



Christ Presbyterian Church, New Haven

CPC Covid-19 Update

19 May 2020

Dear CPC Family and Friends,

As I continue to reflect on the sermon this past Sunday, my conscience seems to increase as to the gravitas of our Lord's instructions on prayer, and especially how it frames our orientation in life. I am especially reflecting on the profound contrast of living the divine orientation "Hallowed be Thy Name" vs. the more popular humanistic orientation that frames all of life as for the purpose of self-interest. Nor is it an accident that all this Covid-19 stuff is the context that God chose for us to think upon these things wherein such a contrast seems all the more apparent. I am praying for us all—that we might give more time and thought to how our lives could be more faithful in the prayer that wants to first sanctify God's name, increase God's kingdom in/through the church, and live in both submission to and celebration of God's will as revealed through holy scripture.

Second, I want to give a "shout out" to our CPC "Key Leaders," almost all of whom participated in our virtual Annual Key Leader "Zoom" Meeting last Thursday. It was surprisingly productive and will serve us well as we are now earnestly engaged with our annual planning process. Please be in prayer for the staff as we will be meeting all day Thursday and Friday to process the information we have received and produce a first draft set of plans (In-Person Ministry Plan, Transition Virtual/In-Person Plan) for the ministry year '20-'21.

Third, as you know, we seem to be moving toward what could be described as a season of "cautious optimism." Most states, including ours, are initiating a first phase of opening things up. Having said this, and reflecting on what was discussed at great length last night during our Monday Session meeting concerning a Phase 1 transition and CPC protocols and goals, I think it is fair to say that we are also entering into a season that will require great patience and humility on the part of us all.

Patience? Because we will discover in the protocols needed a significant limitation to our experience of being together in Phase 1 especially. (How will it feel to talk through masks when we are together, regulate if not limit how we sip on our cup of coffee as we socialize together, standing/sitting at a distance from one other, etc?)

Humility? There is a vast distance between the two ideological and emotional extremes that exist in our society regarding the "optimistic" and "cautious" sides of this season of "optimist optimism."

Sadly, like all things it seems these days, the two sides are being politicized as identifying with political right or left with the escalated intensity that this inserts. Christian, we are bigger and better than all of this! We will all want to work hard at being both patient and humble through these phase-ins, even as we will want to be careful not to judge motives and/or policies as "moral" per se. With this said, the following are the protocols that the session has approved for our Phase 1 to open up our In-Person Ministry Plan and use of God's House. The plan is to open up our worship to no more than 25 people that are "strategically" invited for the Sunday Worship service on May 31st. This will involve key leaders who will be assisting in the service going forward for the sake of a "trial run" and to work out whatever issues might need to be worked out. The next week, June 7th, we will open it to up to 50 people (exact # to be determined) who will be chosen by first come first serve RSVP. We are tentatively planning a membership service for those who have already met with the session and are waiting to join and who desire to do so at this time (vs. wait till we are all back together again).

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After much discussion, the session decided on the following health related protocols related to Phase 1 Sunday worship:

- Masks on all the time
- Social Distance of at least six feet
- Hand Sanitizer to come into building
- Wipes to clean own area followed by next day sanitizing of room
- BYO Beverage (while still managing mask). No Food.
- Note on Door: One occupant at a time (small rooms/bathrooms)
- Every other pew- no taping-with sample six feet in front with signage to sit six feet from next family/person
- Use patio for after service socializing with social distancing
- Ask people to take their temperatures at home in the morning before coming to worship
- No mask on babies under 2 (CDC)
- No nursery provided during service (or events)
- Upon dismissal congregants asked to leave sanctuary one pew at a time from the back
- If positive test of person who was present then all who attended that event are excluded from attending future events for 2 weeks
- Use conscience to determine whether you in good faith are comfortable attending

The following protocols are adopted for in-church meetings other than worship:

- Meetings of no more than 10 people and approved by session. (We will still try to limit the # of meetings due to the additional work that is involved in post-meeting cleaning, etc.)
- Masks on all the time
- Social Distance of at least six feet
- Hand Sanitizer to come into building
- Wipes to clean own area followed
- Next day sanitizing of room by church
- BYO Beverage (while still managing mask). No Food.
- Note on Door: One occupant at a time (small rooms/bathrooms)
- Masks made available to those who don't have their own.

Again, I realize that there are going to be different reactions to “opening things up.” Some might feel deeply unsettled by it. Keep in mind that especially for those with a “high emotional I-Q,” this has been a long season of internalizing all the pain and trauma that has been communicated these past months. It will take time to get beyond it, but you will get there! For others, the whole thing may feel even exciting with a desire to normalize. The key thing here is to just let people be who they are and let it happen as it will in each of our lives without judgment—thus the “conscience” clause that we talked about from the beginning. We encourage everyone to follow their own conscience as to whether they feel comfortable or not attending an on-site worship or meeting. We will of course continue to live stream our Sunday worship services and of course the other online zoom events that we are engaging throughout the week.

I am yours most affectionately,

Preston Graham (on behalf of Session)