



## A NOTE FROM THE PASTORS' OFFICE:

*"I'm grateful for our in-person worship and the blessing it has personally been to me. Having it taken away for a time, has had me appreciate it all the more. But the question may remain, is in-person worship absolutely necessary? Is it more convenient, and safe to remain at home? Whereas those may be true, they come at a spiritual cost. This article by David Gunderson gives ten reasons to come back to church and the spiritual benefit of gathering together for worship. We have shortened the article down for length available but encourage you to read all ten reasons by following the link at the end of the article. God bless you and enjoy the read!" ~Pastor Joel*

### Why Meet in Person?

Over the past few months, most churches have stopped meeting in person. A global pandemic, government regulations, and a desire to serve each other and society have kept us from gathering. Instead, we've held "services" on-line, met "virtually," and used technology to connect.

Many churches are now resuming our meetings, or will soon. But these new services feel strange. Our sensitivities are heightened, our differences are on display, and we have to endure restrictions and protocols that are awkward, inconvenient, and frustrating. Then, no matter how safe we make it, some of our church family still can't come. With all this in mind, some believers may feel tempted not to come at all. If our restored gatherings are so different and restricted, our on-line options so available and convenient, and our physical presence a genuine vulnerability, why should we even meet in person?

This is a valid question. But before we make our decisions, we need to reflect on the importance of our gatherings so that our desire to meet grows instead of atrophying. So unless you're someone who needs to stay home for health reasons, here are several reasons to come back to church.

### We're embodied creatures.

God made Adam from earth's soil, Eve from Adam's side, and humanity from their union (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18-25; 3:20). We're embodied souls, male and female, in his image. We're not ethereal beings made to float in virtual space. We're not just pixels and screen names, head shots on Zoom and Facetime. We're human beings. We're designed to see and hear and taste and touch and feel our way through the physical world God's made. In recent months, we've seen the power of our on-line world. But we've also felt its limitations. No loving couple gladly accepts a "long-distance relationship" as ideal. Neither should a loving church family.

### The church is one body.

The Bible consistently teaches that the church is Christ's body on earth (Eph. 1:22-23). Each believer is a different body part, but we're intricately knitted together (Eph. 4:15-16). We're not independent but interdependent. Our spiritual gifts are like eyes and ears and hands and feet that each play their part in the body's growth and mission. Yes, even at a distance, we're still Christ's body. But like any healthy body, we shouldn't want to stay dislocated.

### We're a spiritual family.

In the church, God is our adoptive Father, so we're all spiritual siblings-God's "household" (1 Tim 3:15). With our different ages and genders, Paul even calls us fathers and mothers, sisters and

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brothers, sons and daughters (1 Tim 5:1-2). But families aren't meant to be separated. Healthy families live together, cry together, and help each other. Parents with grown children love when the adult kids get together—and those parents are only fully satisfied when everyone's present. We must be faithful during this season to reach out to those who can't safely join us. But all who are able should seek to gather for our life-giving family reunions.

**Preaching is a sacred moment.** Our generation is used to John Piper sermons and Beth Moore videos and Ravi Zacharias clips. Phones and screens and apps are now our default medium. In just three months, we've even grown used to watching our own pastors and leaders teach God's word through WiFi and glass. In this digital environment, we must remember that preaching is fundamentally a live, sacred moment (Acts 20:20, 27). Yes, it can be streamed and recorded and posted, benefiting both virtual attendees and future hearers. But for a local family of believers, God's word is best communicated live as the Spirit empowers an appointed preacher and trusted shepherd to articulate God's word personally in a moment pregnant with purpose and possibility. In these moments, pastors shepherd their own sheep, and sheep hear the voice of their shepherds. In these moments, we're struck not only by the content of the message but also the gravity of the moment. When we hear God's word taught in a congregation, we resonate not only with our risen Lord and his royal word, but with each other. A feast enjoyed together is better than food eaten alone.

