



## A Message from Rev. Tom Ficklin



How do you dress to listen to Facebook Live on Sunday mornings? I think the hardest thing, when we physically go back to church after this, will be that we have to put on shoes for the worship service. Who would have ever thought that? I wonder what else is going to be different?

Recently, Tony Morgan wrote an article, “7 Shifts Churches Need to Make Because of the Coronavirus.” And Ken Braddy wrote, “24 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return.” Both authors seem to believe, and I think they are right, that when we start back to church, it will not be like when we stopped, nor should it necessarily be the same. Realistically, we could be in an altered pattern for at least twelve months, or more.

Let’s think through some of their thoughts, candidly realizing that some of their suggestions are some of the same things we were talking about before the Stay-at-home order. Now, that is refreshing to me.

How important will digital technology be in our future? Right now, we have about 400 people watching our service, in an average week. That number amazes and humbles me. Those people are depending on our God’s Word to be spoken. Can we keep that going? Really, the question should be, “How can we increase our online presence?”

What will have to change with the way we do The Lord’s Supper, baptisms, choir, passing the plate, and greeting people, if social distancing stays around for twelve more months? Will we need to shorten our services?

How will we deep clean and sanitize the building so that all people feel comfortable coming to our church, especially with children? How will we do that with special events, including funerals? Those in “at risk” categories may choose to hold off longer before coming back to church. And that is fully understandable and it is acceptable. Some of those who hold off may be leaders of various things in the church. Who will fill their roles? How do we make that transition healthy for everyone? We have to respect people’s decisions, and we have to make sure all the important things are done. How do we do that kindly?

How far back should we push VBS? What does Sunday school look like? Will we defer starting Sunday school again, even though we may be meeting in worship? What happens to Wednesday night activities?

## A Message from Rev. Tom Ficklin (cont'd)



I don't want to deal with any of those questions. But at some point, we will HAVE to deal with these concerns, and maybe many more. Now, let's make a deliberate, major perspective, change following one author's opinion. What if this interruption allows us to make some changes we have wanted to make? Changes that we were not exactly sure how to accomplish? What if our March 14<sup>th</sup> meeting was actually timed perfectly?

What if it is a GREAT time to think about new ministries in a changed community? What if it is a GREAT time to rethink how we do Sunday school, books studies, and VBS? What if it is a GREAT time to connect with our community in ways that are important to us all? What if this is the launch we needed to increase our online presence? What if it is a GREAT time for outreach because people want to know more about God?

Yes, the world around our church life changed. But in fact, the life of the whole world changed too. No one is "doing" and "being" like they used to do and be. Schedules are altered. Rhythms have changed. Priorities are being rethought. Some things are changing in good ways, and some in frustrating ways. Our choices will be affected when this is all over, even if "all over" is still a long time away.

I beg you to be intentional in thinking through all of this. I urge you to increase your spiritual practices of reading scripture and praying, of being alone with God, or whatever is best in your specific spiritual journey. We want to keep this in our theological perspective.

If any of this becomes confusing to you, call me as I would love to hear your thoughts, in your own voice. We are not alone in any of this. We always have each other. More than that, God is with us all, each and every one, always and forever.

This kind of time is scary. This kind of time is different. You know, Easter was a different kind of time also. Back then, just twelve men turned the world upside down, after Jesus' resurrection. There are, and will be, opportunities for us to make a difference in people's lives.

