



Christ Presbyterian Church, New Haven

CPC Covid-19 Update

31 March 2020

Dear CPC Family and Friends,

How are you doing? More and more I'm hearing something akin to "this is getting old" as we are all getting tired of the new normal. Internet facilitated "virtual reality" is an amazing gift in so far as it enables an incredible approximation of human interaction and life-giving programs in a time like this, but it is *still* virtual and approximate - technologically cumbersome at best.

To be sure, I hope for your sake and ours that you are proactively engaging the mystery of Christ's spiritual communion being transacted through our COVID-19 induced virtual church in all its technological brilliance and frustrations. Through *CPC Virtual*, you have access to pastoral visitation and prayer, men's and women's prayer services, life group gatherings, social events, classroom discipleship, and most essentially Sunday Worship, lest we "forsake the assembling together as is the habit of some" (Hebrews 10:25). Please take a moment (every week) to review the constantly updated **CPC COVID-19 Homepage** (cpcnewhaven.org/covid19) that will connect you to the full range of *CPC Virtual*!

One of the more recent additions is our **CPC COVID-19 Mercy Homepage** (cpcnewhaven.org/covid-19-mercy). Now is the time for the church to speak the love of the gospel through action. Last night the session discussed various mercy ministry opportunities and approved a three-tier priority for mercy in the following order:

- 1) Our CPC Multi-Congregational Church Family
- 2) Our New Haven Church Family (BOH)
- 3) Our Common Family of Humanity in Greater New Haven

We encourage members to consider participating in any one or more of the specific opportunities to volunteer both time and/or money. There is also an opportunity on the COVID-19 Mercy Homepage to communicate your personal need or your suggestion concerning ways we can do mercy in this time of need. Once approved, we can add those to the list as well. Again, you can do all this by going to our CPC Covid-19 Mercy Homepage (cpcnewhaven.org/covid-19-mercy). Like all things COVID-19, the Mercy Homepage may also be accessed through the CPC COVID-19 Homepage (cpcnewhaven.org/covid19) as accessed through CPC's Church Homepage (cpcnewhaven.org).

Another update from the session meeting last night pertains to our financial situation. Several actions were taken in anticipation of the economic challenges that are sure to impact us both in the long and short term. Already in our first of many "COVID" months to come we saw a significant dip in our March giving. We also gave significant attention not only to our CPC New Haven family, but to our family of CPC congregations in the Hill, Milford, Fairfield and Wallingford—all of which are in a vulnerable situation as well. Along these lines, the session first asks that we consider the wisdom and mandate of 2 Corinthians 8 as applied to our situation:

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We want you to know, brothers about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints...For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich...For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of parity your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be parity. As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

2 Corinthians 8:1-4, 9, 12-15

Here's the thing relative to our moment at CPC New Haven: Whereas some of us are in a situation of great stress with more work than we can handle and not much time left for other forms of service, others are in a situation of great stress with much less work than we can handle but with not much income for service. Paul's point then and now is that all of us still have assets to give—those with continued income could see this as a season to give financially even more sacrificially to cover those who are without as much income. Likewise, those with more time could see this as a season to give of our time even more sacrificially to cover for those who are without as much time. And in the words of Paul, "*Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.*" Perhaps this is one of those silver linings that God intends for us as a church, as we depend on one another to take care of each other and to fulfill our mission and witness for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ in greater New Haven.

Relatedly, some of the initial actions taken last night are as follows:

- 1) We ask all congregations to cease all non-essential expenses immediately. We measure "essential" in terms of our primary mandate as pertaining to the ministry of word, worship, and mercy as pertaining to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It might be that we will need to spend more to sufficiently make ourselves accessible through virtual means and/or to spend more on mercy needs in this season of crisis. But then again, if a project or new venture can wait, then we will wait such as to divert all our fiscal assets to the Ministry of Word and Mercy.
- 2) We are looking for ways to reallocate our financial resources from various budgetary categories into our Mercy Funds. This is important! For as you give, a high priority will be given to directing that money to shore up our Mercy accounts.
- 3) CPC New Haven will shoulder the significant financial burden of our CPC mission congregations for their financial Central Services expenses for at least three months, more if needed. This will allow those congregations to reallocate their related savings to their own local Mercy accounts. It was generally agreed, moreover, that we at CPC New Haven are committed to doing all that we can to see our fellow CPC mission congregations make it through this financially challenging season.

Again, please know that whatever you can give right now in time and money is vital to our continued ministry and witness as mediated through the mediatorial presence of Christ that is in/with/through the congregations of CPC Southern CT.

Ok, so "it is getting old" already. And I hear more and more of us starting to ask the question "how long?" The newness of the "*new normal*" is wearing off quickly isn't it? We are hearing anything ranging from 14 to 30 days until the apex of the COVID-19 curve is reached, much less the perhaps equally treacherous *Christ Presbyterian Church | 135 Whitney Ave New Haven CT 06510 | 203.777.6960 | cpcnewhaven.org*

walk back down off the mountain in terms of both the continued medical and financial challenges (those who hike mountains know what I am talking about by analogy).

The fact of the matter is that there probably isn't going to be an "Easter surprise," at least not in the outward sense (notwithstanding of course that our all-powerful God can do whatever He wants). And so, my pastoral encouragement for us all is akin to the writer of Hebrews to his 1st century congregation who likewise faced daunting challenges for even their survival. What must it have been for them when by way of reassurance, it is conceded "*you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood*" (Hebrews 12:2). The encouragement of the pastoral epistle then is no less true for us today:

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Hebrews 10:35ff

I look forward to "seeing" you Sunday where we will hear more from God about the call to a "Patient Faith."

I am yours most affectionately,

Preston Graham

Senior Pastor, Christ Presbyterian Church