



Prescott Presbyterian Church

Jehovah Will Be Our God, and We Shall Be His People

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Charles K. Perkins, Pastor

March 19, 2020

Dear Prescott Presbyterian Church Family, Friends, and Visitors,

The elders wrestled and prayed regarding how to guide corporate aspects of our congregational life as the COVID-19 virus spreads. Part of this wrestling stems from differing reports on statements of fact, e.g., “How long can the virus live on a surface?” “What exactly is the mortality rate?” “Would a normal rate of spread overwhelm our hospitals’ ability to care for those most threatened by it?” How much social distance would meaningfully decrease the load on hospitals?” “Who has the virus without knowing it (and could pass it to others who could then, unknowingly contact a person at risk)?” These kinds of unknowns cause rational persons to make plans with more caution than we might, given greater clarity, somewhat like a contractor who might increase his estimate because of uncertainties of a particular job. Add to this the fact that each individual will weigh the various unknowns and risks differently, and thereby come to differing conclusions.

Some of what we do know is summarized in a letter from the elders of Calvin OPC
COVID-19 seems to be a serious threat to those over the age of 70, those who have respiratory conditions such as asthma, COPD, and emphysema, heart disease or diabetes and those who are immunocompromised due to cancer treatments or other immune suppressants, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that such groups avoid public places where large number of people congregate. No vaccine is available yet for this infection, so preventing the spread of the disease is our best weapon against this virus at this time. The CDC also recommends basic hygienic practices to reduce the spread of this virus.

Specific biblical guidance for you to consider (and that the elders considered) pertains to

- Observing the Lord’s Day in the context of mercy and necessity as well as the principle that the Sabbath is made for man [Matthew 12:10-12; Mark 2:27] “*making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God’s worship*” [Larger Catechism 117] In this case, social distance can be considered a form of mercy, perhaps even necessity.
- Christian’s duty to obey the governing authorities, per Romans 13:1 *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.* (For instance, the government has not forbidden public worship).

After taking biblical wisdom and the factual uncertainties into consideration, **the Prescott Presbyterian Church session has suspended all corporate gatherings of the church until further notice. This includes assembling for worship and Sunday School.** Of course, the session will be continually assessing new data as it becomes available, in the hopes that Lord's Day worship will begin again soon.

Our session did not come to its decision easily. We tell you this to communicate to you that this situation requires integrating a wide scope of facts and biblical wisdom which can result in Christians, prayerfully, coming to different conclusions.

The session does call you set aside dedicated time each Lord's Day to worship God through Scripture reading, prayer, and song. Because Christians, filled with the Spirit and the Word, can come to different conclusions about worship on the Lord's Day in this situation, the session recommends some different ways this might work itself out in your lives and the lives of your families as your consciences process the biblical truths during serious medical situation:

- 1) View a live streaming worship service (We recommend Calvin OPC <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCt2AGs7IGo006XWBgOd1pdQ> or Tenth Presbyterian in Philadelphia <https://www.tenth.org/>)
- 2) Participate in private/family worship: Read or listen to the Bible and/or good printed or recorded devotional material, Sing, and Pray. (We recommend Refnet <https://listen.refnet.fm/#start> and *Tabletalk* <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/>. Also, Charlie and Peder are going to record about 40-45 minutes of teaching each week for you to view on Sunday. We'll send links each week.)

Peder and I will contact each household by phone to answer any questions you may have.

In Christ's Service,



Charles K. Perkins, Pastor

for the Session of Prescott Presbyterian Church