



Christ Presbyterian Church, New Haven

CPC Covid-19 Update
27 May 2020

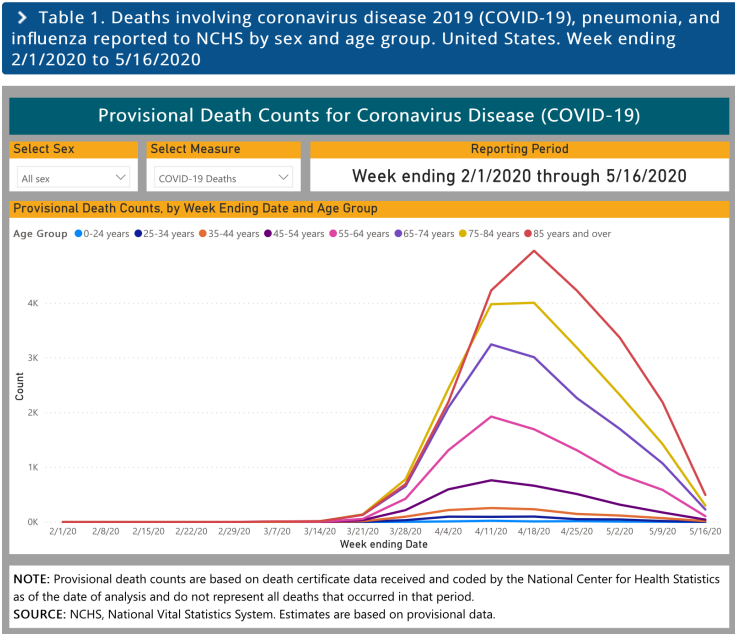
Dear CPC Family and Friends,

As we move into June, the Session continues to engage the challenges of Covid-19 while remaining proactive in our mission to build the church and make disciples of Christ. Along these lines, **PLEASE READ THE ENTIRETY OF THIS UPDATE AS IT CONTAINS SOME VERY IMPORTANT NEW INFORMATION!**

*Please Note: The Session would like to host a Q&A with Session members RE Doug Bruce and TE Preston Graham, scheduled immediately following our corporate worship service this Sunday, to address the two issues mentioned in this letter. We will do this in a way that will allow both those who are on-site and those who are present via Zoom to participate. **Please plan on joining the worship service via Zoom this week if you want to participate in this Q&A meeting.** At the appropriate time, those on Zoom will be virtually “brought” into the sanctuary with those physically present where we can on-site interact with questions as needed.*

Transition to Re-Opening

As for re-opening, the Session continues to pray for God’s wisdom in discerning the way forward to a safe and measured return to corporate worship. Clearly, safety is important as we consider a return to worship, but we cannot underestimate the incredible value of corporate worship. Indeed, church is an essential element of the Gospel. It is because of this high value of corporate worship that the Session seeks to discern a right and reasonable return to corporate worship.



Data from CDC as of May 26, 2020 reveals that there are 1,662,414 people who were/are infected with COVID-19 and 98,261 who have died from the disease. While data continues to be validated, it is good news that 94% of people infected survived infection and 6% died. The mortality rate of COVID-19 appears to be three times influenza (based on current data even as with more testing the rate continues to lower). It should be noted however that of the 6 % mortality rate, the significant majority of that percent pertains to those over the age of 65 and the remaining mortality rate is concentrated among those over the age of 55 (see Table 1 from the CDC above where the top 4 curves).

Towards “opening up” our worship service, the Session takes seriously the health-related concerns many might have about rejoining together. But it is important to remember, as with influenza, most individuals do fine and the Session weighs the health-related concerns over against the needs and freedoms of those who are less at risk. That said, older individuals and those who fall into high-risk groups as defined by the CDC should consider staying at home and continue to utilize the video options for worship. As we have stated several times, follow your informed conscience. If you are unclear if you are in the high-risk group, please consult your primary care provider. Otherwise, the Session will continue to take the physical safety of the congregation seriously and follow the infection prevention guidance from the CDC regarding social distancing, the use of masks, hand washing, cleaning the facilities, etc.

