

Dear Members of City Reformed,

The onset of COVID-19 infections in Allegheny County has brought enormous changes to our individual lives and to our congregation as a whole. Fears for our health and for those we love cast dark shadows upon each of us. Adjustments to the “Stay at Home” order for Allegheny County and the closure of many businesses present difficult challenges for each of us. As we struggle with these new and challenging circumstances, uncertainty abounds. But God is faithful. He is our ever present help in time of trouble.

Here are some things I would like you to consider at this time:

1. **Recognize that this pandemic and the resulting closures affect each of us differently.** It is normal for members of the body of Christ to have different concerns in general, but more than ever, we are each impacted differently by recent events. Some people are stuck at home with too many people in too small of a house. Others are enduring long periods of lonely isolation. Some people are doing jobs that have become increasingly dangerous. Others can work remotely. Some have lost their jobs altogether. Members of our congregation have different levels of vulnerability to COVID-19. Quite simply... we are not all afraid of the same thing or struggling in the same way. Let’s be mindful of the different challenges that our members face and try to extend patience and grace in this unusual time.
2. **Look for needs around you.** Please give special attention to the needs of people that God has providentially put into your spheres of influence. Who do you work with and how are they doing? Who do you live near and what are their needs? How are the people in your CG doing? Who would really benefit from a phone call or an online talk? The deacons are eager and ready to help. Together we can begin to think about larger groups of people in our city that may need assistance. I fully expect that we will see open doors for communicating the hope of Christ in this difficult time. God is always building his eternal kingdom as the nations shake. (Heb. 12)
3. **Redeem the time.** Some of us are busier than ever, but some have a lot of free time. How are you using it? While many voices around you may encourage you to binge watch Netflix for days at a time, God has bigger desires for our lives. Why not use this time to invest in your spiritual growth? Older versions of the Bible use the phrase “redeeming the time” to describe the way in which we invest our time and energy into things that glorify God. (The ESV reads, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, *making the best use of the time*, because the days are evil.” Eph. 5:15-16) We have many ways to help you redeem the time. Our community groups are meeting online and our adult Sunday School class on the study of Isaiah will be resuming soon. Pastor Joseph is producing a Bible study on YouTube each day. Agora Forum will be online in the near future. We have no shortage of book recommendations to offer for independent study. Make the decision to “redeem the time” and don’t let this opportunity be wasted!
4. **Reduce your other screen time.** It is important to stay informed through the news, and social media can offer ways to connect with people that you don’t otherwise see. But be careful with how much of your time is absorbed through these avenues. Both social media and the news can create the effect of amplifying worry and concern. Sometimes you need to just shut it off for a period of time. Here are some suggestions:
 - a. **Bible before screen time.** Read God’s word before you read other things each morning. The first thing that hits your brain will have a lasting influence on your heart for the whole day.

- b. **Strive for direct communication.** A phone call (and even a text message) is part of personal communication and can grow our relationships. Posting messages through social media can have its place, but the relational component is dispersed across a wide and unseen population, thus losing the personal connection.
 - c. **Go outside.** The governor's "Stay at Home" order for our county specifically allows for outside activity as long as people observe appropriate social distancing. Getting exercise and fresh air is important and can have a huge impact on your perspective.
 5. **Draw near to God.** While social distancing affects so many human relationships, it does not limit our ability to draw near to God. James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you." During this time of change and uncertainty, nothing is more important than centering your thoughts on God. Please commit to praying for our congregation during this time. And please join us each week for our Sunday Worship Service. While we cannot all be in the same location each week, we can gather together at the same time and worship God together through the same service. Until we can gather again, please make it a priority to join with us for our livestream service. We covet your prayers.

RELEVANT LINKS:

Regular updates are compiled on our [website](#).

Sunday Worship will be livestreamed at tinyurl.com/CRPClive. The weekly bulletin is available on our website: www.cityreformed.org.

Find tomorrow's [Sunday, March 29, 2020 bulletin here](#).

Easter Week Services:

- **Good Friday** Service will be livestreamed at 7 pm on Friday, April 10.
- **Easter Sunrise** Service will be cancelled, but members will receive a liturgy that they can use with their families, roommates and neighbors (at a safe social distance.) We encourage you to celebrate the beginning of Easter with those around you. Some people may choose to use an internet or phone connection to participate with those who cannot join them in physical proximity.
- **Easter Breakfast** will be cancelled.
- **Easter Sunday** Service will be livestreamed at our normal time and channel.

Pastor Joseph's YouTube Devotionals can be found at tinyurl.com/CRPCPastorJoseph. Joseph is working through the book of Philippians and posting a new video each day, except for Sunday.

Weekly videos for children will be made available to families. If you are interested, please contact [Charis](#).

Adult Education: The Isaiah class will resume online via Zoom every Thursday evening at 7:00 pm for the next four weeks beginning on April 2nd. If you've never used Zoom and want to join us, create a free Zoom account on [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) and click on this link tinyurl.com/CRPCAdultEd. If Zoom asks you for a password, type "CRPC". Join us for an interactive study of Isaiah 24-27 this Thursday. Feel free to share this information with others you think may be interested. If you have any problems connecting, contact [Seulgi](#).

Agora Forum will be offering regular online seminars and discussions on important topics.

The letters which described our rationale for **responding to the COVID-19 crisis** with a livestream worship service can be found here: [3/12 Pastoral Letter on COVID-19](#) & [3/14 livestream worship](#).

A new document which describes our **theological framework** for how we conduct our livestream worship service can be found [here](#).

The **deacons** can be reached by contacting [Nik](#). An online Social Distance Update surveying how we can help each other is found at tinyurl.com/updateCRPC.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matt", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Pastor Matt