



STATE OF THE CHURCH ADDRESS

April 29, 2020

Thanks to you, Carney Free Church family, for keeping our witness going for Christ and His Kingdom as the Spirit of God leads us in this strangest of seasons. I thank God for you as I share below how God continues to work among us in the last few months. You are a testament to the living God at work in our church and into our communities! Celebrate along with me as we look at the ministries of our church: what God has done, where God is leading, and how God will lead into the months ahead.

Grace and peace, Pastor Kit

FACILITIES MINISTRY TEAM

The Facilities Ministry Team is keeping a special eye out for how we can **maintain and strengthen our level of cleanliness at the church**. Big thanks to Shirley Schoen and the team for focusing on a healthy environment for us to worship in once we can resume services or other gatherings at church in person!

Several adjustments are in the works for when we're able to return. For starters, the Facilities Ministry Team and the Elders need to know what *you* plan to do when we begin having in-person services again. **Please go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/G8ML367> or call Pastor Kit or Lana to let us know if you plan to attend our regular 10:00 service, a new second service at 8:30, or to continue streaming services through Facebook online for you and your family until a later stage.**

Other adaptations include having greeters hold doors for people as they come and go, modify how we distribute bulletins and communion elements, make masks available for people if/when they forget theirs, rope off certain pews to help maintain social distancing, set aside Bibles for individual (but not one-time!) use, and other subject like bathroom best practices and attention to microphones for our music teams. Some of our adjustments need to factor in whether we will have one service or two, **so please be sure to complete the survey online OR to call Pastor Kit or Lana with your plan.**

WORSHIP MINISTRY TEAM

The Worship Ministry Team **purchased a Streaming License from CCLI** so that we could share not only our sermons and prayers but also our music in our services with you on Sunday mornings.

The Worship Ministry Team is planning **how to stream services online** once the stay-at-home orders are relaxed so that no one has to decide whether to risk their personal health in order to worship with us at Carney Free. A new camera will likely be purchased to send high-quality video to Facebook and connect to the church's sound board for better audio.

Per the stay-at-home orders for Michigan, **we will not hold in-person services until at least May 15**, perhaps longer. However, conversations have begun on how to adapt our facilities and services to worship the Lord together with reasonable precautions in place: adjusting our greeting time, our seating arrangements, our offerings, and communion, for starters.

OUTREACH AND MISSIONS MINISTRY TEAM

It seems so long ago, but the **Venison Supper** on February 29 went very well. We had a great turnout, with a number of people who asked for prayer at the end of the night. Pastor Jason LaFlamme from Munising Baptist Church gave a solid, gospel message on listening to God's rules when we make decisions for our lives. Because everything shut down relatively soon after the event, it's been harder to follow up with those who came. Still, many presenters and vendors brought good interaction for all. A good twist this year was to have our own mounts on display up front!

We always celebrate when we see everyone getting together to host and put on the event. Special thanks to the ladies who made great food and worked real hard in the kitchen! And thanks to all who donated venison for the feast as well!

A major ministry of our church is our team of American English teachers we send to the Czech Republic every summer. Sadly, **English camp is canceled** this year because of COVID-19. The Outreach & Missions Ministry Team wants to give the Czech leaders a gift from our funds to help offset costs they've already incurred, such as their down payment to reserve their camp location. Czech national leaders will be following up with former campers as restrictions are (hopefully) loosened this summer.

The Outreach & Missions Ministry Team has heard from several **missionaries** about how COVID-19 has impacted their ministry areas. While we can't share some things about our missionaries on social media or over the internet, Dewey Olson and other team members would love to update you in person on how our missionaries continue to serve and adapt in this time.

Two things about **Lake Lundgren Bible Camp**, where several of our missionaries serve to spread the gospel: (1) **Students are still applying to serve there** for their Summer Staff Team (“SSTers”). Pray for these students as their plans feel especially uncertain—and as they raise their support to serve, should the Lord provide for camp to stay open this summer! (2) Also, consider supporting LLBC with a gift, even if / especially if the virus situation causes weeks of camp to be canceled. We praise God for the years of gospel proclamation there, and we want to see it continue! **Would you financially support LLBC, and other Christian camping ministries, even if going or sending your kids this year becomes a non-option?**

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRY TEAM

The Christian Education Ministry Team is **almost finished accepting scholarship applications for high school seniors and college students who are attending a Christian college**. If you have not received a scholarship application form via email from the CEFC Christian Education Team, please contact Sherry Cooper right away at scooperyooper@gmail.com. Completed applications are due back tomorrow, April 30, 2020.

