

## **Corona Update #26**

**September 18, 2020**

Evening friends!

Tonight's update will be brief. Our return to in-person worship continues to go smoothly. Some have wondered if there is enough space for them on Sunday. Right now we are only averaging about 50% of our available space so yes there is room for you.

The Presbyterian Women have begun their annual Terri-Lynn nut and candy sale. As most of you know this is a fundraiser. All proceeds, after costs, will go to supporting local ministries. Please support this work!

Tonight I would also like to let you know this will be my last weekly update by phone. As we transition to more activities on campus I am going to transition to a monthly update. This will be done through our monthly newsletter. You will still receive calls for special announcements.

Finally, let me encourage you all to keep praying. Pray for the west as they deal with the fires. Pray for the south as they deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Sally and flooding. Pray for our country in this election year. Pray for the families and teachers who are struggling with the new school year. Pray for each other and our churches.

Peace and love to us all! Ben

## **Corona Update #25**

**September 11, 2020**

Good evening dear friends!

In two days we will resume in person worship in our sanctuary. I have looked forward to this for some time. Our time together will look different. I would like to encourage everyone to take a few minutes and look at the latest video we have posted to our CCPC YouTube channel. In the video I walk us through the steps we will be taking together to ensure the safety of all.

I would also like to let everyone know that Children's Church is also resuming this Sunday. It will be open to all children between Pre-K and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. One difference this year is that the children will go directly to Children's church in our educational building rather than come into worship. Ms. Heather has been hard at work ensuring that this year will be a safe and fun one! Masks will be required.

Back Pack Friends is off to a good start with the new school year. This week our contributions totaled 144 pop tarts, 112 nabs, 12 cans of beef ravioli, and 178 packets of oatmeal. For all of September we will be collecting the beef ravioli.

In closing I would ask that you keep those in Louisiana and Texas impacted by the hurricane in prayer. Pray for students, parents, and teachers as they navigate new

ways of learning. Pray for our country and our churches. Pray for our CCPC family and the ministry we share.

Peace and love to us all! Ben

### **Corona Update #23**

**August 28, 2020**

A happy Friday to all!

It is with great anticipation that we look forward to resuming in person worship next Sunday (September 6<sup>th</sup>). Much work has gone into preparing for us to safely gather together.

Tonight our re-entry plan is being emailed to everyone on our newsletter list. If you receive the newsletter in the mail then a paper copy of the plan has been sent to you. While the plan will answer most of your questions a few items keep coming up. I would like to highlight them tonight.

Reservations or calling ahead is not being asked of anyone. At this point we believe we have adequate space in the sanctuary to gather and observe current social distancing guidelines.

- While you will hopefully be able to sit in or near “your” seat - social distancing requires that attendees only sit in designated areas. Ushers will assist in this process.
- Masks will be required to be worn at all times including time spent in worship.
- There will be no congregational singing. I know this is a difficult thought for most of us but group singing is the number one way the virus could potentially be spread in our sanctuary.

No doubt you have other questions. Please take time to read the re-entry plan. Let me also reiterate that on-line worship will continue. I ask for your prayers and your patience as we take this next step together.

Let me close with the announcement that for the month of September we will be collecting Beef Ravioli for Back Pack Friends. Our first packing week was successful and I look forward to sharing updates with you in the months to come.

Peace and love to us all! Ben

### **Corona Update #22**

**August 21, 2020**

Good evening friends!

This week marks five months since the pandemic led to us closing our CCPC campus and beginning worship on-line. As stressful as this time has been I have continued to be so grateful. I am grateful for each of you and your commitment to our church family. I am grateful to the elders and their leadership in these challenging times. And I am grateful to our God and the faithfulness of His merciful hand.

After months of preparation, deliberation, and prayer the session has elected to resume in-person worship on September 6<sup>th</sup>. We recognize that many will not yet feel comfortable returning to the sanctuary. Please know that we fully support your decision. Everything that was implemented over the last five months (on-line worship, weekly message, Bible study and drive thru communion) will continue.

