



**GRACE
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

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Dear GPC family,

Over the past few days, we have seen a heightened response from our civil leaders and public health officials as they attempt to slow the spread of the coronavirus. These measures have been taken in order to prevent our health care system from being overwhelmed by a massive amount of cases requiring treatment at the same time. It is sobering to consider that a person can be infected for two weeks without showing any symptoms, during which time he or she can infect others. This is why our governor has issued an [executive order prohibiting meetings of 50 or more people](#) until April 6, and our president's guidelines for slowing the spread of the virus advise [avoiding gatherings of 10 or more people](#). Life as we know it is changing in some rather sweeping ways, and it seems likely that it will be some time before things return to normal.

These government directives relate to several of the things that God requires of us in his law. For one thing, it is our duty to set apart the Lord's Day and gather in public assembly for the worship of God (see Ex. 20:8-11; Heb. 10:23-25). For another, it is our duty to obey our civil leaders (see Rom. 13:1-2), unless they command something God forbids or forbid something God requires (see Acts 5:29). For another, it is our duty to make all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life and the life of others (see Ex. 20:13). These directives restricting gatherings have not singled out Christians, nor have they been given with the intention of suppressing the practice of our faith, so we cannot say that we are being forbidden to worship. Moreover, the directives have been given with the

intention of preserving life and maintaining order. This is obviously not in conflict with God's law, but is rather an effort to uphold it. Another factor to consider is that if we were to keep meeting as usual, in defiance of the warnings of the government, and if our doing so contributed to the harm or death of our neighbors, we would risk bringing God's name into disrepute through our actions. In light of these things, we think that it is clear that we should obey the governor's order and take seriously the president's guidelines by making some adjustments to our sanctifying of the Lord's Day.

Having considered these things, along with the risk factors for those in our congregation, the Session, in counsel with the Deacons, has taken the following actions pertaining to our church's ministry, in effect through April 6:

- On the Lord's Day, no services will be held at the church. Instead, a **sermon** will be recorded and will be uploaded to the church website (www.graceopcnh.org) by 11:00 a.m. I will send out an email to notify you as soon as the sermon is available online.
- By Friday of each week, I will email a modified **order of worship** that you can use as a guide in conjunction with listening to the recorded sermon online in your home. We encourage you to sing together and to pray for your family's needs and the needs of our community, country, and world during this time of sickness and disruption. If you would like to take some of the church's hymnals to have at home, contact me to make arrangements to get them.
- We encourage you to spend additional time on the Lord's Day praying, reading the Bible and other good Christian literature, studying and memorizing catechisms, and making use of helpful resources such as the various [Ligonier teaching series](#) (which can be streamed online for free through June 30).
- Sunday School classes, the Wednesday prayer meeting, and the Friday night study at the Villaumes' **will not be held through April 6.**

- The monthly fellowship dinner, the men's breakfast, and the women's dinner **will not be held in April.**
- **Session meetings, Board of Deacons meetings, and officer training** will be held through a video-conferencing platform.
- We will be dividing the households of our congregation into ten groups so that our five officers and five officer nominees can keep in contact with you through **regular phone calls.** Our goal is to call everyone twice per month.
- I will try to send a few brief **devotional messages** via email each week.
- We are working on setting up **online giving** through our website and will notify you as soon as it is ready. Those who still prefer to give by check can wait to do so until the next time we meet for worship. Our treasurer has asked that checks not be mailed.
- The Deacons will be ready to utilize **the Deacons' Fund** for needs that arise in our congregation. Please let our officers and officer nominees know of such needs when we call you. When the balance of the Deacons' Fund goes under \$2,000, I will notify the congregation and ask for gifts to replenish it.
- Since it is being advised that **the elderly and those with compromised immune systems** should remain in their homes in order to avoid exposure, we ask that anyone in that situation let us know if they need help getting food and other supplies.

We will reassess the situation at the end of March and communicate what we determine to do after that point. Obviously, if the situation significantly worsens or improves before then, we will consider making changes to what we have outlined above.

It is a sore trial to have to refrain from gathering for regular Lord's Day worship. While I am grateful that we have technology that allows us to mitigate this to some extent, the reality is that we cannot replicate being in the physical presence

of the gathered saints for the worship of God. There is no such thing as “virtual worship.” Yet in the Lord’s providence, we find ourselves in a situation in which we cannot safely assemble.

This is not the first time that such a thing has taken place. When the Babylonians destroyed the temple, the Israelites were not able to have temple worship for seventy years. During the Middle Ages, public worship was sometimes disrupted by the outbreak of plagues. In all times, there are always going to be believers who are providentially hindered from attending public worship due to sickness or infirmity. The Lord cared for his people through those crises, and he will care for us through this one. And when we are next able to assemble for public worship, we will be able say these words with renewed appreciation: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD!’” (Ps. 122:1)

Please contact me or one of the other officers if you have questions, concerns, or needs. Our contact information is listed below.

In Christ,

Pastor Wilson