

**May 5, 2020**

**Dear Church Family:**

**James the Apostle wrote: “Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (James 1:2-3). Sometimes it is hard to find the ground of joy in a given situation. The good news, however, is that our Lord is in control and He cares. He also is concerned about our development and maturity as believers.**

**I know how much you long to get together as a congregation. On May 4, Governor Hutchinson suggested guidelines for churches to open safely. He began by saying that he “strongly encouraged” churches to continue online services. This we will do. Each week you will be able to see a pre-taped service on Saturday or Sunday.**

**Since it is not feasible to get the Church Council together, your Church Staff and a couple of other leaders met on May 5 to consider the Governor’s guidelines. After consultation with Dr. “Sonny” Tucker, Executive Director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (he is on the Governor’s task force), and contact with other churches in the Village and beyond, we concluded that our church is not ready to gather for worship. We have also learned that most churches will not open now.**

**The State of Arkansas is still in Phase One of the COVID-19 epidemic. Those of us who are 65 years of age and older are urged to stay at home. As you know, most of our congregation falls into this category. We would deeply regret if we opened too soon and had an outbreak in our church.**

**We have ordered masks that will be needed when we worship again, and we are exploring ways to sanitize our facilities. We have also marked off the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall to provide for six-foot distancing. Let’s just be patient a little longer.**

**Thank you for your faithful and generous giving. Offerings were adequate to meet budget needs in March and April. We have received \$10,456 the first week of May, a good beginning for a five Sunday month.**

**In this envelope you will find Duane Blakley’s retirement letter. Duane and Pat have been a special part of our lives for nearly eighteen years. We are grateful for their dedicated years of service and will miss them. I know you will find ways to express your love and appreciation for them.**

**Your Pastor,**

**Jon M. Stubblefield**