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May 26, 2020

Cambria Baptist Family and Friends,

Through this period, we have sought to rightly apply Biblical principles to this ever-changing situation. We have been very aware of the command in Hebrews 10:25 not to forsake assembling. We rightly understand that principle to mean *to turn our back on* assembling. To this point we have been faithful. Yet, this has been a delicate balance with several other principles: The principle to care for the most vulnerable among us (James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:11; Philippians 2:3-4; Matthew 25:34-39), our testimony to the lost (Matthew 5:16; 2 Corinthians 8:21), the command not to fear (Philippians 4:6-7; Psalm 46:1-3), and the principle to submit to and honor civil authorities (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14).

When the COVID-19 crisis began, there was unanimity among our civil leadership on the steps necessary for our society to take. While the Governor exempted churches from the Executive Order to close, this unanimity among civil leadership led our church leadership to agree that this was the kind of issue in which we needed to take very seriously the principles of caring for the most vulnerable and seeking to honor civil authority. Over the past month, this unanimity among our civil leaders has degraded. As a result, they have been giving mixed and contradictory signals. This past Friday, President Trump ordered that the time had come to allow all churches to reopen. Further, as we have learned more about the virus, we have learned better how to protect the most vulnerable from it.

With this in mind, I met with the Board of Deacons last night to discuss our plan forward. The challenges of the last few months have been, without question, some of the hardest decisions we have had to make. The questions we sought to answer were, “At what point does the principle of assembling in Hebrews 10:25 take precedence?”, “At what point have we moved into forsaking assembling?”, and can we assemble while still honoring our civil authorities?” Good Christians can look at these questions, answer them differently, and both be right before God. These are questions of conscience. We needed to answer them for our body here at Cambria.

After lengthy discussion, the board came to a unanimous decision. We will begin meeting for morning service in the auditorium on Sunday, June 14th. This will provide us with time to prepare for opening. This will also give the Governor one final opportunity to open things up when her Executive Order expires on June 12th. We feel that because of the President’s statement, the exemption the Governor has given to churches, and the mixed signals from our civil leaders, we can now meet without dishonoring civil authority.

The Sunday worship will be restricted to a single morning service at 10:30am. We are doing this to give our custodian sufficient time to sanitize the auditorium before we meet again. We will rope off every other pew to encourage social distancing and spread out throughout the auditorium. At this point, we will not be providing any children's church. However, we are seeking to work through a plan for a nursery (as we feel it is unreasonable to expect an infant to make it through a service). We will seek to keep the service to a reasonable length. We will still have greeters at the doors although it will look a little different. We will have one person at each door to open it for those coming in to reduce the amount of surface contact. We will have a person in each lobby to hand a bulletin out. If you are in the category that is not as vulnerable to this virus and are willing help us in these areas please contact me.

I had mentioned just after Easter that we would have our choir Easter program two weeks after we started meeting again. However, as time has passed, it has become evident that this is not the wisest plan. In accordance with the CDC guidelines, we will be suspending the choir for the foreseeable future. Since we do not normally have choir during the summer, this simply follows along with what we have traditionally done. I look forward to our Christmas program.

Without question, the most controversial issue is the concept of masks. CDC guidelines recommend masks, and so we are asking that masks be worn. In this however, I want to encourage everyone to practice the principles of Romans 14 with one another. Some believe that they must be worn, some believe they should not be worn. We need to let everyone be ruled by love for one another and their conscience. Please be in attendance on Sunday as I work through the important text found in Romans 14 with you all. Let us not be divided over a piece of cloth.

We will continue to provide the recording of the service on our YouTube page. It will be uploaded by Tuesday. We would encourage those who are especially vulnerable to the virus and feel that they need to stay home to follow their conscience and do so. We will continue to minister to you as we have sought to do throughout this period. For those who cannot come and cannot access the YouTube channel, I will continue to provide a printout of my messages. If you have not been receiving this printout and would like to receive it, please contact the church office.

As we have currently suspended children's programs, we will not be having Sunday school or Wednesday night programs for the foreseeable future. We are watching to see what the recommendations will be for schools as we seek our next step in this area. I would like to offer weeknight small group Bible studies. On June 14th we will have sign-up sheets for you to sign up for a group. They will all meet at the church and will all be going over the same study. The goal is to provide some closer fellowship after this extended time apart. I will also continue my short Bible study on our YouTube channel for the foreseeable future.

The next weeks and months will be a period of growing for all of us. We will see that some things we do will not be necessary and some things we are not doing will be necessary. Some are concerned about this virus, some have lost family members to the virus, and some see the

virus as no big deal at all. Some feel very strongly about the need to physically distance, while some are ready to shake hands and hug it out. We have members on both extremes and everywhere in the middle. Satan would love nothing more than to divide us over these things. It is vital that we practice the challenge laid down by Paul in *Philippians 2:1-4* – *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,* ² *complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.* ³ *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* ⁴ *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

In Christ Alone,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dave', written in a cursive style.

Pastor Dave