**There's nothing like singing together.** There's no experience on earth like congregational singing (Ps 95:1–2). Singing together glorifies God by re-enthroning him in the hearts of his people. Singing together brands our minds with truth and warms our hearts with grace. Singing together symbolizes our unity as we harmonize over the gospel. Singing together expresses our emotions to God (and we have lots of emotions right now). But we don't just sing to glorify God; we also sing to encourage each other (Col 3:16). And we can't sing to each other through a screen. Yes, we're vulnerable: Congregational singing could get an American Christian infected, just like it could get a Chinese Christian arrested. But like the underground church has always done, God's people will figure out how to praise him together, as faithfully

and safely as possible. We'll wear masks, or clean the air, or meet outside, or recite psalms, or even whisper. But ultimately, God will hear the rising praises of the Christian church, and it will be good if we're there to express them together.

**You have a job to do.** If you're a believer, you have a job to do when the church gathers. The work of ministry isn't mainly for pastors and leaders. It's for every Christian. Every believer has spiritual gifts meant to be used, and every church body desperately needs every body part to be active (Rom 12:4–8; Eph 4:15–16; 1 Pet 4:10–11). When we stay home, we can still listen and give and call and text virtually. But there are many ways we simply can't serve or encourage or build up Christ's body unless we're physically present.

**Our worship is a witness.** Each week our friends and neighbors and coworkers walk through the same broken world we do, but without our hope and our map. Each week they suffer challenges and tragedies that make them wonder where grace and truth can be found. Yes, there are ways we can minister to them on-line, and we should rejoice that God's now reaching new people with new methods. But the unbelieving world also needs to see the gospel's transforming power embodied in a local family of Christians who love God and serve each other in the most gracious and gritty ways.

**Conclusion** You may not be able to return right away. You might need to exercise caution for yourself or those you love. You might need to keep watching from a distance for a while. But when the time is right, God's people can and must gather again, and I hope you'll join in. After all, our gatherings are ultimately a taste of heaven. The Bible's vision of heaven doesn't look like a quarantine, a livestream, or a Zoom call. It's a "face to face" encounter with the risen Christ and a worshipful reunion of both saints and angels (Heb 12:22–23; Rev 22:4). In the life to come, we won't be siloed and segregated in mansions of glory, but living and working and loving and serving together in a new world where righteousness dwells (2 Pet 3:13). So once we know it's safe, wise & no disservice to our communities, let's gather together again, in person, until all things are new.

David Gundersen serves as lead pastor at BridgePoint Bible Church in Houston, Texas. \*Article was originally published on Crossway Publishers Website & abbreviated for space. To read in its entirety go to: <https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-reasons-to-come-back-to-church-after-covid-19>

# CHURCH NEWS

## Smyrna Pres Continuing In-Person Morning Worship

The church and the nursery are open to the public for corporate worship during the 11 a.m. Lord's Day service. A number of new procedures and policies are in place to limit person-to-person contact and lower the risks of sickness. One such policy is to register children for the nursery each week by 3pm Thursday at <https://forms.gle/9fDxj1ZSFSSjuEGaA>

## Molly Jackson's Bridal Shower Save the Date 08-08-20

A Bridal Shower for Molly Jackson is planned for August 8th from 10:00am-12:00PM at the SPC Fellowship Hall. Safe distancing and face masks provided. Molly and Aaron Liwanag are registered at Bed Bath Beyond & Wayfair.



Molly Jackson & Aaron Liwanag are registered at:  
1) Bed Bath & Beyond  
2) Wayfair

## SPC Men's Gathering

As the Summer closes and we prepare for the Fall we wanted to celebrate and cast vision for what the SPC Men's Ministry will look like going forward! We are excited that the Thelen's are willing to host us at their house Thursday July 30th. We will have dinner and a time of fellowship. Be on the lookout for an Evite sent out with more details.

## Wednesday Night Drive-Thru Meal Set For July 8th



Volunteers will be taking the Wednesday night dinner from the fellowship hall to the portico for another drive-thru meal. Wednesday night meals are planned and made by Jenny Powell. Several other volunteers work to setup and clean up afterwards. The July 8th menu includes glazed beef meatballs, jasmine rice, roasted broccoli, chopped salad and dessert. Please confirm your order by 4pm Monday July 6th.

