



First Presbyterian

CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO

LOVING CHRIST. LOVING ONE ANOTHER. LOVING THE CITY.

April 24, 2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

You may remember an old Sunday School song that went something like this:

*The Church is not a building,
The Church is not a steeple,
The Church is not a resting place,
The Church is a people.*

*I am the church,
You are the Church,
We are the Church together
All who follow Jesus,
All around the world,
Yes! We're the Church together.*

The Church is the community of God's people. Right now, it is important to remember that the church is not closed because the church is the body of Christ. The church is the congregation of believers who are dedicated to love Jesus Christ, love one another and love the city. Although our facility is dark right now, our congregation is shining the light of Christ all over San Antonio and around the world.

- Our elders and deacons have reached out to every household and covenant partner of our congregation.
- Our connections committee has extended our concern to our regular visitors and broader community.
- Our worship service, Social media presence, publications and burgeoning podcast ministry are reaching hundreds of people each week.
- We are continuing to support our mission partners and are assembling plans to take a major leadership role in the healing of the city during and following this crisis.
- We are continuing to offer discipleship and growth opportunities for every age and stage of faith development in the church, from children to adults.
- Sunday school classes, youth and university Bible studies, young adult studies and senior adult ministries are embracing the zoom meeting platform as a tool for continued growth.
- Our covenant partners are delivering cookies and other assistance to frontline healthcare workers, making face masks, and delivering groceries.
- We are maintaining regular connections with our homebound members, especially with those who are in crisis and grieving.
- Our staff and committees are continuing the essential functions of finance and maintenance.

As one of our covenant partners told me "the church is not closed, it's just been deployed!"

As we look forward, we are committed to a plan of innovation in our ministry, courage in our compassion, support for our civil and national leadership, and sensitivity to the health and fears of both our community and congregation.

The Session has been meeting weekly since March and is tracking developments very carefully. Wednesday night, the elders decided to maintain our current operating status while

developing plans for a return to regular mission and ministry. The session will review plans for that return on May 6 in full hope that we will be able to begin our return from exile. To use language from the old *Book of Church Order*, the church will proceed “*without undue haste or undue delay*” and we ask your patience as these critical decisions are made.

The following precautions remain in place.

Worship:

We will continue to broadcast a weekly digital worship service. This service will air at 11:00 Sunday mornings from fpcsanantonio.org, the FPC app and our FPC Facebook Page. Video recordings and podcasts of the services will also be available through these platforms.

Memorial Services and Weddings:

Following CDC guidelines, we will perform only private services of 10 in attendance or less. Arrangements will be made in consultation with the Pastoral staff. Public services to be scheduled according to guidance of civil authorities.

Church Events:

The church facility will remain closed for all activities, meeting and events. KRL and Loaves & Fishes activities have been transferred to CAM.

Committee meetings will continue virtually. Bible study and small groups will continue to meet virtually.

Regular business operations will continue.

We will continue to receive mail, make deposits, pay bills and pay payroll.

Church ministry, program, and administrative staff will continue to work remotely. Household staff will be scheduled for regular facility cleaning and maintenance. We encourage covenant partners to continue to tithe and to download our church app for ease in doing so.

Although the facility will be closed, the Pastors, Senior Staff and Program Staff may be reached by cell phone or email. A receptionist will be available to receive and direct calls to the church from 8:30-4:30, Monday through Friday.

The session remains committed to adhere to the guidance of the civil authorities for the sake of our neighbors and our witness. Unfortunately, trying to predict the status of the pandemic from one week to the next is like trying to predict the weather or track a hurricane. There are many sophisticated models, but one never knows which ones are going to be accurate, if any.

Please understand that our leadership is not reacting out of fear of **getting** the disease. We are practicing principles of social distancing as a precaution against **spreading** the disease.

In a recent interview, Pastor and Author Tim Keller said that in the short term, the best way to “*love your neighbor and family is to not take risks.*” He goes on to say:

“It’s odd because by trying to avoid getting it (the virus), you’re also loving your neighbor.” “You can’t take a risk and say, ‘I’m going to go out and do things because I don’t care if I get it or not.’ The trouble is, you’re risking the health of those who might not be able to get over it so quickly.”

This principle became very personal for the Fuller family this past Wednesday Morning.

Wednesday morning Morgan and I were tested for the COVID antibodies (our doctor is requiring this of all of his patients). Later that afternoon, he called us to inform us that both Morgan and I tested positive for exposure to the virus itself.

Both Morgan and I feel fine and we are completely asymptomatic. We are, however, under full quarantine for 14 days. I have been working remotely for the last month (as have many of you) and will continue in the exciting work the Lord has set before us.

I am still weighing this news and praying about this development, but I definitely have peace about it. I have never felt more firmly gripped by our savior. My prayer is that the Lord will use this time to refine me by His truth and humble me by His grace.

We are also praying that we will pass through the storm quickly and easily with a full battery of antibodies after the fact (and maybe even some additional super powers).

When we can't control our circumstances, and when we don't have clarity about what is ahead, the Lord says "trust." Right now, I am finding great comfort and strength in Proverbs 3:5, *Trust the Lord, with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and he will make straight your path.*

I ask for your prayers for Morgan, me and Bo as well. Ellie remains safe and unaffected at school in her college apartment. Wherever you are, at noon each day, please continue to hold our daily prayer vigil. Stop and take a few minutes to pray for our families, our covenant partners, our friends and neighbors, our city, and especially our leaders. We should pray for health, for guidance, for clarity for our leaders, and especially for a cure and relief from the sickness. Most of all we should continue to pray for courage and patience as we trust in the Lord's healing.

As we approach a medical peak, people closer to us will likely become sick, health care workers we know will be stretched, friends will suffer job adverse changes, and the physical isolated will experience more stress. 1 Thessalonians tells us to pray without ceasing. Let's do that, and let's embody those prayers by reaching out and offering encouragement to those we know who are feeling the bite of this crisis.

The task before us is how to love Jesus Christ, love one another and love the city for the duration of this crisis. Thank you for the energy, intelligence, imagination and love you have expressed in the last six weeks. The church facility may be closed but the Body of Christ is wide open.

Grace and Peace,
Bob Fuller
Sr. Pastor