Him during these dark and difficult days in our communities, state, and nation. Let us pray together with Jesus as He intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father, “God’s will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”

The Governor of Indiana has transitioned how local communities are being invited to partner together for the health and well-being of our local communities, state of Indiana, and these United States of America as we are experiencing a second wave of the novel COVID-19 international pandemic, which materialized in our county 8 months ago in mid-March 2020. The Governor is no longer utilizing the five-stage plan, but is now calling us to make decisions based on the color-coded map of Indiana, which is based on the positivity rates in each county.

With that said, there is an onslaught of new decisions being made by organizations and officials around us, including local and surrounding school districts. Much is changing around us and many are anxious about what that means for our local church. What does this mean for FBC?

1. We will continue to partner with our local and state health partners, while still retaining our autonomy as the Church of Jesus Christ. We are seeking the Lord’s will in all that we think, say, and do. We will continue to monitor decisions being made by our city, county, and state partners, including our local school corporations.

We praise God that, at this time, religious organizations and churches are exempt from the governor’s directive to limit capacity of our gatherings. That means we will continue to offer all FBC programs and services to the glory of God, as long as the many members of FBC who lead and support those ministries, services, and programs are willing and able to serve and make them available to us. See point #2 below for how we will do this.

While we are exempt due to our religious freedoms, in order to preserve and protect this freedom of religious worship, we must uphold the directives, based on our Henry County positivity rate, for any and all outside groups who want to use our facility for their meetings, activities, concerts, etc. We will do everything in our power to be a good host site, but we will not put our own ministries and services at risk. Therefore, we will remain above reproach with our partnership with city, county, and state health partners regarding our facility usage beyond our FBC ministries and services. Our vision is to see communities thriving to the glory of God and that means we work together with our communities to bring this about.

2. We are ensuring your safety and well-being while we continue to prioritize our mission of seeing stories transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will continue to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and offer services and ministries to this end. We will also make sure that every person who comes in our building is safe and helping other people be and feel safe.

We need you to partner with us in the following three ways in order for us to be able to do this:

- The wearing of face masks is required upon entry to the building of FBC, and should be continued while in the building, unless you are sitting and are socially-distanced (6 feet) from any other person who is not of your household. Please work with your class leaders to accommodate this allowance.
- Social distancing must be maintained to the best of your ability. Rather than hugging or shaking hands, please use other forms of acceptable greetings. Please sit in the worship center in such a way that honors others; you don't know how you are making someone else feel when you don't follow these guidelines. People are trying to be kind and forgiving, even when you are making them feel unsafe and uncomfortable.
- Personal health and well-being is a personal responsibility for your health and the health of others. While this is about following good practices and established guidelines about when to come and not come to church programs and services based on your health status or contact with someone has been sick, this is also about your overall well-being. We are trying to connect everyone (over 500 people) through daily phone calls, regular emails, and invitations to participate, but we can only be the church working to meet your unique needs if you let us know where you need help—physically and practically, mentally and emotionally, spiritually and relationally. Please help us have a healthy relationship with you.

We commit to maintaining the highest of standards of safety and sanitary facilities. We commit to conducting our services in the safest and healthiest of ways. These are our commitments to you and we ask that you help us by doing your part. Please don't put one of us in a very uncomfortable situation because you feel you are honoring God and walking in the Spirit in some way while also being contrary to your pastors, elders, and leaders at FBC. We need to honor one another, and please know that; we are trying so very hard to honor all of you in your great diversity of opinions, and expressions of those opinions, over these last eight months.

We love you! We give thanks for each of you! We are praying for you!

On behalf of the elders and leaders of FBC, I write this to you with faith, hope, and love,

Pastor Jerry

Pastor Jerry Ingalls