## Honoring Our New Communicant Members



Earl Harrison April 2020



Mazie Ruth Thomas  
May 2020

# GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



## Wednesday Night On-line Devotion & Prayer

Every Wednesday night at 7 p.m. until further notice. Details and reminders for the Zoom gathering are sent by email. If you know anyone who would like to be added to that list, they should let us know at [info@smyrnapres.org](mailto:info@smyrnapres.org).

## Strength to Strength: Blueprints for Christian Growth

This month, we continue our 10-week Strength to Strength series called Blueprints for Christian Growth. This series will use Sinclair Ferguson's book *Devoted to God*.

Each Sunday at 5 p.m., you will receive an email with the link to a new video teaching. The teachings will also be livestreamed on social media at that time. You can find the book at any Christian book retailer, including Amazon.

While we are without evening worship services, we suggest watching the teaching videos when they premiere on Sundays at 5 pm EST. At that time, you can use the teachings as an introduction before reading the corresponding chapter during the week. If you ever miss a teaching video, would like to re-watch one, use it for review at the end of a week; you can always find them on our web-site: <https://www.smyrnapres.org/blog/post/strength-series-blueprints>. We also have a running collection of all recorded Strength to Strength videos.

We encourage you to make *Devoted to God* a part of your personal summer reading plan. Together, with the video series, you will have great material to know, GROW, and show forth the love of Christ.



# STRENGTH TO STRENGTH - BLUEPRINTS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH READING PLAN

## **Week 1 teaching: The Ground Plan**

(Devoted to God chapter 1)

## **Week 2 teaching: All of Me**

(Devoted to God chapter 2)

## **Week 3 teaching: Propositions of Grace**

(Devoted to God chapter 3)

## **Week 4 teaching: A Different Kind of Death**

(Devoted to God chapter 4)

## **Week 5 teaching: Conflict Zone**

(Devoted to God chapter 5)

## **Week 6 teaching: The New Rhythm**

(Devoted to God chapter 6)

## **Week 7 teaching: In for the Kill**

(Devoted to God chapter 7)

## **Week 8 teaching: The Law Goes Deep**

(Devoted to God chapter 8)

## **Week 9 teaching: Keep Going**

(Devoted to God chapter 9)

## **Week 10: The Ultimate Goal**

(Devoted to God chapter 10)

# JULY 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 7 p.m. On-line Devotion & Prayer	2	3	4 <b>INDEPENDENCE DAY</b>
5  11 a.m. Worship Service	6	7	8 <b>5-6 p.m. Drive-Thru Meal Pickup</b>  7 p.m. On-line Devotion & Prayer	9	10	11
12  11 a.m. Worship Service	13	14	15  7 p.m. On-line Devotion & Prayer	16	17	18
19  11 a.m. Worship Service	20	21	22  7 p.m. On-line Devotion & Prayer	23	24	25
26  11 a.m. Worship Service	27	28  Youth Date Called Intown@K- Town	29	30	31	

**NOTE: All regularly scheduled in-person events and activities outside of 11:00 a.m. worship will be canceled/postponed until further notice.**

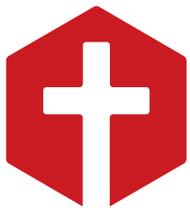
# JULY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Mallory Zang
- 1 Paige Crooks
- 2 Joy Powell
- 4 Allie Thelen
- 7 Lisa Maxwell
- 8 Jill Fogarty
- 8 Matthew Funk
- 8 Opal Landon
- 9 James Philip King
- 13 Trina Whitaker
- 13 Brett Crompton
- 14 Lucy Katrek
- 14 Manuel Hart
- 15 Becky Reumann
- 18 Jill Kerns
- 21 Paul Thelen
- 23 Anh (Ton) Phan
- 23 Ben Phan
- 27 Peggy Bryant Adams
- 27 Wayne Haynes
- 30 Cora June Fogarty

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Find us on social media!





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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**