

March 20, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of PCCH,

I hope that you and yours are healthy and well. Let's continue to hold one another – and our world – in prayer as together we seek to navigate this uncharted territory.

Your Session and staff is working diligently (and remotely, practicing good distancing!) to determine ways we might move forward faithfully. We will send out a much more detailed correspondence on Monday with our plans.

In the meantime –

- Worship will happen **online** this coming **Sunday, March 22 at 10am**. To find us, simply go to www.chestnuthillpres.org and click the “Watch Live” button at the top of our homepage. Please let one of us know before Sunday if you are having problems.
- We will keep the building closed to worship, ministry programs, meetings and other activities until *at least* April 5 (including Palm Sunday).
- If you have prayer concerns of any kind, be in touch with Brian, Austin or myself. If you'd like to make some phone calls or write notes to some of our members, that would be great! Let us know.
- We are compensating our staff fully in this time. The ability to take that important step happens in large part by your continued financial support. You can mail your pledges and other contributions to the church office, or give online by visiting www.chestnuthillpres.org and clicking “Financial Support” on the homepage. Thank you for your support.

As I mentioned, we are pulling together a variety of online activities – prayer, study, fellowship, for all ages. We will send a more complete update at the beginning of the week.

In the meantime, keep in touch. Invite friends and family to join us Sunday for worship.

And keep praying – for a quick response to this virus, deliverance for those affected and all vulnerable populations, fortitude for all medical workers, wisdom for our governmental leaders, stamina for families with children at home, hope for those whose employment is precarious, and resources for all those already facing financial or physical hardship.

This Sunday, we will share Psalm 23 in worship. Its words are familiar, even iconic. And they are timely – perhaps they can provide both comfort and a mandate as we seek to be church for such a time as this.

Psalm 23 (NRSV)

¹The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

³ he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths^l
for his name's sake.

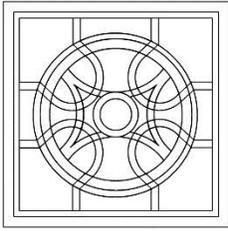
⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.

Faithfully,

John



March 12, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of PCCH,

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble...”
~Psalm 46:1*

With you, the Session and church staff have been monitoring the Coronavirus/COVID-19 news closely, both the health developments and the growing wave of church, school, business and sports cancellations. We have spoken with church and medical colleagues locally and across the country about their responses. Things are very fluid, and news seems to be unfolding in real time.

No one directly affiliated with PCCH has been, to the best of our knowledge, infected with COVID-19. Nonetheless, and because of our deep concern for the well-being of our church and community, *we have decided to cancel in person worship for the next two Sundays, March 15 and 22*, and all activities in the building during that time. We will continue to assess the situation as we look to a longer term plan.

Cancelling worship goes against our instincts, of course, yet after extensive discussion, we believe it to be the wise course of action now. While we would do everything we can to minimize the threat, including adapting worship and sanitizing and deep cleaning, medical professionals strongly suggest that the practices of “social distancing” are particularly apt for a church community.

For the next two Sundays, we will offer a worship experience via Facebook Live. Simply log onto https://www.facebook.com/PCChestnutHill/?epa=SEARCH_BOX at 10:00 a.m. This Sunday will include prayers, scripture readings and a brief devotional; we will offer something more expansive for March 22.

Again, this was not an easy decision, but we collectively feel that it is the wise one. Simply put, canceling worship removes risk and is a good act of pastoral care. As one friend said to me, “Jesus cared about the health of the community,” and this is one way to demonstrate that commitment.

Next week we will update you on our plans. Please check the church website and Facebook pages and your email for these updates.

As we continue on this “unique” Lenten journey, please remember to check on neighbors, friends, and church members. Let us know of any pastoral concerns. You can reach staff members through their emails and the office phone.

Finally, even though we are not gathering in person, it would be helpful to our ministry if you can maintain your pledge support via the mail or electronically.

Thank you for your prayerful and thoughtful support as we move through this uncharted territory. Please pray especially for those affected by the virus and all those providing care.

Faithfully,

John Wilkinson