



Christ Presbyterian Church, New Haven

CPC Covid-19 Update
24 March 2020

Dear CPC Family & Friends,

This morning in our virtual pastor's weekly prayer service we considered Psalm 46. It starts out *God is our refuge and strength, a very PRESENT help in trouble...we will not fear though the earth gives way...* Surely, a great assurance for times such as this! It continues *come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth and makes wars to cease...* Hmmm. The same God who is our help in times of trouble is the God who decrees both earthly desolations and takes them away? The Psalm ends *be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.*

Be still. What does this mean exactly? According to the Psalmist, it has something to do with being stopped in our tracks with the sober realization that God, the God of Biblical history, IS God and there is no other, sovereign over all powers and circumstances—all for his glory as being revealed in the ultimate salvation of all who embrace Him in saving faith, hope and love!

Without a doubt, the coronavirus pandemic has in varying degrees and directions raised the question “*Where is God in all of this?*” You will not want to miss our Live Stream Service this Sunday where I will address this very dilemma. Is it because of specific or even general sin that this has come upon us? Is there a purpose to it all? But what about the grief and suffering? Empathy? Let's all be in prayer for our worship service “together” as we ask God to speak powerfully into our souls and into the souls of our friends and neighbors. You can invite friends and loved ones to join our virtual service with this Facebook Event (<https://www.facebook.com/events/202910647644701/>) or by sharing our post on Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/cpcnewhaven/>).

Speaking of live stream worship—from all accounts it was a huge success. We do have some technical tweaks planned to make it better, but thankful for all who attended and for those who sent us immediate texts of encouragement! If you didn't last week, make sure to check out the Zoom option with an opportunity to see and talk with each other in the digital foyer before and after the service – evidently it made a significant difference in our attempt to approximate a flesh on flesh worship experience.

Our session did meet as planned last night. We spent a considerable time discussing the nature and theology of covenantal worship and how to translate that into a digital age. I won't here even attempt to summarize the various options that we discussed. But please continue to pray as our CPC congregations in our varying contexts attempt to most approximate a total Christ worship experience. Otherwise, here are a few of the things that the session decided:

- It was decided to quarantine our church building until further notice with the exception of the 10 or under who conduct our virtual live stream on Sunday. CPC staff are allowed access to their offices but are advised to avoid the public areas of the building.

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- All CPC ministries, Sunday School classes, and servant leader teams are asked to discontinue (if you haven't already) meeting in person (event those that are under 10). However, we encourage all groups to continue meeting virtually. Group leaders may utilize our church purchased Zoom accounts. (Leaders should have received information on Zoom account login. If not, please contact Annie at annie.mchugh@cpcnewhaven.org).
- We especially encourage all servant leader teams and boards to continue meeting as able/needed using our Zoom service, especially as we move into our annual planning season. Be advised that our operational planning schedule remains intact, albeit perhaps executed virtually. (c.f. Calendar for Key Leader Meeting, etc.).
- Be sure to visit our COVID-19 Homepage (<https://www.cpcnewhaven.org/covid19>) where you can discover a growing number of opportunities to help you “connect” with one another and the pastors. We have added a special link to this page, and directly on the CPC homepage and Live Stream page, wherein you can submit a prayer request and/or request a meeting with a pastor. There are a growing number of virtual events being hosted both by the church itself (children's Sunday School classes, ministries and life events) and spontaneously such as virtual pubs, movie nights (Netflix has specifically created a way to watch a movie virtually together), game nights, etc. If hosts would send us the event (email annie.mchugh@cpcnewhaven.org), we WILL POST THEM ON OUR COVID-19 HOMEPAGE.
- Men and Women notice especially our 20-minute prayer and fellowship events being formed throughout the week - one for women and one for men, wherein you may be assured that there is someone there!
- Finally, send me (preston.graham@cpcnewhaven.org) any resource that you believe would encourage our faith and witness as related to COVID-19. I will consider posting them on my upcoming updates and COVID-19 Homepage under “Resources.” Here is one that I grabbed off the Shoreline Life Group's email recently that you might appreciate (<https://bit.ly/3brAtJo>).

While we continue to grieve the absence of full *flesh on flesh* communion with one another, I can tell you it was a deeply moving experience for me as I led the worship Sunday in a mostly empty sanctuary. I was often moved to the point of tears with deep lament throughout the service at the images of you in the “foyer” before the service while cordoned off in your homes. But alas, I also felt great joy in seeing many of you in the foyer and knowing many others were watching on YouTube. As with the words of the apostle Paul,

For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. (Colossians 2:5)

I am yours most affectionately,

Preston Graham

Senior Pastor, Christ Presbyterian Church