

# The *TIDINGS*

*Mid-Tidewater Baptist Association*

May 2020

*Serving Cooperating Sharing*



## Life After COVID -19

I guess I always thought that after the Coronavirus passed, there would be this huge celebration all across the land. Something like a July 4th kind of thing for our country. Everyone would be so glad to get back to normal life that celebrating would be the most natural thing to do.

I definitely thought that would be the case for churches. It would be like our best Easter Celebration. Lots and lots of people coming to church all dressed up in their Sunday best to celebrate our Risen Lord, and the fact we could worship together once again. Oh, I know we have been worshiping in our homes and cars in all kinds of different ways, but we have not been able to GATHER as The Body of Christ. There is a great deal of difference between the Dispersed Church and the Gathered Church. The one comment I have heard over and over with each passing week since we have been asked to “shelter at home” is “I miss worshiping with my church family.”

**WE ARE READY TO GO BACK TO CHURCH!!!**

So pastors and denominational leaders have begun thinking about **Life After COVID-19**.

In the last several conversations I have been in with Dr. John Upton, Executive Director of the BGAV, we always seem to get around to life after COVID-19. Almost all of the web and zoom gatherings I have participated in, spend some time talking about what we can expect as we try to return to some kind of normal. Here is a summary of what I am hearing:

1. No one knows but the Lord himself, exactly what life will be like after the pandemic passes.
2. Almost everyone agrees that when we return to a new routine, it will be different from what the routine we knew before COVID-19.
3. The return is going to be gradual, not all at once. Restrictions will be lifted gradually, not all at once, and it will take some time for us to get use to our new normal.
4. Hopefully, we will bring the good things we have learned from COVID-19 with us into the new normal and not take for granted again the things we have deeply missed during these days of isolation and “sheltering at home”. Can’t wait to see each of you real soon.

Eddie

**Keep This In Mind When We Return To Church**

Hopefully, it will not be much longer before the restrictions on gatherings of more than 10 people will be lifted, and we will once again be permitted to return to our places of worship on Sundays. That day is closer than it has been in some time. Here are some things to keep in mind as we think about getting ready for that Sunday:

- If you are sick or have cold or flu symptoms, it will still be **best practice** for you **to remain at home** until all of the symptoms are no longer with you. You don't want to come to church and have your friends avoiding you like you have some kind of plague.
- When you do get back to church, keep in mind that most people will now be unformattable with handshaking and hugging. I feel it will be a long time before hugging, kissing on the cheek, and handshaking will be a part of our normal way of greeting our friends. Knuckles, elbows, and waving are still good ways of greeting one another, at least for the foreseeable future. Our bathrooms need to be prepared for a lot of hand washing still. Lots of soap and paper towels, and bathrooms cleaned from top to bottom before our families return. They need to look and smell fresh and clean. This could be a good time to put on a fresh coat of paint on those rough looking areas.
- Begin thinking now about seating patterns for those who return when the restrictions are lifted. "Social Distance" for a lot of people is going to be the norm. Pastors, staff, deacons, and church leaders need to plan now for when our church families gather again. We at least need to think about such things as how many people to a pew, and do we only use ever other pew. Certainly, we will not be able to avoid the first 4 rows so more people can sit toward the back. We will need to use the spacing of our entire sanctuaries. Even our balconies for a while, if they are safe. Some churches may even need to have two services for a while to help address the six foot spacing issue. Sunday School will present some of the spacing challenges as well. A lot of folks will not try Bible Study until they feel safe at the worship service. But when they do come to Bible Study, they will want proper "people spacing" to be the norm.
- I would ask youth, children, and preschool workers to begin thinking now about the safety of our children. They are natural born carriers with their coughs and runny noses. We need to make sure we have safe places for them when mom and dad return to church. Lots of folks are putting material on line now to help us prepare for their return. Check it out.

I know this is a lot to think about. There is more, but this is enough for now. The prep work is worth the effort as we prepare for our moms and dads, our brothers and sisters, our families, to once again gather to worship at our places of worship on a Sunday morning in the near future.

**MTBA Update**

**The Rise Against Hunger** packing event has been postponed until 2021.

MTBA office hours are still in effect (8:30-3:00), M-W. Barbara is in the office, Eddie is mobile. Restricted visits.

**Because of your generous giving, our MTBA Treasurer** has not had to use any savings for MTBA operations.

**MTBA Prayer Team**, although not gathering, is still providing focused prayers for our churches.

Most **MTBA churches** are either live streaming services or doing drive in church services.