

From the desk of Pastor Derek Jones:

Good morning! As most of you at Abundant life have been informed, the church board and I have decided to honor the request of our government and postpone our normally scheduled services until April the 1st. This was a very difficult decision and at the conclusion of our meeting many of us were in tears. This is uncharted territory for many of us. Over the last few days, I have watched hours of press conferences about COVID-19. This has included the press conferences of the president, the Virginia Governor, and even the local Hampton officials. The general consensus of the national, state (VA), and local (Hampton) levels is that gatherings be contained to no more than 10 people. This is unfortunate and frustrating, but it is a reality, nonetheless. I want to mention a few things of why we came to this decision.

1) We did not view this as an isolated attack against the church – The request is being made to all businesses and institutions.

2) We analyzed the state and local guidelines – We approached this at a state and local level. What is being requested in another state does not apply to us, we are a church in Hampton, VA.

3) We are concerned for the elderly – We have several faithful elders in the church who will be in church if the doors are open. We do not want to put them at risk. As of yesterday, we had 15 known cases of COVID-19 and two deaths in this region.

4) We are concerned for our church's testimony – We are to honor civil authority when we can. If a reasonable request is made by the government, we should honor it. If the Government makes a request that is anti-biblical, we stand our ground and prepare for persecution. But when civil authority makes a reasonable request, we are to do as Paul says, "**Ro 13:1** ¶ Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. **Ro 13:2** Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. **Ro 13:3** For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the

same:” Do that which is good! We do not want to be a church that resist authority when it is unnecessary.

5) This is a great opportunity for our church to set a precedent for future pandemics – I do believe in these last days there will more events like this to come, and we will have to weigh each one of them as they are presented. But we do have the opportunity to set in order a strategy right now. Sure, COVID-19 seems to be a pretty basic virus to many for us, but we may have to address something even more catastrophic in the future. Let us use this as an opportunity to practice a proper response so we have a reference point in the future.

6) This is a great Opportunity to present the Gospel – America is terrified right now, but we don’t have to be. We are not canceling services because we are fearful but simply because we have been asked not to gather in groups more than 10. I encourage you if you are a believer don’t sit there in front of the news and give into the spirit of fear. Be a light! Don’t fist fight over toilet paper and canned goods. That mentality is going to mark those who will be here during the tribulation period. If COVID-19 has revealed anything it has revealed how weak America really is mentally, and how many are ready for the mark of the beast. I encourage you to stay full of God’s word! Spend extra time in prayer! When you would normally spend time in church spend that time listening to online sermons, reading your Bible, and prayer. Men! Lead your family in devotions and be the priest of your home. Mothers sing some songs with the children and teach them the Sunday School lessons that they may be missing.

This is what we will be doing at ALT to help get through this through this difficult time:

- 1) Starting Sunday, we will be posting a Sunday sermon. This will either be audio or video on our churches website. (Your Pastor struggles with videos so we shall see haha!)
- 2) We encourage you to use our sermon archive on our website <http://abundantlifetab.net/> There you will find over 500 prerecorded sermons.

3) We will be sending our weekly devotionals through the mail from Pastor Derek and other ministers in the church.

4) We encourage you to read your Bible, Sunday School literature, and other orthodox Christian material in this time. If you would like you can gain access to the church library which has several good Christian biographies.

5) ALT has qualified Ministers and Deacons who are there for you. Do not hesitate to reach out to any of them as we are here to serve and pray with you.

6) Check on one another! Use your church directory and stay in touch with one another. You are a covenant community and we need to keep each other encouraged.

7) Lastly, pray! Pray for our nation, pray for our missionaries, pray one for another, and please pray that COVID-19 will begin to decline in the coming weeks so we can get join together in a wonderful reunion service.

God Bless, Pastor Derek Jones.