Worship in September will not look like it did in February. Next week the re-entry plan and safety protocols the session has been working on will be sent to every family in the church. This will help you know what to expect if you do decide to attend in person. In addition we are working on a few other resources to prepare us for our "new" normal. I would ask for your continued prayers and patience as we live into what our time together will look like.

I will close now with a word of thanks. The packing of school backpacks begins next Tuesday. This week 685 packets of oatmeal and 652 packs of pop tarts have been donated to fill those bags. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Peace and love to us all! Ben

### **Corona Update #21**

**August, 14, 2020**

A good evening to you all!

This weekend I have the joy of officiating the wedding of a young girl and her fiancé. It was originally planned for May. She was in tears when she called and told me they were postponing to August what they had been planning and dreaming of. Instead of hundreds of guests there will be a small gathering of family and friends. Instead of a huge reception there will be a small dinner party. Just about everything about their wedding has changed, yet their love and commitment to each other has not.

The pandemic has changed so much of our lives. This will include worship when we gather again in the sanctuary. No doubt we all would prefer for it to be as it once was. For now it must look and be different. However, the reason we worship remains the same. We worship God because He is faithful in all things. Our worship of God, whether in the sanctuary or at home, also

connects us, encourages us, and strengthens us to face these difficult times. Nothing can take this away from us!

Our Christian commitment to love our neighbor is another thing the pandemic cannot take away. The packing of school backpacks begins next week. A few in our congregation (including myself) will be part of the teams packing the items we have collected over the summer. This week you generously donated 354 packs of oatmeal. With all the changes in the new school year, isn't it good that our children will not only be fed, but also reminded that there are people in this community who love them?!

This week I invite you to pray for the Back Pack Friends ministry. Pray for the children. Pray for their homes. Pray for the volunteers. Pray for all whose donations make this ministry possible.

Peace and love to us all! Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #20**

**August 7, 2020**

Good evening folks!

This week I'd like to share a God story with you. A few years back we gathered in the fellowship hall to talk, dream and pray about our future ministry. Out of this time a vision arose. The vision was to upgrade our existing sound system and to eventually be able to stream our worship service, so the good news could be shared far and wide.

For two years many worked on this and there were times it looked like it would never be. In December of 2019 everything miraculously came together. By the first of the year we not only had a new sound system installed, but also the infrastructure to share worship on-line. The pandemic took us all by surprise in March.

With the purchase of cameras, made possible by your gifts, we were able to start on-line worship and only miss one Sunday. Our service to God is now viewed by both members, as well as people who most likely we will never meet. In looking back at the last few years, I clearly see the hand of God especially in those times when it felt as if our vision would never be completed.

I share this story for two reasons. First – to give God the glory for where we are today. Second - to assure everyone that when we gather once again in the sanctuary to worship, our on-line service will continue. God has made it possible so that whether we are sitting in a pew or on our couch we can be together each and every week.

In closing, please remember we are collecting oatmeal packets for the month of August. The new school year is almost upon us. So please keep praying for our students, teachers, and the countless others who make school possible. Pray also for

our on-line ministry that it will reach all who are seeking a word of love and encouragement from God in these difficult times.

Peace and love to us all! Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #19**

**July 31, 2020**

Good evening my friends!

I'd like to begin this week with a word of thanks. The decision to keep our church campus closed for August was a difficult one. The words of encouragement and support we have received since the announcement has been much appreciated. We truly are seeking to do what is best for the health of our church family.

One step we are taking to ensure the safety of everyone is to invest in a new air purification system. Along with cleaning existing duct work this new system scrubs the air of not just viruses but molds and other germs. The decision has been made to install the system in our educational building to protect our preschoolers and teachers as well as in the sanctuary to protect us all when we resume in-person worship. Many other safety protocols are also being put in place, and I will share them in the weeks to come.

