



Ponca City

Free Will Baptist Church

March 17, 2020

Dear Church Family,

We are postponing our normal services for the next two weeks. Below you will find important information, please read carefully, thank you.

The coronavirus has spread rapidly over the past week, bringing with it a level of panic from the supermarket to the stock market and everywhere in-between. Our message as a church from the beginning of this pandemic has been the same; we are called to be people of faith in the face of fear. We still proclaim that message with confidence. However, as I write this, I can feel the tension between faith and wisdom. Navigating the road between the two is especially tough as fear often has a way of masking itself as wisdom. We want to convey safety by implementing recommended health measures, at the same time, not succumbing to the cultural climate of fear, anxiety, and worry. Living in faith does not mean we abandon wisdom; we are to still use sound judgment and precautionary measures. As leadership, we are asking three important questions that will help us navigate with faith as we move forward. What is the risk? What is our response? And what resources can we offer? I would like to try to answer these questions with clarity and simplicity.

RISK - What is the risk for our church?

The virus can spread quickly and is very dangerous for the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. We as a church want to be a strong agent to prevent sickness and protect the susceptible. As the virus is now a part of Ponca, we want to do our part to lower the risk for our church family and our community.

RESPONSE - What is our response as a church?

The danger of the risk dictates our response as a church. After much prayer and dialogue with our leadership, we have made the following decision. In accordance with the order issued by local health officials and the government, we will exercise practical wisdom and postpone our gatherings for the next two weeks. This is hard, as meeting together and fellowship is healthy for our soul and plays a big part in our faith. We will evaluate at the end of the two weeks and let you know our plan of action from there. It saddens me to say, but we will NOT have the Great Day of Service this year. We believe this is the right response, as we do not want to be irresponsible or reckless.

RESOURCE - What resources can we offer?

While we are restricted from our gatherings, we still have the technology to provide resources to help us in our journey of faith and spiritual growth. There are 3 resources we want to offer to our church family.

1. [Worship Together Online](#) -

This Sunday, March 22, as well as next Sunday, March 29, our services will be held online. Service times will remain the same at 10:45. There is nothing that can replace meeting together, but in the meantime, we believe we can

continue to learn and grow together as a church by worshipping together in our homes with our families. We will post a short message on our website, **poncafwbchurch.com** and on our Facebook page, **facebook.com/poncafwbchurch** -You can watch from your smartphone, computer, or other devices, if you need any assistance on how to watch online, please contact me on my cell phone at (580)716-0628.

2. *Opportunities to engage in Spiritual Disciplines of Prayer, Giving, and Bible Reading*

On Wednesday, March 25th as well as April 1st, we will email and post on our website and Facebook a prayer and bible reading. We encourage you to stay engaged in the meaningful disciplines of our faith. We also want to provide a way for you to live with generosity and provide an opportunity to give your tithes and offerings to the Lord. We are encouraging you to mail in your giving to the church address at 1900 E. Hubbard Rd. Ponca City, OK 74604. If you have any questions about giving, you can contact Becky at the Church Office at (580) 765-5393.

3. *Attention and Care*

While the impact of the coronavirus means change to our daily lives, the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of people have not been put on hold and we must continue to care for those around us. We encourage you to check on each other, your families, and your neighbors. Good deeds will go a long way with a fearful public. We are to remember that kindness is infectious too. We also want to care for you and offer you practical help. If you feel uncomfortable getting out in public and would like for us to pick something up for you, please let us know. We are here to serve you.

These are the Risk, Response, and Resources for us as a church. While we cannot control the virus, the spread or the impact it has in our church, we can trust in the God that is in control. We want to do everything we can to honor God and to trust in Him. We appreciate your cooperation and commitment to help us on this journey. I will end by echoing the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Crisis shows the true character of a Christian. My prayer is that God will fill all of us with these three gifts, no matter what comes our way.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Adam Phillips