

Saturday, August 15, 2020

Dear City Reformed,

As the summer calendar rounds into the Fall, our church leaders are steadily working on plans for ministry. This is an annual process in which ministry plans are most often adjusted around the time college students return. This year, it is more challenging than ever as we seek to make adjustments that reflect the constraints of the COVID pandemic. We believe it is more important than ever for our church to have a faithful witness for Christ in the university community. People need hope in an uncertain time. In order to do that safely and effectively we need to be creative. I am planning to finish a longer member letter in the near future which summarizes the past year's activities and lays out more comprehensive plans for the Fall. Until then, there are two immediate steps that you need to know about.

Fall 2020 Parent Survey: *From Charis*

As we prepare for Children's and Youth Ministries at City this Fall, our vision and goals remain unchanged as we continue to navigate the unprecedented challenges of a 'new normal' for you and your children at the start of this new school year. We remain committed to partnering with you as parents in the discipleship of your children. We are praying and getting creative in how to best serve your family while many of our in-person ministries remain closed at this time and many of our families face the prospect of school at home this coming year. As we make plans and finalize decisions for this Fall, we appreciate and value your input!

Please take a moment to complete this [PARENT SURVEY](#) ~ please COMPLETE & SUBMIT by the end of the day THIS TUESDAY, AUGUST 18.

Sunday PM Communion Service: 5:00 pm & 6:00 pm in the WT Parking Lot

Tomorrow (Sunday, August 16, 2020), we will take our first step into a rebooted format for public worship. When our plans for an open worship service fell through in early July, we began to explore ministry options that were less infringed by the constraints of COVID. One part of that plan is to transform our normal evening worship service into a smaller, shorter, outdoor service that centers around communion. By keeping the service short and having it outside, we hope to accomplish several things. First, we will make it possible to have multiple services and thus reduce our overall attendance at any one service. Second, because we will need to wear masks at the service (for all attendees more than two years old), this reduces the time in which that will be necessary. Third, we want this to be a truly open service – one that everyone can attend, and one where we can serve communion. As we get closer, I realize that I am personally excited to see people again and share in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. My hope is that we have such a strong turnout from CRPC members and visitors that we will need to add even more service times in the future. Here are a few things that I would like you to consider:

Communion. Theologically, we can speak of this meal in several ways. When we call it the Lord's Supper it is a reminder that this is from Jesus and that he feeds us through the merit of his own life and sacrificial death. The name communion reminds us that this is a relational activity. As we receive this meal together we are reminded that we are united to Christ and that we receive his benefits as he takes our sin and shame. But we are also reminded that we are united to one another. This is the reason that we don't celebrate the Lord's Supper on our own. As we eat and drink we are reminded that we are part of the family of God – a family that extends throughout the world, but which has local expression in our own congregation.

Order of Worship. Tomorrow our order of worship will be very simple. We will sing one song in the beginning, and we will close with the doxology. We will have a short cycle of confession and assurance of pardon, followed by a mini-sermon (homily.) From there we will shift into the celebration of the Lord's Supper which will be distributed to each recipient as they remain in their seats. The service is meant to compliment the fuller worship service in the morning and not to replace it.

Safety. We want to create a space for as many people to attend as possible. For this reason, we will take every reasonable effort to maintain the safest possible gathering. This means we will keep our masks on (except for children two and under and for the immediate moments when we eat and drink together) and gather in household units that are seated six feet from other people. We ask you to be extra-cautious as we arrive and as we leave. We don't want our public gathering to be ground zero for any infectious spread and aim to show an abundance of caution. When you arrive you will be greeted by an usher and a deacon who will provide bulletins and take note of which members are at each service. Visitors will be invited to share contact information if they so choose. Although our system is designed to limit risk of transmission in the event that an attendee is later found to be infectious, we want to be able to notify members afterward if we later learn of the presence of a COVID-positive attendee.

Preparation. Historically, the celebration of Communion has been an occasion of reflection. It is best observed as part of a larger spiritual trajectory and not something that we simply show up for and then depart. Even though our service is intended to be short, this is not "fast food." I hope that the safety precautions listed above can quickly become second nature and fade into the background. I hope that the enduring spiritual realities of our union with Christ and our co-union with each other can be seen in their full glory. It will take a little work for all of us to adjust to ministry in this new age. But with determination and concern for others, we can move forward in a truly meaningful celebration. Please pray for both of our worship services tomorrow and seek to prepare your own heart for our common spiritual meal.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Martha Hall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.