This has been an amazing month for our Back Pack Friends ministry. This week alone we received 18 jars of peanut butter and 18 jars of jelly along with 124 servings of oatmeal. In addition we were able to contribute \$1,500 towards the ministry because of your generous support. What a beautiful reminder that the work of our Lord continues!

Let me end by asking you to pray this week for our teachers, administrators, and the countless others who make school possible. There is so much uncertainty as well as so much concern about the safety of all. Continue to pray for our country, our church and our congregation.

I miss you all! Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #18**

**July 26, 2020**

Good evening dear friends!

It has been a hot week and I hope all of you are staying safe and hydrated!

Most of you are aware that the session recently asked for members and friends of the church to take a brief survey. As of today we have received 91 responses. Thank you! Your input has been very helpful.

Basically the results can be broken down as follows. A majority of you feel uncomfortable about returning to worship at this time and most likely will not do so until there is a vaccine or another solution to reducing exposure to the virus. In addition most have no problem wearing masks or calling ahead to reserve a seat. However,

there was also a significant number who are ready to return if appropriate safety measures are in place. The session took all this into consideration.

Given the rising number of cases of the coronavirus in our state and in our county the decision has been made to continue on-line worship only and to keep the campus closed for the month of August. Remaining on-line was also the recommendation of our denomination. While this may not be the decision some of you were hoping for ... we do believe it is in the best interest of our congregation.

With all this being said the decision was also made to tentatively work towards resuming activities in September. Our target date for resuming in person worship is September 6<sup>th</sup>. The hope is that numbers will be down, our reentry plan will be finalized, and all our safety protocols in place by then. I will be sharing much more information about all of this in the weeks to come.

Let me end by assuring you that none of our current practices will stop if and when we resume in person worship. Everything that we have in place now will remain. I ask your continued prayers for me, the elders of our church and our congregation.

Peace and love to us all, Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #17**

**July 17, 2020**

Greetings my friends!

I hope this message finds each of you doing well and staying cool! Summer is definitely upon us.

There are a few things I want to share with you this week. First let me say how good it was to share communion with so many of you. We had a tremendous turnout and I hope it was as good for your soul as it was mine.

The second thing I want to share is a public service announcement. Carteret County is offering drive thru Covid-19 testing to all residents. You do need to pre-register. All the information you need is available on both our web site and our Facebook page.

The third item is just a gentle reminder that if you have yet to complete our on-line survey please do so. I will tell you that the response so far has been very good. However, we really want to hear from all of you. It only takes a couple of minutes to complete and it will help the Session tremendously as we carefully and prayerfully make decisions for our church.

The fourth thing is not new but still very important. This week I am asking that you be not only in prayer for our world and our leaders but also for the Session of our church. We are meeting this coming Thursday to make a decision about whether or not we will resume in person worship in August. We need your prayers!

I will end with a plug for our Backpack Friends Ministry. As you know the governor announced this week that school will resume in August but with restrictions. This means that our food insecure children will again be able to receive help on a weekly basis. The items we collect, like the peanut butter and jelly we are collecting for July, will ensure that each child has a full backpack to take home with them. Thank you for generously making this possible!

Peace and love to us all, Ben

**Corona Virus Update #16**

**July 10, 2020**

Good Friday evening to all!

There are a few very important things I want to share with you.

First of all many of you have enjoyed using Our Daily Bread as your devotional. Our subscription has continued even in the pandemic. The current Daily Bread is good through August. If you would like one mailed to you please contact the church office.

The second thing I want to do is remind you that we will be holding a drive thru communion this coming Sunday (July 12<sup>th</sup>) from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm. Communion elements will be provided but you are welcome to bring your own from home. There will be folks in place to direct you through our parking lot. I can't wait to see you!

