



## From the Pastor

Dear Friends in Christ,

**“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”** 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

I hope you are reading this while well and safe at home. Less than a week ago at our Church staff meeting we were making plans for Lent, for Palm Sunday, for Easter and so much more. Now the COVID-19 crisis has changed everything.

First, Session acted at a called meeting on Sunday, March 15 to immediately suspend all church sponsored activities on our campus, including public worship, until such time as the Center for Disease Control and the LA County Department of Public Health indicates that it is safe to resume public gatherings. During this time, our church office will not be open to the public. We are encouraging church staff to work from home as much as possible. We **will check the church phone’s voicemail at least daily. If you need to reach one of our Pastors quickly, please contact them by email.**

Karen Sapio: [karensapio@claremontpres.org](mailto:karensapio@claremontpres.org) or [karensapio@gmail.com](mailto:karensapio@gmail.com)

Brian Gaeta-Symonds: [brian@claremontpres.org](mailto:brian@claremontpres.org)

Your pastors are at work, even though their normal routines are disrupted. We are working to design on-line worship possibilities. We intend to stream worship via FB Live each Sunday at 10 AM. To watch, you will need to **create a Facebook account (if you don’t already have one) then search for “Claremont Presbyterian Church” and make sure you like and/or follow the page.** We also hope to offer opportunities for on-line bible studies, prayer, and mutual support. As we develop these alternatives, we will post this on our church website, Facebook page and through our weekly electronic newsletter, *The Latest*. If you have not already joined our Facebook page or signed up to receive the latest, this would be a good time to do so as these are our best ways to communicate with you during this time of separation. Head over to our website to sign up for *The*

*Latest* by going to the bottom of our homepage and filling in your e-mail under the “Subscribe” heading.

Our pastors, elders and deacons will use our deacon parish lists to touch base by phone to check in with you all regularly. How can you help?

- Pray. This is going to be a difficult time. There is going to be loss and grief and economic hardship. We need to stay grounded in the love and strength of God.
- Call your church friends! Stay in touch with one another. Let your pastors know if you become aware of **any needs. Don’t hesitate to contact us! We’d rather hear the same news several times than not hear of needs at all.**
- Participate in on-line gatherings. The Church is the people! We can be our church for a time without our building. We can learn from those who have lost their buildings to fire, earthquake, floods, tornados or hurricanes. We can do this!
- Give. See the related article in this newsletter about **ways to give when we can’t “pass the plate”**. Your generosity is needed to continue to sustain our church at this time. We will also let you know about opportunities to give to community efforts to assist those most deeply impacted by this crisis.
- Serve. As we become aware of ways to help members of our church or wider community, we will post those on our website and social media platforms.

I am grieved that we must endure this trial. And I am grateful to be going through this together as a community full of the love and mercy of God. I leave you with these **words of Scripture. “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8: 35-39**

# How to Give when there's No Offering Plate

Even though our campus programs are suspended, we **as a church still rely on one another's continued faithful** generosity. We want CPC to be here strong, healthy, with its ministries intact when we are able to restart our regular gatherings and programs. In addition, our mission partners need us to fulfill our financial commitments to them now more than ever: Inland Valley Hope Partners, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, UnCommon Good, and many others are working overtime to address the desperate needs this current public health crisis has already brought to us and the fallout that is yet unknown.

No offering plate? No organ music? No problem. There are still ways to support your church during this time when public worship is suspended.

## Here's how;

- Check: As long as the US Mail is still delivering, we can receive contributions by checks mailed to our church office.
- Online: You can make an online contribution to Claremont Presbyterian Church by navigating to our website at [claremontpres.org/giving-2](http://claremontpres.org/giving-2). You may also use the QR code in the bottom corner of this page.
- Autopay from your checking account: Your bank should be able to help you set up an electronic payment directly to CPC.

# Praying Together but Separately

Here are some prayers to use yourself or with your household while we cannot physically pray together.

Night Prayer, from the *Book of Common Worship*

“Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.”

Caim Prayer, from the Celtic Christian Tradition. The word ‘caim’ originates from an old Gaelic word meaning: “protecting”, “encircling”, “sanctuary”, or “circle” and has been passed down from the ancient Celtic Church. Caim Prayers are simple prayers of faith and are often called ‘encircling prayers. The circle symbolizes the encircling love and presence of God- surrounding you- protecting you

- caring for you. Psalm 125:2

Circle (name), Lord.

Keep (comfort) near and (discouragement) afar.

Keep (peace) within and (turmoil) out.

The eternal Father, Son and Holy Spirit shield (name) on ever side.

Or, simply pray [Psalm 23](#).

# From Pastor Brian

By this time those of us with children home from school, elementary through college, are probably going a little stir crazy. And, I would bet you children are too! Some of us are learning way too quickly how to do homeschool, and proclaiming that when all this is over **we're going to demand that our teachers make 6-figure incomes.**

It is a new challenge to continue creating community in a time when we are being asked to stay home. And so as Pastor Karen and I have been planning for this time as church, and as we have been watching Facebook posts fly by and emails zoom in, we have noted a few ways to make time to be in community and offer fun ways to pass the time. Try one or more of these ideas:

- Visit our CPC Youtube channel for Storytime and Godly Play with me
- **Become a “pen pal” with a member of the church who is older than you** (you can write a card, draw a picture, or make a phone call)
- Look for my *This Week* weekly email that may have printable coloring sheets and worksheets for your kiddos as well as other faith-based fun activities
- Trade snack recipes with other CPC families. Visit [kidsites.com/sites-fun/crafts.htm](http://kidsites.com/sites-fun/crafts.htm) for fun ideas for crafts

Pastor Karen and I, along with the Deacons and Elders, are going through the church roster and phone calling many people to check in and offer support. It is a neat way to hear familiar voices and offer an encouraging word, and it is a lot of people. If you would like to help out with making phone calls, let me know and I will be happy to offer you 5-20 families to check in with.



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