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Greetings Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

Wow! The headlines and the updates keep coming and coming and a dizzying speed. Together we're journeying in what can only be described as new (even unprecedented) territory together as we put one step in front of another during this COVID-19 pandemic. Who would have thought say 10 days ago that our local church building, the schools and just about everything else would be shut down for weeks – essentially until further notice. And all this is caused by a virus, a tiny (we can't see it) highly-contagious germ.

Having said all of that I believe that all of us would do well to reflect on the words of Psalm 139, be sure to take the time to read the whole Psalm several times. But for now I want to call our attention to verses 1-6 and 15-16. Psalm 139:1-6 (NIV) says:

*You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.*

*You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*

*Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.*

*You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.*

*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.*

And then this is verses 15-16 (also in the NIV)–

*My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

*Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.*

Just think about it - before a word is on our tongue God knows it complexly; and then in verse 5 we read – *You hem me in behind and before...* And then in verse 16 we read that – ... *all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.* This calls all of us to trust the sovereignty of God! Trust Him. Our lives are in His hands.

So my first encouragement this afternoon is to 'lean in' and trust in the sovereignty of God – trust Him. He alone declares the end from the beginning. A second observation that I'd like to make this afternoon is that all of the unexpected events we've faced over the past several days and will no-doubt face in the days and weeks to come ought to humble us. James 4:13-15 (ESV) says –

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

There's that phrase, it's at the end of verse 15 – "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." I think we've all come to understand much better the truth of these words as we process through these uncertain times. All of that said here are our (Arthur Evangelical Free Church's) *If the Lord wills...* plans:

1. We will continue to regularly communicate updates via Facebook and email.

2. We will release for Sunday morning a YouTube play list with worship music and a teaching video recorded with our new and makeshift but pretty nice setup here at the church building.
3. Lord willing – this Sunday will be message one of a new series – *Philippians – Finding and Sustaining REAL Joy...*
4. If you want to prepare to study Philippians check out this link from 'The Bible Project' (if you have time watch all their videos) –
<https://vimeo.com/195665039?fbclid=IwAR2P8hYABIOMcOZNDMRPp5beTLmWoKzjNHZuwWrrfY4UkrOxBPtKaoEn34>

I'll close with a couple of thoughts – I've been so encouraged by the fact that many of you are asking – *What can I do?* And I want to share from my heart that this is both an easy and a hard question – the easy part of the answer is pray! Pray together as families, on the phone, etc. Pray for each other, pray for our neighbors, pray for our leaders. The second part of this is where we need wisdom and where the answer gets a little more difficult because right now 'loving our neighbor' means trying hard not to put them at risk. Love obviously means seeking to not spread the virus. I trust in the days to come how else we ought to uniquely respond as individuals and as a church family will become more and more clear – let's be praying for wisdom. In the meantime let's fervently pray and please share your thoughts and suggestions.

Pastor Dave

PS – I've got a simple challenge – call or text someone from our church family today and after your do that call or text someone not from our church to 'reach out'.