The third thing is very important. We are asking that all our members and friends of CCPC complete a very simple and short on-line survey regarding in person worship. Your feedback is absolutely needed as we make decisions about re-opening the sanctuary. Tracy will send an email with a link directly to the survey. If you are unable to get on-line then simply call the church office and we will ask you the questions over the phone. Please take the time to complete the survey!

Lastly, remember that we will continue to collect peanut butter and jelly for the month of July. Some have asked if plastic or glass jars of jelly are best. Both are accepted but plastic is preferable as they are lighter and less likely to break.

Continue to pray for our country and each other. Each of you are in my heart! Peace and love to us all, Ben

**Corona Virus Update #15**

**July 3, 2020**

Good evening!

I hope this week's update finds each of you safe and healthy!

For many months it felt as if Covid-19 was something that affected everyone but our small community. We have been blessed with very low numbers for the majority of the pandemic. Unfortunately that has recently changed. The number of active cases has almost doubled in the last few weeks. The coronavirus is a reality in our midst, and now we know folks who have not only become infected but who have also died. All of it is overwhelming.

It doesn't help our morale that this holiday weekend will most likely look different for a lot of us. There will be no fireworks at the Bogue pier or in downtown Swansboro. Family and friends who normally visit on the 4th may choose to stay home. We may decide to stay in because of the growing crowds. These losses are small, but they did affect us. This is why I want to encourage you to continue to put your faith in God.

The more I study scripture the more I realize how often God was at work in the direst of situations. It was often impossible for the people to see it at the time, but God was there. God was faithful. God is still faithful! Such knowledge keeps me looking ahead in hope and not in despair. I pray it does the same for each of you.

In the weeks ahead let us continue to exercise our freedom by doing our part. Being mindful of social distancing and wearing a mask are such small sacrifices to make when compared to the great benefit these practices offer to others.

In closing let me share that we will be having our 2<sup>nd</sup> drive thru communion on July 12. Details will be on our web and Facebook pages. Also for the month of July we will be collecting peanut butter and jelly.

Peace and love to us all, Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #14**

**June 26, 2020**

Hey everyone!

As all of you know the number of cases of the coronavirus has significantly risen in North Carolina. This week we also had a number of young people in our area test positive as well as members of a local small church. These examples remind us yet again how important it is that each of us do our part in staying safe.

All too often we forget that the choices we make as Christians makes a difference. The witness we offer in our homes, in the stores, and in the

workplace points others either towards or away from the grace, mercy, and love of Jesus.

I know these are difficult times. In my conversations this week I have heard people express their fear of becoming infected with the virus. I have heard frustration from those who despise wearing a mask. I have heard grief as people realize that life going forward is going to look really different. These emotions along with anger, loneliness, anxiety, impatience are increasing each day.

This is why I keep encouraging all of us to pray. In prayer we connect with God and receive the strength we need for these difficult times. Please pray for those recently infected with the virus in our area. Pray for our country. Pray for leaders here and throughout the world. Pray for our churches. Pray that all Christians will live up to the high calling we have each received through Jesus.

I love and miss each of you. Not a day goes by that I don't yearn to be back together. But for now I am willing to set aside my desires for the greater good of our congregation and our country. Together we can and will get through this!

Let me end by sharing that for the month of July we will be collecting regular size containers of peanut butter and jelly.

Peace and love to us all, Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #13**

**June 19, 2020**

Good evening folks!

The number of cases of Covid-19 are on the rise in North Carolina and the number of visitors to our beloved Crystal Coast are increasing as well. A combination of both these things has made me more mindful of the need to wear a mask so that I can protect myself as well as those around me. I hope each of you will consider doing the same.

The Session of our church met yesterday. After prayer and much discussion we came to the unanimous decision to continue on-line worship only for the month of July. We all expressed our desire to be together but realize that if we were to start worshipping in the sanctuary again that it would be stripped of everything that we value and love. For this reason and many others we feel it best for the safety of our congregation to continue gathering on-line for the near future. If you have questions or concerns please reach out to me by phone or email.

