

As we are navigating how to respond to COVID-19, I have been in daily contact with Dr. Aaron Lambert, M.D., who is a family physician and beloved member of Forest Hill. His advice and wisdom are invaluable during this time. He is working in both the clinic at Cabarrus Family Medicine and on hospital rotation at North East Medical Center in Concord. He has the latest updates on our community. I have asked him to write a letter to our community of faith from his experience. You will find that he weaves medicine and faith together in a beautifully passionate way to give us his wisdom during this time. Please read and share.

We have many people at Forest Hill that are daily working in the field as health care professionals to address the pandemic. The days and weeks ahead will be long and tense for these professionals. Their families face concerns that we do not fully understand. The way that we can best support them at this time is to stay healthy, find activities to do at home, and pray often. Please join me in lifting them up each hour on the hour with a short prayer.

Please also view this [video](#) that Dr. Lambert has shared. It is helpful in understanding this virus and its effects on the body. Please stay home and wash your hands!

Love and prayers,  
Pastor Mandy

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Long before hospitals or Minute Clinics, antibiotics or Tamiflu, there were plagues. God's Word gives us some of our earliest documentation of outbreaks, and in those days without medicine, people dealt with it by...you guessed it - social distancing. Except then it took the form of casting someone out of the city walls. Much later during the Black Death of the Middle Ages, people literally walled the sick inside towers so they couldn't escape and infect others. Today another plague is upon us, and although modern medicine can do many things, our most effective weapon remains separation.

If you're reading this thinking "I'll be fine! I've survived much worse" or "I still need to live my life," I would humbly suggest that you haven't, and you don't. As an amateur student of disease outbreaks, I can say with some confidence that no one living today has seen a health crisis to this degree, at least in this country. In times like these, we must heed Paul's command to "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Philippians 2:1-4)

If you still feel like throwing that big dinner party or organizing a shopping trip with friends, I'll give you two great reasons not to. The first one: look for the helpers. In the Just Love Sunday School class, we've been studying the iconic children's show star Mr. Rogers and his wisdom. Growing up in the 1930's, there were plenty of scary times. When little Fred witnessed something scary happening, his mother would tell him "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." As a frontline healthcare provider in this pandemic, every time I see people in a big group because "life has to go on," I see more future patients we are going to have to risk our own lives to take care of later. When it's hard to say no to one last social gathering, do it anyway – do it for all the nurses, doctors, respiratory therapists, food service workers, custodial staff, paramedics, and many others whose job is to dive headfirst into the sickest of the sick and be helpers. Give us a smaller crowd in the hospital, please, and thus a smaller chance we will expose our own families.

And if that still isn't convincing, here's reason #2 from a favorite parable of sheep and goats which says "the King will answer them, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:31-46) Right now, our community's elderly and those with chronic illnesses (diabetes, COPD, asthma, cancer) are at risk. From what we know right now, their risk of death if they contract coronavirus (COVID-19) is 1 in 5, roughly 10 times that of the average population. COVID-19 is here in Concord with confirmed cases, and it is our job as Christians to set the example for others. We must keep to ourselves for a short time to help the long-term health of everyone. Even if you think you could get sick and recover easily, it is our duty to "the least of our brothers and sisters" to stay well so there are less people to get them sick.

I am a front line healthcare worker, but I am also a child of God and a member of the Forest Hill family. In these frightening and unprecedented times, we are fortunate to have the best Helper of all watching over us. Let us seek our guidance from His Holy Word, putting others' needs ahead of our own, taking care of the most vulnerable among us by a temporary inconvenience. Stay connected to each other through prayer, phone calls, and various online resources, but above all – wash your hands, and stay at home.

Dr. Aaron Lambert, M.D.