

Dear Evergreen,

I'm writing to inform you that we are canceling this week's Sunday service (March 8th). I will live stream a short service (message) through Evergreen Foursquare's [Facebook](#) page this Sunday at 10 am, but we will not be gathering in person. After prayer and counsel, Pastor Dan and I believe this is the appropriate step to honor our communities, our leaders and those working to stop the spread of the coronavirus. To be clear, Evergreen does not have any reported cases of coronavirus in our church community. We are taking this precaution as a preventive measure and to honor what many local governmental and health officials are advising.

This course of action is in response to many factors, but I will list a few so that you can hear our heart and genuine concern:

-Auburn's mayor, along with many other regional governmental officials, has issued an order that all city sponsored public gatherings be canceled or postponed at this time. Most of you are aware of the many public gatherings that have been canceled recently, along with school closures throughout our region. Although we certainly have the right to meet, we feel it is right to honor these temporary concerns from community leaders. We believe Christians are supposed to be good citizens and to behave in a way that is above reproach with the larger community.

-The simple truth is officials don't really know the extent to which coronavirus is spreading. As officials are trying to gain a better understanding, we think it is prudent to do our best to limit the possibility of increased infections. As we gain more information, we will be able to make more informed decisions as a church community, on a weekly basis.

-We love and honor those in our church community who are at a higher risk of being harmed by coronavirus. If possible, we do not want to place people in a position where they are needlessly exposed to the virus. This is particularly true of our volunteer workers. We know that if we gather this Sunday some people might be placed in the awkward position of serving in the church, even though it is better for them to isolate from the larger group. We do not want to put people in a position where they are coming to church to serve us at the risk of their own health.

-We are trusting that God sees this step as an offering of faith. That we are not afraid to cancel a service out of respect for our community, health workers, governmental leaders and those in our congregation at greater risk of infection. We trust that God can use this time for us to grow closer to him and to more value the sacredness of our community gatherings. We simply do not know the future and we will prayerfully assess our decisions on a daily basis. As time passes we hope to have more clarity, but we cannot promise anything but a desire to be faithful. We ask for your grace and understanding as we move forward. Next week we may make a very different decision. We just don't know about tomorrow until tomorrow comes. Regardless, we are confident that God is good and he will help us grow in his love and character through this season.

Finally, I know some of you might be wondering what we are going to do in the long haul. I am sure there are many “what if” questions in each of your minds. These questions are in our minds as well. We believe we can only take things step by step, in a daily bread fashion. Things might go back to normal with regular gatherings, we might gather but in a different way, or we may need to cancel several services in a row. We just don’t know yet. Regardless, we can still keep in contact with each other through our phones, through social media and through any other avenues that seem right to you and the people you are trying to maintain relationship with.

God is good and nothing can separate us from his love. With this in mind, I urge each of you to press into love, prayer, Scripture reading, fasting or anything that turns your eyes towards Jesus. If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact pastor Dan or me.

Much love,

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