This evening I also want to share with you that the summer boxes for the Back Pack Friends ministry has been completed. Each box costs around \$68 to fill. Total cost to supply our children who we know are food insecure is approximately \$16,000. Your monetary gifts help make this happen. Your donation of items brings down this

cost. So the 164 cans of soup donated this week alone makes a difference! You make a difference!

Please remember that for the rest of this month we will be collecting Chicken Noodle and Tomato soup.

Each week I usually end by asking to join me in praying for our country and for our leaders. Please continue to do so. Also keep in your prayers this week our churches and our community. Peace and love to us all, Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #12**

**June 12, 2020**

Good evening everyone! What a joy it was to see so many of you this past Sunday. Our first drive thru communion was a wonderful opportunity to briefly connect as we continue to practice social distancing. One of the highlights for all of us on the communion team was the opportunity to meet and serve a man who recently retired from the Coast Guard and moved back to Cape Carteret. He was passing by and saw the line of cars and asked what was going on. He then got in line with everyone else. Of course he was invited to join us for worship on-line and in person once we are able to reenter our facilities.

Another bit of wonderful news I have to share is in regards to our Back Pack Friends ministry. Tracy recently sent the money collected for the month of May to the ministry. Dick and Susan were told that this generous donation of \$1,285 dollars was very much needed so that all the summer boxes could be filled. On behalf of Missions and Outreach ... thank you!

Everyone continues to give both money and canned goods so generously. I have been asked to share that no more milk be donated. This is because of expiration dates. Please continue to purchase Chicken Noodle and Tomato soup for June. Together we are making a difference in this community!

I know all of your hearts are full with many emotions. Our country needs healing and love. Let me encourage you to continue praying for our country, for our leaders, for the men and women who serve, and for one another. Peace and love to us all, Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #11**

**June 5, 2020**

Good evening everyone! I hope by now that most of you have heard that we will be holding our first drive thru communion this Sunday (June 7th). We will worship on-line at 11:00am and then everyone is invited to drive to church between 1:00 and 2:30. There will be a few folks on hand to direct you as to where to enter the parking lot as well as where to exit. Once you are on the campus you will be directed towards the covered portico. Please remain in your car. I will come forward to serve you communion. We are taking every precaution to ensure the communion elements are handled in a safe manner. If you still feel uncomfortable receiving elements already prepared then please feel free to bring your own from home. Everyone is encouraged to

share this worship opportunity with their friends. We welcome all! I am really looking forward to seeing your face and having a few moments with each of you!

Let me close with just a reminder that for the month of June we will be collecting Chicken Noodle and Tomato soup. The cans have already started rolling in. Thank you for your continued support.

As always I encourage you to pray for our country and for each other. Peace and love to us all, Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #10**

**May 29, 2020**

Good evening everyone! It's Ben and I hope this update finds each of you safe and healthy. The first bit of news I have to share will probably not come as a surprise to any of you. The Session met this past Thursday and after careful consideration of the current state policies as well as the recommendations of our denomination ... the decision was made to continue worship just on-line for the month of June. Even though we will not yet be meeting in person I would like you to know that we are beginning to plan for when we can safely gather.

However with this being said I am excited to share that we are going to try something new in June. On June 7th we will be holding our first drive thru communion. We will worship on-line at 11:00am and then everyone is invited to get in their cars and drive to the church between 1:00 and 2:30 that same afternoon. You will drive under the portico, remain in your car, and I and an elder will serve you communion. Everyone is encouraged to share this with their friends. We welcome all! Several reminders will go out about this special time to briefly be together!

Let me close with another reason to be encouraged. This week Susan Shetzer delivered our Backpack Friends donations. Bob, one of the founders of the ministry, told her that Cape Carteret Presbyterian Church was the energizer bunny of churches. We keep giving, giving, giving! And we do. Thank you for your continued support of the ministry we share. For the month of June, we will be collecting canned soups...chicken noodle and tomato.