Martha Palmer is making plans for a **church cleaning day**, so if you'd like to get involved, please let her know! Typically, this cleaning day is for toys in the nursery and the toddler room—but due to the nature of our current break, if you'd like to help expand the cleaning for our church, that would be very welcome.

Take a moment soon to **encourage those parents** who are doing what they can and stepping up their game to disciple their children and youth in following Jesus. It's been a hard hit for our youth group and Bible Instruction Class—though we celebrate our leaders who continue to reach out to students individually and in small groups. As you're able, write a note in the mail, or make a phone call to **let our students know that you love them and miss them!**

Discipleship classes and small groups have hit the pause button for the last six weeks because of the coronavirus, but many are eager to return once they can get together. Some have found ways to connect online through this storm as well. Remember that, **for small group and discipleship class leaders, Zoom allows 40-minute gatherings free of charge** for as many people as you have in your groups! Offering a ten-minute devotional, followed by sharing prayer requests and praying for one another, could be a great way to keep in touch with your members. **Zoom is not just for people with internet:** anyone with the meeting ID and password can **call in on your Zoom meeting by phone**.

Pastor Kit is reading **Christian classics on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2pm on Facebook:** classics like *More Than a Carpenter*, *The Cost of Discipleship*, *Life Together*, or *The Problem of Pain*. Catch up on what you've missed at

carneyfreechurch.org/livestreams/book-readings, where you'll find study questions to help you live out what many Christians have been reading and growing from!

Lastly, thanks to all who have joined in on **Kids' Nights on Wednesdays at 6pm on Facebook** with Pastor Kit and Caroline. We've had visitors to Kids' Night from the Czech Republic and Finland, even! And Bethel Baptist Church in Marquette (with Becky Nelson leading the children's ministries) has invited families to join in as well. We sing songs, read Bible stories, and usually have another activity to shake things up, too.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE MINISTRY TEAM

The Congregational Care Ministry Team has been one of the busiest teams lately! The **Prayer Team** held two **days of prayer and fasting**: one in late February, and another in early April. The service in the Fellowship Hall to conclude the day in February, including the Youth Worship Band leading music, was very well received. Thanks to all who participated, most of all in prayer.

To minister in this COVID-19 crisis, the Congregational Care Ministry Team began two new ministries. One is an ongoing **grocery ministry** to pick up and deliver groceries to those who are more vulnerable to the disease and who may be quarantined from contracting it. Thanks to all who have agreed to participate in this way of blessing our neighbors!

Another new ministry is a **mask ministry**: as of April 29, **284 masks have been donated**, and there are more masks being made! So far we have donated masks to essential workers in two group homes and to a local doctor's office. Thank you to thirteen different mask makers from our church and community, and eight other material donors and deliverers. Because of the continuing demand, **we're still looking for more people to sew and to donate materials** (cotton fabric, thread, and elastic)!

The latest development of the mask ministry is a **drive-through mask giveaway this Sunday, May 3, from 2-4pm in the church parking lot**. If you or someone you know needs masks, we have enough masks currently available to give away to the first 40 cars that drive in, not including extra masks for kids. **If you're willing to help out, please contact Mary Ann Peterson or Sherry Cooper!** We need people to help direct traffic in and out of the front lot of the church.

When we can resume in-person worship services again, we will be using **pre-packaged communion cups** with both grape juice and wafers. Thanks to the Congregational Care Team for working out the logistics, both to follow through on what the Lord Jesus commanded us to do, and to minimize the spread of viruses.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Thanks be to God, our **finances are looking healthy so far**. By the end of March, the church's total loss was \$13,690.36—which included paying back the church's Spiritual Ministry Fund for a \$13,024.04 loan that was taken out to fix the roof a few years ago. Bearing this in mind, our total loss for March 31 was only \$666.32. Thanks to God—and thank *you* all for your generous giving!

