

MINISTER'S REPORT TO FCCBRLA BOARD  
JULY 21, 2020  
REV. DR. DAVID CHISHAM

Fellow leaders of FCCBRLA,

We continue to labor under the strained circumstances that COVID-19 has presented. Since we last met the major accomplishment has been the transition from 100% online pre-recorded Sunday worship services to a hybrid of In-Person and pre-recorded video worship services. The herculean feat of bringing our Sunday services online via livestream cannot be underestimated and I am grateful to the technical help I've received from Ted Baldwin and Jo Craddock, the support of congregational leaders who have supported financing these projects, and the support of the congregation which continues to show up in-person and online. While there have been some technical difficulties along the way, overall I am proud of what we've accomplished in a short period of time, and I see that every week is better than the last.

While it was my hope, and the hope of all of us, I think, that things would be opening back up by now, the situation is dragging on and we will have to plan our Fall programming accordingly. I've offered to conduct a lunchtime hybrid Zoom and in-person bible study starting when I return from vacation in August. Mary Thompson's Sunday school class has been conducting hybrid in-person and Zoom call meetings and, as we've figured out some of the technological challenges, the Sunday school meetings are well-attended online and in person. Dak, Pam Jones and I met yesterday to begin shaping the Consecration Sunday campaign and are starting to envision how we can harness technology to help us feel connected as a community even when we can't be together. Our children's programming will have to be explored as well.

Beyond our programming, it's important that we consider how to effectively minister given the diverse challenges of this crisis. There are at least a couple of families inside the congregation who are facing an increased financial burden – the number may increase depending on how long this crisis continues. I have been in contact with those families and offered support as they've needed. Certainly, in our community, there are countless individuals and families dealing with a financial crunch. When I call around to people in the church, there is a sense of isolation and weariness, a readiness to return to life as before while wondering what the new normal will be. Parents (myself included) and educators are trying to sort out what education will be like, starting in just a few weeks. I mention these examples to simply say that we are called to be intentional in reaching out to serve others – the beginning of that is identifying needs and beginning to think about what resources we can bring. Across the board I sense a psychological weariness of being pulled back-and-forth and feeling like the target is always moving – we all thrive on messages of hope and inspiration in these times. I hope our conversation tonight can begin to open our hearts and minds to the needs around us.

Our God is faithful and we trust that God will lead us through this. Even in the midst of increasing precautions there are signs of up that a vaccine might be around the corner. Even if we don't know when exactly, we know that there is an end to this. Let us also begin to consider the longer range questions of what that will mean for us.

After a number of delays and rescheduling, my family has decided to take a vacation beginning this coming Monday, July 27, extending through Tuesday, August 4. Rev. Michael Elmore will provide pulpit supply, and we are already lining up volunteers for the various pieces of that service.

Respectfully,  
Rev. Dr. David Chisham