As always I encourage you to pray for our country and for each other. See you Sunday as we worship together on-line. Peace and love to us all, Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #9**

**May 22, 2020**

Good evening everyone! It's Ben and it is time for another update. As all of you know Governor Cooper has announced we have officially moved into Phase 2 of reopening. What does this mean for us? As of now groups of no more than 10 may meet indoors and no more than 50 may meet outdoors. This means that we are still not able or ready to worship together in our sanctuary. A few have asked about us holding a drive-in worship service. At the beginning of the pandemic we made the choice to invest our

time and resources into developing an on-line service. This has been a goal of our church for years. An on-line service allows us to worship together now but will also be available when the pandemic passes. A lot of time and investment has been spent on making this goal a reality. It would not be prudent at this time to change the path we are on.

So when will we worship in the sanctuary? I don't know ... yet. The Session is meeting this week and that will be topic #1. There are literally hundreds of big and small decisions and changes that need to be made before we can safely gather together. What I want you to know is that we are preparing now so that when the time comes ... we can open the doors and feel safe coming together in a place that we all love.

Let me close by thanking everyone for the support of our Backpack Friends ministry. Over the last two weeks we have collected 210 milk cartons, apple sauce and juice. You folks rock!

Please pray for our country and for each other. See you Sunday as we worship together on-line. Peace and love to us all, Ben

### **Corona Virus Update #8**

**May 8, 2020**

Happy Friday evening folks! It's Ben and I am calling to tell you that I love you and God loves you too!

The big news this week is that North Carolina has officially entered Phase 1 of reopening. I don't know about you but I am still trying to figure out exactly what this means. This week looked pretty much like last week when I boldly venture to the store. The one thing I noticed was a number of faces that I normally don't see. I suspect that folks are already visiting our beautiful Crystal Coast so it is more important than ever that we do all we can to remain safe. Some may be wondering if we are getting ready to throw open the church doors and gather in the sanctuary since we are in Phase 1. The good news is we are getting closer to being able to do this. The sad news is that we not there yet. It is just not safe yet for us to gather together and the session is committed to doing everything they can to provide for the health and wellbeing of all who worship at CCPC. I am praying for patience for all of us! Please pray for patience for me!

Dick and Susan came this week to collect donations for Back Pack Friends. For those who wondering they always do so practicing social distancing. Over the last week we have received 96 apple sauces, 48 apple juice boxes, and 96 milk cartons. Isn't that amazing?! We will continue to collect small milk cartons for the month of May. Some of said they are having trouble finding the milk. It's out there. Please keep looking!

I look forward to joining all of you this Sunday as we worship together on-line. Until then may God's peace and love be with us all!

## Corona Virus Update #7

May 1, 2020

Good evening everyone! It's Ben and it is hard to believe but it has been 7 weeks since we last gathered together in the sanctuary. The old saying goes: absence makes the heart grow fonder. No doubt this is true as my heart grows in love for you with each passing day.

This week Tracy read to me all the small notes many of you are including in your giving to the church. Let me just say how these notes and the drawn smiley faces brighten up our day. Also many of you are leaving encouraging comments on-line. While I may not be able to respond to each one personally I do want you to know they are read and very much appreciated.

I have been saying a lot lately how generous the hearts are in this congregation. One beautiful example of this can be found in the support of our Back Pack Friends ministry. Last month we not only contributed apple sauce and juice but together we contributed over \$720 to this vital ministry. Thank you for your support. For the month of May we are collecting small milk boxes. You can find them on most grocery store aisles where the shelf stable milks are stocked.

Based on comments I have received you were all thrilled with the new camera. A number were surprised to learn I had shaved. Shaved head and a shaved face is my new quarantine look.

The session continues their work on what it will look like when we reopen the campus. Please keep them in your prayers. What we are quickly discovering is that there are lots of important decisions that have to be made in order to ensure everyone's safety.