Now, at the end of April, we've fallen a little farther behind. Our current loss is about \$18,000, so we're closer to \$5,000 behind after the Spiritual Ministry Loan. But **we are still in a healthy position overall** for this time of year: ***thank you for continuing to support the ongoing ministries*** of Carney Free. You can continue to give to the church by mail (52 Church Street, Carney, MI, 49812) or online at carneyfreechurch.org/give.

PARSONAGE AD HOC COMMITTEE

The Parsonage Ad Hoc Committee is **narrowing down the options** ahead for the parsonage. Of a starting ten options, two have been ruled out of the running. The members are doing more research on their options to see what's possible, but they're moving in a good direction to narrow their focus.

SAFETY AD HOC COMMITTEE

The Safety Ad Hoc Committee has made significant progress on getting **smoke detectors and fire alarms** ordered to install at the church. In February the committee put up **evacuation maps and emergency response guides** around the church. Our **lobby monitors** have kept up an excellent job during our worship services! A next stage will be to offer them further training in handling potential emergencies that could arise.

ELDERS

The Elders **met weekly starting in mid-March to address our church's response to the COVID crisis**. New needs and new opportunities have arisen; the Elders thank all who have risen to the occasion to help the church continue growing in the Lord and continue loving and serving our neighbors.

The Elders appointed a **Constitution Ad Hoc Committee** to review, clarify, and update our Constitution and Bylaws. This committee has not yet begun to meet, but once they are able to begin they will communicate their progress to the congregation in our quarterly business meetings.

Our Elders approved a **raise for our custodian, Shirley Schoen**, per the terms offered by the Facilities Ministry Team in their interview with her last fall. The raise will be an increase of \$2 an hour, and Shirley will be retroactively paid for her raise since her 90th day working for the church. The Finance Committee agreed not to raise the budget to accommodate this change; the adjustment may still even out due to the effects of the coronavirus on Shirley's work schedule over the last two months.

Lastly, the Elders sent a letter to those who had been on the **Inactive Members list** per our previous constitution, inviting them to become active again in our church or to help us transfer their membership to their new place of worship. Our new constitution and bylaws have no provision for inactive members. We eagerly encouraged previously inactive members to engage fully with their church family wherever they are, and we renewed a welcome to all of them to join with us again any time at Carney Free!

SENIOR PASTOR

Pastor Kit **thinks everyone for moving online** with him during this season. It's been a change, but the church family has shown its commitment to fellowship, to worship, and to growing in God's Word that is worth celebrating! Thanks for joining in for Sunday morning worship services; for Zoom meetings afterwards (great to see all your faces, together!); for Kids' Nights on Wednesday evenings; for church COVID updates and for book readings, too. It's encouraging to see new friends regularly joining in because you've shared our services and other gatherings on your own Facebook pages! What a privilege to bless others and point them to God online!

Pastor Kit **thinks Lana for her faithful work**, keeping up with the mail, the phone, the bulletin, and the other office and financial needs of the church. The next time you give Lana a call, please thank her and encourage her for persisting in her caring service to our church!

Pastor Kit started writing **weekly Letters to the Editor for the Menominee County Journal**—originally, to offer comfort, encouragement, and guidance from a pastor's perspective to the residents of our county at large through this unique season. What's become a further blessing is the connection these letters have provided with our church members who don't have any internet access! Pastor Kit encourages you to reach out to one another, especially those who aren't connected by Facebook or email.

Pastor Kit has been trying to **improve contact with the congregation**, those who are members and regular attenders of our church. If he hasn't reached you yet, he hopes to soon! And he thanks all who have connected with him and been an encouragement as we share our burdens together and lift one another up.

Pastor Kit finished an **online counseling class** in April with the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation (CCEF) called *Dynamics of Biblical Change*. He will also begin a new class in May with CCEF called *Counseling in the Local Church*. For more information on this School of Biblical Counseling, go to ccef.org/school.