



May 6, 2020

Greetings in our Lord,

Seven weeks ago, our Leadership Team announced that we were suspending all gatherings and worship services at Community Church building until further notice, making a shift to online worship (youtube) and online group gatherings (zoom). Our first recorded worship service was March 22nd. Speaking on behalf of both your pastors, it grieves us to be apart from you. We love being with you face to face, worshiping and sharing life together with you in person.

As of this writing, there have been 19 confirmed cases of coronavirus in Clatsop County but no deaths related to this disease in our county. 11 confirmed cases were from a single Astoria business where co-workers were exposed while near one another. In the USA, there are many places that have been much more deeply impacted by this pandemic, with over a million confirmed cases of coronavirus in USA, and at least 71,000 deaths in our country from this disease. Coronavirus has become the number one cause of death per day in our country, surpassing heart disease and cancer. Worldwide, as of this writing, there have been 3.6 million people who have tested positive for this disease and a quarter-million deaths related this disease.

Because of Christ's call to love our neighbors and out of respect for the most vulnerable in our community, we are continuing to suspend worship gatherings until further notice. We eagerly await the coming time when we will celebrate worship together face to face once again. We will reopen for worship when the Lord leads us to do so, as we heed wise guidelines from our local and state health professionals and elected officials. Paul was concerned about how the church gathered for worship, writing to the Church in Corinth that "everything must be done so that the church may be built up . . . everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor 14:26, 40). Because "Christ's love compels us," (2 Cor 5:14), we are preparing to reopen Community Church in a loving and orderly way that builds us up.

We want to bring you up-to-date with how Cannon Beach Community Church is responding to the global coronavirus pandemic. As we prepare to step back into face-to-face life and worship together in the Church Building, there are lots of questions and best practices to consider how to protect the most vulnerable, and not cause further spread of this disease. We are developing guidelines for phases of reopening Community Church in the near future as we see the hand of God's healing grace extend through our community, nation and world. We will let you know as soon as our Leadership Team has these guidelines in place.

The economic impact of this global pandemic has also caused deep distress in the lives of people worldwide, with millions in our country out of work or underemployed. Locally, there are people we know and love who are not sure how they are going to make it through the next week or month. We lift up our hearts in prayer to our God, asking for Christ's mercy to help people in need during this time of crisis. If you find yourself carrying this burden, please let us know, so we can "carry each another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). We want to support you and walk this journey alongside you.

In face of the uncertainties of these times, we keep seeking to be Christ's good and loving presence in this world, as Psalm 23 assures us, "surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life."

We are bringing God's goodness and love in practical ways through many acts of compassion and service, to benefit the needy and hurting in our congregation, local community, and world. Community Church gives 25% of church giving to support local, national, and international mission partners, including: local Food Pantries and the regional Food Bank, North Coast Young Life, Child Evangelism Fellowship, Astoria Rescue Mission, Door of Hope Pregnancy Resource Center, Lower Columbia Gideons, Partners for Seniors, Helping Hands, Homeless Connect, among other agencies who are personally reaching into people's lives with God's goodness and love. We are committed to continuing to support these ministries throughout this crisis and into the future.

Our Community Church Health Taskforce and Go Teams continue to assess best ways we can promote God's gift of health and wellness in our congregation and community. We are writing letters of encouragement, making phone calls, delivering meals, volunteering our time at local food pantries, reaching out to the most vulnerable with acts of kindness, and lifting up our prayers. Our missionaries, both local, national and international continue to bring Christ's grace and truth to challenging places around the world. Please continue to pray for God's healing grace to be at work in our community and world, bringing healing to the millions of people who are suffering from this disease, and pray for Christ's comforting presence to be with those hundreds of thousands of people who have lost loved ones to this disease.

We continue to encourage you to connect together in these days in creative ways, to help people come to *know Christ, grow in Christ together, and to go with Christ into our communities*. We encourage you: keep reading weekly in our Immerse readings (we are now on Week 19 in 1 Kings); keep praying for one another; keep writing letters of encouragement to others within the church; and keep using creative digital tools to help us stay in touch with one another and be encouraged during this time.

Each week, we will continue to record Sunday worship and make them available on our church website by Saturday night. Weekly, your pastors record short inspirational video podcasts to encourage your spiritual growth in Christ during this time. Nathan reflects weekly upon our Immerse readings, and I, David, reflect weekly upon *Cloud Devotion* with personal ways to deepen our life in Christ.

Please feel free to contact us during this time to share with us any prayer requests, joys or troubles in your life or family. We are grateful for your faithful support of the ministry of Community Church by mailing in your financial support, and by supporting the ministry and mission of Community Church through online giving available at our church website.

We love you. We pray for you daily, and we look forward to the coming time when we can gather together once again for worship. We will keep you up-to-date on these developments in the weeks ahead. May you know the closeness of Christ's presence. As John reminds us, "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). As I shared in the message last Sunday from 1 Thes 5:11, "encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing."

May your life be full of the grace and truth of our Lord!