

Church family,

This afternoon (April 27), Governor Greg Abbott announced that his current executive order mandating Texans shelter in place will expire as scheduled on April 30 and be replaced on May 1 with a new executive order instituting a two-phase reopening of Texas's economy. This executive order legally supersedes any local orders.

Under both the current executive order and the one which will take effect on May 1, churches are classified as "essential businesses" and are legally allowed to remain open, but encouraged to follow the restrictions placed on businesses in the name of public health and love for our neighbors. In that spirit, South Garland Baptist Church has not had an in-person gathering of any kind since March 15 and church offices have been closed since March 24. We have sought to minister to you and to our community online, by phone, and through other creative avenues which respected social distancing restrictions.

As eager as we are to return to gathering in person, we also need to recognize the reality that Dallas County and the city of Garland have been hit particularly hard by COVID-19. In light of this stark reality and out of an abundance of caution, we will be following the direction given last week by Dallas County—even though the governor's new executive order does not require us to do so—by keeping church offices closed through May 15 and continuing to worship via Facebook Live until May 17 at the earliest.

This decision gives our area more time to continue "flattening the curve" of infection and gives church leadership time to continue preparing for an in-person return. Between now and then, we will be checking in with local churches, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and other trusted friends to determine how best to implement social distancing restrictions when we return.

I am eager to worship, pray, and enjoy fellowship with you in person soon. As that day approaches, there will be announcements coming about what will look different on our first Sunday back, as well as opportunities for you to ask questions and offer feedback. For now, I ask that you pray for the staff, deacons, and other leaders of our church as we continue ministering long distance and prepare for a return to in-person ministry.

God is continuing to shape and mold us in this strange exile. In uncertain times, may we continue to place our trust in Him.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Daniel