

Oak Grove Baptist Church

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Dear Friends at Oak Grove Baptist Church...

Over the last few months, our church has faced many different obstacles in our response to COVID-19 and the corona virus. We have had to adjust how, where, and when we meet, while reminding ourselves why we meet in the first place... It has been a challenge to take care of the inward needs of our fellowship, maintaining our Jerusalem, while attempting to stay outwardly focused on the ministries God continues to let us be part of outside the four walls of the building... On behalf of the staff, deacons, leadership team, and all who choose to make this fellowship their church home, **thank you** for all you are doing to maintain a good attitude, being flexible, giving faithfully, and joining the Lord where He is moving today and holding on to His truths as we face tomorrow. It hasn't been easy, but I do believe what man might have intended for evil, God will use to bring Him honor and glory!

As we continue to monitor the ever changing landscape of our community and fellowship, we (leadership team, staff, deacons, lay leaders) just wanted to **remind folks where we are at** and **bring you up to date** with what **our current plan as it is today** as it relates to how our church is responding to COVID-19. We will continue to monitor local, state, and national official recommendations and regulations that are placed on the community as a whole. The pastor will also collaborate with the Association and other churches in the area, as well as the staff to provide "trends" we are observing in our area. We have chosen to continue to put in place "best practices" and safety precautions that we will continue to ask our congregation to follow. (See the tutorial video on our website.) Any adjustments will be made known accordingly. As you have seen on campus, masks have been made available, sanitation stations prepared, offering stations provided (including online giving via our website), designated entry and exit locations marked, parking restrictions put in place, and limits to in person service times put in place. All these restrictions have been reviewed with our leaders and will remain in place until such time is designated. **Service times will continue to be limited to Sunday morning and Wednesday evening at this time.** We just added back Children's Grow on Wednesday night at 6pm and Church Choir at a new time on Wednesday night at 7pm. This will look a little different, but we are excited to see these groups gather again.

Additional ministries (new and old) such as Sunday school, Children's Church, Youth Grow, Community Circle Groups, nursery (both during worship and Sunday school), and etc... have not been added to our regular schedule. All these programs and others remain under constant review and will not be added back officially until such time as the Spirit leads and accurate data is collected that gives us confidence to move forward safely for all. Consideration must be made for all our members, guests, and staff as it pertains to their health in making these

important decisions. Even the **ability to staff certain ministries such as nursery and provide proper spacing for classes** such as Sunday school **may determine what we can and can't do as a fellowship**. *It is worth noting, at the time of this letter being sent, of the close to 90 churches in the local Baptist Association here in Cleveland County, only 4 have begun any on campus Sunday school or youth and children programs since the original shutdown.* Many churches of all denominations in our area remain in the dark or strictly online with their services. As the new church year fast approaches, it will be even more important that the Body of Christ continue to work together to embrace new ways for the same Gospel message to be shared for all to hear.

As we continue to consult with the churches in our area, government officials, lay leaders in our church, our Deacons, staff, and others on a weekly basis, I remain encouraged that we are providing avenues where our people and this community can stay connected. Unfortunately, there have been several cases in our Baptist Association and community involving COVID-19 where congregations have had to return to “online only” services. This is not ideal, but should we have to return to online only services again, we have the resources to make it happen and to do it well. In the worst case scenario, however, **if the number of COVID-19 cases were ever increase** to an unsafe level **or an outbreak should occur** in our own congregation, it would be the plan of our congregation to close the physical doors of our fellowship for a min. of 14 days and then re-evaluate to determine when to re-open the doors again. All official and unofficial gatherings would cease until such a time was deemed appropriate to open again. Fortunately, this has not occurred in our fellowship as of yet, but we must remain prepared to adjust accordingly when if needed.

I hope this note clarifies and reinforces much of what you already knew that we as a fellowship are doing in light of the challenges of COVID-19. I recognize that not all of our congregation is on board as it relates to the precautions we are making at OGBC in light of this pandemic. We are imperfect people attempting to anticipate something that is both inconsistent and unknown. We can make plan after plan, but there is no guarantee that these plans will ever be used. But the reality is, we can only do what we can do. We must use discernment and wisdom in looking out for the entire congregation as a whole and attempt to keep everyone as much in the loop as possible. Your leadership teams, lay leaders, staff, and deacons appreciate your support and prayers. These are unique times and our response to each other and all that is going around us matters. I still believe that God did not give us a spirit of timid-ness, but rather one of power, love, and self-discipline through Him. (II Tim.1:7) As we walk through this “perceived” and “real” valley of uncertainty in our community, state, nation, and world, **may the church's hope remain certain in the person of Jesus Christ**. As we pray for God's Will to be done, may everything be done to His Glory! Until the next appointed time, may God bless you!

In Christ,

Pastor Jason