



Coronavirus

COMMUNICATION UPDATE

March 13, 2020

Good afternoon, Clifton Park:

After much prayer and deliberation, we are moving our March 15, 2020 worship experience completely online. We will not be meeting in-person. In addition, the church building will be closed through Friday, March 20. We will evaluate the situation each week and make a determination regarding worship and closures. We will remain in contact with you to provide regular updates. You may also check the website, www.cpbcc.net, for information concerning the status of weekly activities. Additionally, by completing your REALM profile here: (www.onrealm.com), you will also gain access to regular updates.

The decision to suspend in-person worship this weekend does not come easily. Indeed, churches across our nation are wrestling with whether to open for worship and there are arguments to be made on both sides. For us, the Apostle Paul's admonition to the Corinthian Church provides guidance. He said, *All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor* (1 Cor 10:23-24). In other words, Paul challenges us that just because something is permissible does not always mean it is advisable. And that when making decisions, we must look beyond ourselves and consider the best interest of others.

In that regard, there were several factors that influenced our decision to close and will be considered as we evaluate the situation going forward. Among them:

1. The governor of the State of Maryland has asked organizations with gatherings of 250 or more not to meet. There is a certain amount of deference we owe to our civic leaders, not because they have authority over the church, but because they have responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of residents (Rom 13:1-7). I imagine our state government did not order the closure of schools, universities, events, etc., without great deliberation and without counting the considerable costs. Both biblically and practically, there is a certain public trust that is reasonable and responsible. Without specific reason to do otherwise, the most prudent thing for us is to defer to our government authorities in this instance.
2. On balance, the risks associated with meeting on Sunday outweigh the reward. Having one worship service this weekend is not worth the prospect of someone in our congregation getting sick or potentially spreading the virus to someone they love. The experts have consistently said that the coronavirus is a low risk to the majority of us. That being the case, we have also been

advised that the elderly and persons with compromised immune systems should consider foregoing large gatherings for the time being. By meeting online, we can better ensure the safety of everyone within our congregation and community.

3. As a community church, and a congregation with a stated purpose of leading in our community, we have a responsibility to participate in solidarity with our community as it tries to stop the spread of this virus. Right now, limiting large gatherings is the path our community is taking. We will join that effort. To do otherwise is not leadership.

By taking this action, we hope to serve as a model of the kind of vigilance called for in this moment. We encourage each member of our ministry to follow the personal guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control which can be found here: (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf). By doing that, you will help keep yourself and your community safer. This information also is available [here on our website](#).

Sunday Worship. Please join us on Sunday at 11am for worship via live stream. You can find the feed on the church's Facebook page and on our website at www.cpbc.net/services. In both of those locations, we find not only a live feed of the service, but a gathering of people who are praying, communicating, and connecting as the service goes on. For those without internet access, we will be working on a way to dial in and listen to the worship experience.

Giving is an important aspect of our worship and I ask that we give particular attention to it during this season when we are not meeting in-person. There is a possibility that our gatherings may be remote for multiple weeks, but our financial obligations continue. Said plainly, we need your continuing and consistent support. The options include:

- *Online Giving* – Online giving is available on our website via your computer or mobile device. You can access the Clifton Park Baptist Church giving portal directly at <https://onrealm.org/cliftonparkbaptistchurch/-/give/now>.
- *Text to Give* – Simply text the word *cpbc* and the amount to 73256 (ex. "cpbc 125" makes a contribution of \$125). The first time you use this option there is a short process of completing payment information.
- *Bank Bill Pay* – By contacting your bank directly, you can set up direct contributions to the ministry. Use the church mailing address (8818 Piney Branch Road, Silver Spring, MD 20903) in lieu of an account number.
- *CashApp* – We have responded to many of your requests to establish a CashApp account. The church's identifier is \$CPBC.
- *Paper Check* – Of course, we would be glad to receive paper checks if you'd prefer to send them by mail to: Clifton Park Baptist Church, 8818 Piney Branch Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20903.

Prayer Meeting. Weekly prayer meeting will be held by conference call on Wednesday evening at 6:30. Prayer meeting remains an excellent opportunity to join together in lifting our cares and concerns to the Lord. I understand many of us have difficulty making it to the church midweek, let's take our current challenge and transform it into the best prayer meeting we've ever had. **You can dial in at: (605) 475-5950. Access code: 5190849#.**

Opportunity to Serve. Finally, crisis moments often provide that greatest opportunities for impactful ministry. As we work through the impact the coronavirus is having on our church, it is vitally important for us to remember there is an entire community that needs support and service during this season. In times like these, the church must really be the church. We are in conversations with our food distribution partners and our neighborhood schools to determine how we can best serve. Please stay tuned and be ready when we put the call out for volunteers. Now is the time to *lead the way, teach the truth and experience the life.*

Clifton Park, we have an opportunity to show the Lord what we are really made of. No virus will stop us from living, serving and worshipping together as the people of God. I am excited because the Lord shows His strength in moments just like this. If we do our part, I know He'll do *exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen* (Eph 3:20-21).

With much love,
Pastor Lewis