One important aspect of worship is our singing of praise to God. We are aware of recent case reports by the CDC which provide data that singing is an activity that has increased risk compared to simply talking. It is for this reason that the Session requires that everyone attending worship wear a mask for the entire time – including during singing. While this is unlikely to reduce the risk to that of simply talking, the use of a mask in combination with the other infection prevention provisions (e.g., high risk individuals worshipping from home, use of social distancing during the worship service, copious hand washing, etc.) represents a reasonable intervention to facilitate the safe worship of God.

Protocols for Attending Worship

Prior to Arrival

- Use conscience to determine whether you in good faith are comfortable attending
- Take your temperature at home and do not attend if you have a fever or are symptomatic
- If you test positive for Covid-19 and have attended worship, please alert us. All who attended that event will not be allowed to attend any future events for two weeks

Upon Arrival

- Wear your mask at all times (per the CDC no mask on babies under 2)
- Social distance of at least six feet at all times (except for families, roommates, etc.)
- Use hand sanitizer before you enter the building, or upon entry
- Use the main foyer entrance only.

Inside CPC

- Seating in the Sanctuary will be in every other pew
- Families and roommates (those already in close proximity) may sit together, with at least six feet between units (note the blue tape with sample six feet)
- There will be no Lord’s Supper
- A basket for giving will be set up in the back of the Sanctuary.
- Only one person at a time may use the restroom (or any small space)

- No food or beverage will be provided (you may BYO Beverage while still managing mask)
- No nursery will be provided, children should remain with you at all times

After Worship

- Use the disinfectant wipes provided, or your own, to wipe clean your area (the building will be thoroughly sanitized the next day, but this is a first step)
- Upon dismissal you will be asked to leave the Sanctuary one pew at a time from the back
- Use patio for after service socializing with social distancing
- The building will be sanitized fully on Monday and quarantined through the rest of the week

Assistant Pastor Position

For context, you will remember that we had already discerned the need to pursue a dedicated position of “worship pastor” a couple of years ago such as to culminate in a site visit by an interested candidate. While it didn’t work out, our interest in the position remained open for the sake of the long term even if the urgency of filling it was subdued by the good services of Trevor and Emily in the interim. We recognized then that the unique combination of “Pastor” (ordained) and “Worship Leader” can be difficult to fill given the different aptitudes and callings that can be associated with both. We had also recognized that in our post-Christian New Haven context especially, such a person with the added calling and gifts suitable to being an evangelist/gatherer would be all the more ideal—thus the position of “Assistant Pastor of Worship and City Outreach.”

Fast forward to 2020, as promised late last summer, the Session had intended to report back to the congregation after the new year it’s thinking about how we should move forward in filling the vacancy initiated by Kevin’s departure. Many different scenarios were discussed by Session and WLB related to various contingencies and variables toward the staff “team” that best suited our needs both in the short and long term. One scenario included the position noted above, even if it was discerned that such a position could prove illusive to fill, especially “up here” in a context where many in our denomination are not eager to come. All that being said, such a person unexpectedly emerged in God’s providence a couple of months ago such that we tentatively entered a “virtual” candidacy process. Meet Jefferson and Andrea Bennett and their three children Elizabeth, August and newborn Elinor Bennett:



(c.f. Attached Resume Below)

To date, Jefferson has been interviewed by the Sr. Pastor several times, met in person (prior to Covid-19) with the church planters/pastors during a Local MA collaboration and then again with our local and global MA pastors/church planters during our virtual collaboration, led a bible study virtually with members of the East Rock Life Group, and various other conversations. Andrea was able to meet with the church planter wives via Zoom as well. Having checked out all his references and considered information from their participation in the PCA's assessment center (for potential church planters), the Session has decided to invite the Bennett's up for an in-person visit on June 18-23. **(Please note that some of you will be contacted by RE George Levesque to participate in a carefully selected interview team if able).** Some of the activities that will define the candidacy trip include (social distancing, etc):

- A possible reception with the 20-30's/Young Families (TBD)
- Both Jefferson and Andrea meet with Session and WLB (tentatively Monday evening)
- Interview with Interview Team
- Dinner or B'Fast with Lisa and Preston
- Andrea participate in Women's Event Saturday
- A CPC Tour of New Haven
- Realtor tour of possible homes within the city of New Haven
- Jefferson preach at worship service followed by brief sermon discussion:

A Concluding Perspective on The Challenges and Opportunities We Face

At yesterday morning's men's prayer meeting and at our Session meeting last night, we briefly reviewed the description of Christ in Matthew 8:18-27.