As always I look forward to joining you as we worship on-line this Sunday. If you get the chance read John 21 in preparation for our time together. God's peace and love to us all!

## Corona Update #6

April 24, 2020

Hey folks – it's Ben and let me begin this week's update by saying I miss you all! So to bring some light and joy into our lives let me share a few things with you. As you know we have been collecting apple sauce and juice for the month of April. Dick Shetzer carried our contributions to the Back Pack Friends shed this week and learned they were short on both items. Our donations meant that every child would get both in their bags after all. Isn't it wonderful how God works! **For the month of May we will be collecting small milkboxes.** You can find them on most grocery store aisles where the shelf stable milks are stocked.

Another exciting development is that our new camera is up and running. You should

see a difference this Sunday. We now have the capability to zoom in, and the picture should be even brighter. Please don't be alarmed when you notice on Sunday that I cut my own hair.

The Session met this past week by Zoom. Zoom is an on-line way to connect. Some of the highlights were the fact we can continue to support the salaries of both the church and the preschool. Your generous donations are so appreciated. In addition, we talked about the health of our members, and the wonderful connections we have made through phone and online.

Finally, we started the conversation about what it would look like when we are able to open the church back up. We aren't there yet but we are working towards the time when we can all be together again. I can't wait! Until then I look forward to joining with you as we worship on-line this Sunday. May God bless you all!

### **Corona Update #5**

**April 10, 2020**

Good evening everyone – it's Ben and it is time for our weekly update. I hope this finds everyone remaining safe and healthy. Each of you continue to be in my thoughts and on my heart.

There a few things I would like share with you. Fortunately the Backpack Friend's ministry is still able to continue even with the new restrictions in place. Please pray for the safety of all those who are making sure our young ones have food during these difficult times. Just a reminder that we will continue to collect apple juice in pouches and small boxes and any flavor apple sauce in individual containers.

We have received many positive comments about the Maundy Thursday service. Please plan on joining us on-line Sunday for our sunrise service at 6:45 and our regular 11:00 Easter service. We will be sharing communion at the 11:00 service so plan on preparing some bread and juice for our time together.

Finally I wanted to let you know that the church office will be closed next week. Since the beginning of the pandemic Tracy and I have been working every day to make sure the needs of our church are being met. We are going to take next week off to spend time with our families and to rest. The Together We Grow questions will still go out on Tuesday and we will still have on-line worship next Sunday.

I look forward to joining everyone on-line Sunday as we celebrate Easter together. May God bless you all!

### **Corona Update #4**

**April 3, 2020**

Hey everyone – it is Ben. Each week I look forward to sharing with you the many ways our shared ministry continues. Your patience and encouragement during the last few weeks has been so appreciated. We are still fine tuning our on-line worship. We hope that in the weeks to come you will see and hear improvement. One of the big items

that we are currently looking into the purchase of a camera that will allow us to zoom in closer to the chancel area.

This Sunday we begin Holy Week. All our traditional services will still be held. We will just celebrate Maundy Thursday and Easter a little differently. One thing I am excited about sharing with you is that we will be having communion at both the Thursday service and the 11:00 Easter service. You will receive a phone call about the details of this at the beginning of next week.

The outpouring of support for Backpack Friends has been tremendous this week. We received 335 green beans and 381 containers of corn last month. And have already received over 180 apple juice boxes and applesauce containers for this month. You folks rock! Please remember that we will continue to collect apple juice in boxes and pouches and all flavors of apple sauce the rest of April.

We started sharing a new resource this week: Together We Grow. If you didn't receive it please let Tracy know. Our hope is that together we can study God's word and grow in our faith.

Please keep checking our Facebook page, YouTube channel, and website as new things are added on a weekly basis. I love and miss each of you. Be safe and may God bless us all!

