

This has surely been an interesting week, based upon the unpredictable weather, at First Baptist. While the decision to cancel all Wednesday activities was appropriate and clear in light of the significant snowstorm that blanketed our area, Sunday's cancellation led to some questions and concerns. Let me begin, on behalf of the Pastoral Staff, with an apology for the lateness of Sunday's cancellation and the accompanying communication of that cancellation. We will be addressing these concerns and refining the decision-making process, as well as the communication process this week. The current cancellation policy for weekday activities will remain intact.

Let me offer some areas for consideration pertaining to Sunday's cancellation. These matters impact our ministry in numerous ways yet, ultimately, our first concern is the safety of our congregation, ministry workers, and guests. On Sunday, February 11, 2018, here are some of the considerations that led to the cancellation:

- Icy road and parking conditions. First and foremost, if we have learned anything in the last eight years, it is that the weather conditions on the 'hill' are significantly different than the weather in the valley or even throughout the area. Both Reynolds Road and East Maine Road had patches of ice on Sunday and proved challenging for our 'early arrivals'.
- Perhaps you are unaware of the fact that our pastoral and support staff, worship team participants (including front of house), and lay ministry workers are required to be at church at a very early hour, some arriving before 7 AM. This demands that we address any weather concerns long before our 9:30 AM Worship Service, in spite of the reality that the weather can change over that two and one-half hour interval.
- In light of the number of early arrivals (almost 100 prior to the nine o'clock hour) while you are drinking your morning coffee, the 'ministry' is already taking place. That is a lot of people that appreciate our concern for their safety as much as their ministry contributions.
- When a percentage of those early arrivals are unable to travel to church on any given Sunday, the impact on the ministry is significant. That becomes an important consideration as well. Each week there are people who contact us to communicate that they are unable to fulfill their ministry responsibilities that day, and you can imagine how exponentially, that number grows rather overwhelmingly during inclement weather.

While these are just a few considerations, you can imagine the challenge and extreme difficulty in making any weekend cancellation decisions and communicating the same in a timely fashion. We offer a sincere apology to anyone who may have traveled to church this past Sunday, and commit to refining and improving our communication process in the future. In the end, it was a wise and prudent decision, especially from the perspective of being on the 'hill' that morning.

Thanks for your consideration,

Pastor Jim Murphy