We see our Lord encountering "the stuff of our world" yet in a way that transcends it. When the frenzy of a crowd began to amass, our Lord did not play to the passion, and quietly walked away. When a scribe offered to follow Christ wherever he went, our Lord reminded him that to do so is to forgo many earthly pleasures and rights. When another sought to restrain Christ in his journey in consideration for burying his father, our Lord even then was undeterred in the greater mission he was called to serve. And then when the disciples were terrorized by the great storm out at sea, the Lord revealed his power over this world in the abrupt calming of the sea. These were all recorded incidences stated in rapid fashion to say one thing—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ lived the "stuff" of real life even while never allowing the "stuff" to define or deter him from the transcendent purpose of glorifying God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As I confessed yesterday during our pastoral prayer, I confess to you now an anxiety for myself, my church, my people, and our mission. I confess how it seems that the only transcendent power in our midst right now is the omnipresent hype and politicization being trafficked through both social and broadcast medias such as to stir up "the stuff" of great passions and even terrors at a time when people are most unsettled and scarred. I see the evil in it and how even good people can be caught up in it. While such forces divide and depress, I also realized that the power needed to "hold our church and movement" together is much, much, greater than I can possibly conjure up. There is just too much "stuff." And then of course the spirit speaks into my heart with a simple and sacred "Duh!" I confess this not only as your pastor but as your brother in Christ if per chance the Lord might want to arrest your anxiety at the realization of your powerlessness with a sacred "Duh!" (And you know the rest—c.f Mt 8)

I am most affectionately yours,

Preston Graham (on behalf of the Session, portions drafted by Doug Bruce)

Christ Presbyterian Church | 135 Whitney Ave New Haven CT 06510 | 203.777.6960 | cpcnewhaven.org

JEFFERSON BENNETT - Church Planter

204 E 6th Ave
Rome, Ga 30161

513-800-9101
jeffersontmbennett@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta, Georgia

- Masters of Arts in Biblical Studies with Biblical Languages May 2019

Atlanta Christian College, Atlanta, Georgia

- B.S. in Music Ministry, minor in Biblical Studies May 2008

EXPERIENCE

Seven Hills Fellowship (PCA), Rome, Georgia June 2016 - Present

- Church Planting Resident, overseeing High School, College, Young Adults and Worship, formed and trained discipleship team of 4 leaders with the aim to multiply, evangelism, personally discipling group of 4-6 men, artistic outreach coordinator, worship leadership, crafted and led Good Friday services each year, preaching, started and led a book study for dads of teens, exercised light church discipline with non-members

North Cincinnati Community Church (PCA) September 2012 – June 2016

- Director of Worship & Student Ministries, disciplined group of 4-6 men, attended small groups, recruited and oversaw 25 music and tech volunteers, began a music school with 4 instructors and 50 students, led youth gatherings weekly, discipleship, taught Xpress Your Faith, overseas preaching and music concerts, developed 1 worship apprentice and 3 worship leaders

Operation Mobilization, London, England August 2010 – August 2012

- Missionary, disciplined group of 3 men, led 28 weeks of international teams in outreach program to Muslims (evangelism, apologetics, events), taught Xpress Your Faith at the Training Center, began and led mall relational evangelism, led worship for multi-lingual international church plant, crafted and led community and family outreaches, created and led public artistic confessions on Good Friday ('11&'12)

Perimeter Church (PCA), Atlanta, Georgia August 2008 – August 2010

- Worship Intern, shepherded teams of volunteers and paid professionals, led worship for main service and gym service, coordinated appreciation events for volunteers, supported special programs and church plants, equipped in evangelism (Xpress Your Faith), disciplined by Monte Starkes.
-

ENJOYMENT

Playing with my family, songwriting, recording, videography, frisbee, basketball, urban cycling, driving, film, exploring new cities and restaurants