### **Corona Update #3**

**March 27, 2020**

Hey everyone – it is Ben. We received many positive comments about our first on-line worship service last Sunday. As I looked out over the sanctuary I pictured where each of you sit. I cannot tell you how good it was to share worship with you. Please pass the word to others that we will be streaming again this Sunday at 11.

I have a few updates to share. First, the Session held an electronic called meeting this week. Per the recommendations of our governor and our presbytery we went ahead and made the decision to remain closed until further notice. It was hard to acknowledge that our Easter celebrations will look different this year. We are planning on holding a Maundy Thursday service as well as an Easter Sunrise and Easter service. Together we will celebrate that Christ has indeed risen!

Backpack Friends continues to meet the needs of our young ones that are food insecure. 660 bags were packed yesterday. We still need your donations. Starting this week we are asking for apple juice in small boxes and pouches as well as any flavor of apple sauce in the individual packs. There is a plastic bin located right inside the church doors for you to drop off.

I would also like to use this time to thank everyone who has given financially to our shared ministry. Your commitment to the Lord's work has been humbling. I ask that you

continue to support our church in the days ahead. No doubt there will be more challenges ahead of us as we live into these uncertain times. With the Lord's gracious help we will get through this. Keep reaching out to one another by phone. Keep praying for each other and for our county. Together we can come through this stronger than before.

I love and miss each of you. Be safe and may God bless us all!

### **Corona Update #2**

**March 20, 2020**

Good evening everyone – I hope this call finds you well. Over the past week we have been hard at work in a number of different areas. I along with the elders have been calling our church family to check in and see what needs you may have. The way I provide pastoral care may be different for the next few weeks but each of you remain in my heart. Please call me or the church office if you need anything. We have volunteers in place to help.

A major part of the week has also been focused on getting our Sunday worship service available for viewing on-line. I am excited to share that our service this Sunday (03/22) will be available for viewing on YouTube. We will be emailing instructions on how to connect to everyone on our list. It is not hard. Please be patient as we expect a few hiccups along the way.

Please know that the church remains closed and all activities are cancelled for the near future. This includes outside activities like our Hope Mission dinner. We are still collecting green beans and corn for Backpack Friends. Please feel free to drop these items off at the church office.

Let me ask everyone to continue to pray for each other and for our world. Everyone is being affected by the coronavirus. This is a time in which we should come together as a people even while we are practicing social distancing for the protection of those vulnerable to its effects.

Finally, I would like to encourage you to please give your financial support to the ministry of our church. We may not be gathering for worship on Sunday but the work we share together continues. We are doing all that we can to watch expenses but remain committed to supporting the support of our staff. You can give on-line through our website or simply mail our offering in to the church office. Please let us know if you have any questions.

I look forward to joining all of you in worship on Sunday. Peace and love to us all, Ben

### **Corona Update #1**

**March 13, 2020**

Greetings to our CCPC family –

The effects of the coronavirus are beginning to make an impact in our beloved

community. Major events are already being postponed or cancelled. I want you to know that the session is taking this very seriously and have prayerfully considered appropriate actions. While we might all indeed feel healthy ... we need to consider those among us who are most vulnerable to this potentially deadly virus. After carefully looking at all the information available it appears that the absolute best action we can take is to practice social distancing. It is suggested that all activities be cancelled wherever groups of 100 or more gather. This means that the healthiest choice we could make as a church family is to cancel Sunday School, worship, and all other church activities for the next two weeks. We will be making further decisions on a week by week basis after that. Please check our CCPC Facebook page and our website on a frequent basis for the most current information.

Many are looking at this time of "distancing" as punitive. I believe there is another perspective to consider. As Christians we trust that God is at work in the midst of all this upheaval and uncertainty. We believe that God has given us the ability to make choices not only for ourselves but for the greater community. Our choice to stay home on Sunday allows us not only to protect those who need protecting but also gives us time to pray and sit quietly with God. This time can be a fruitful time if we will release our anxiety to our loving God and join together in doing what is best for all our community. Peace and love to us all, Ben