



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

One West Harker Road | Fort Oglethorpe, GA | 706.866.2521 | www.FPFO.org

March 14, 2020

Dear Congregation of Christ's people at First Pres Fort Oglethorpe,

We had eagerly anticipating meeting for worship this Lord's day in the morning and again in the evening to worship in Word and Sacrament. However, in light of the situation in our communities and especially local emergency rooms, **Session has suspended all church-wide activities and worship services beginning March 15 and continuing at least until March 30.** We are working to make available a "live stream" for Sunday morning that will feature many of the elements of worship including music, prayer, and a sermon on Exodus 7:14-25. Some of the officers will still gather to continue our public witness as part of this live stream "service," but we believe limiting contact and maintaining distance are critical to slowing the spread of and halting this "pandemic" as well as to honor Christ our King in such circumstances.

You can view the live stream "service" on the church Facebook page: facebook.com/fpfochurch. You do not need to have a Facebook account to view it, but you may need to *scroll down* to view the feed.

Public *and* private worship are indispensable to long-term Christian growth and maturity, so we did not take this step flippantly or lightly or out of a fearful lack of faith. God has established the pattern of six days of labor and one day for rest, worship, and service. Christ Jesus reigns on high as the Lord of the Sabbath, and it was the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "the Sabbath was created for Man, not man for the Sabbath." So we urge the beloved to continue to remember the Sabbath Day, and to keep it holy even if we are not able to gather together for public worship in this extraordinary season.

God calls us to live boldly and faithfully in light of His lordship, but also not to put Him to the test or presume on His gracious providence. To that end, we believe the most prudent (though far from preferred) course of action to steward our own lives and the lives of our neighbors is to practice and encourage social distancing (i.e. no unnecessary contact and maintaining 6 feet of distance from other people). Since public worship is temporarily suspended, we urge you to make use of the means of grace available (the word and prayer) to you with added diligence and delight.

Please pray for the elders as we strive, however imperfectly, to shepherd the flock of God in this time; ask God to grant us wisdom and peace regarding what we must do. Please also pray for healthcare workers; ask God to give them strength of mind and body to heal and nurture the sick. Pray also for the weak and elderly in our midst who are especially vulnerable; ask God to provide for their needs as well as ease their anxiety. Pray additionally for the scientists working to develop a vaccine; ask God to grant them success in their ethical pursuit of healing. Please pray for God to show grace and mercy to this land; this nation has provoked God in countless ways, and yet we may implore our heavenly Father to spare us and our neighbors for the sake of His pity.

Additionally, if you have been impacted by a workplace shutdown and are in need of temporary financial assistance, please contact the church office (706-866-2521) so that your information can be

forwarded to the diaconate. Also if you are aware of a need from some of our members, please don't hesitate to meet that need; some of our older members may need help with groceries or medical pickup and that is an opportunity for you to serve in this time. If you need assistance in this area, please contact one of the deacons.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you. I cannot convey adequately how sad I am to have to bring this news to you. I love the corporate gathering for worship generally and I particularly love gathering with *this* congregation of Christ's people.

Please continue to bear with your elders, the civil authorities, and your family and neighbors in this season of sickness, stress, and confusion. While we take added precautions, we can be free from crippling anxiety because we know Him who sits on the throne works all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Updates will be posted on the church website as things develop.

Your servant for Christ's sake,

Ryan Biese