

News from *Cobham Park Baptist Church*

THE LIGHTKEEPER

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” —Matthew 5:14

SPECIAL EDITION—March 20, 2020

Dear Cobham Park Church Family,

Last Sunday morning, I walked into our empty sanctuary and felt the painful loss of being separated from you. The cancelation of bible studies, prayer meetings, worship services, and most visitation has been disorienting. How are we supposed to “do church” without these things? As I’ve been forced to rethink ministry, it’s becoming obvious that the way forward isn’t new.

Over a year ago, I stood behind the pulpit at Cobham Park for the first time. The standard approach in “trial sermons” is to use a tried and true message that has been well-received in the past. On that day, however, I decided not to play it safe.

In my heart, I was convinced that the Lord had a specific vision for this church and I needed to start there. I therefore dived into the experience of the first church in Acts 2. The Holy Spirit arrived to powerfully work through each of those early Christians. We saw that God would not be held back by human expectations, imperfect leaders, or the walls of a building. It was true then, and it’s true now. The points of my first Cobham Park sermon are surprisingly appropriate now:

Will we look for “church success,” or look for God? All the outward trappings of church success are gone this week. Would you like to know our attendance numbers? Offerings? Upcoming events? The answer is the same for each of those questions: zero. The Coronavirus has reminded us to look beyond these measures—not to what we’ve accomplished, but what God can and will do through each of us. Rather than languish in our limitations, let’s see what **God** can do!

Will we leave ministry to the professionals, or is every member a minister? I can no longer preach and teach you face to face. Hospital and home visits are severely limited as we all practice “social distancing.” If the church’s work were left to me, we’d be dead in the water. But God’s Spirit works powerfully through every believer. Our church ministry is exponentially far-reaching, as hundreds of you pray for others, show Christ’s love, and follow God’s leading as only you can. God cannot be quarantined. Each of you is uniquely placed by God to reach certain people that I can’t. **You** are the ministers of Cobham Park Baptist Church!

Will we focus on the church property, or sharing Jesus outside these walls? Our church facilities are largely unused now. The parking lot is empty. But as I said on Facebook today, buildings are not God’s church—we are! Everywhere you go is ground zero for God’s work. Call your neighbors. Pray from all directions. Do what you can to share who Jesus is. Be the church!

In Christ’s Love,



Pastor Keith





Without church meetings and with the pastor's visitation now limited, how will Cobham Park church family members continue to care for one another and reach our community for Christ?

I. Our Sunday School Classes become ministry teams

- Each teacher coordinates their small group, encouraging them to check on one another and notify the deacons/pastor of any needs beyond their ability to address.
- Each small group member prays for the others.

II. Our Deacons ramp up their Deacon Family Ministry strategy

- Each deacon calls and tries to stay informed about his church family. He takes initiative to meet needs directly or to pass these on to others.
- Each deacon daily prays for his church family.

III. Our Pastor and Administrative Assistant coordinate, lead, and equip church members for ministry in new ways.

- Keith and Angie keep the church informed of prayer needs and ongoing ministry through updates online, phone calls, emails, and regularly mailed newsletters. Every Friday, the church is notified of cancelations for the upcoming week (announced by email, Facebook, and local radio).
- Keith plans to post weekly messages and devotions, as well as make regular prayer/bible study guides available to membership.
- Keith wisely and appropriately contacts those in need.
- The office facilitates continued financial giving by mail from membership.

IV. Every Member a Minister

- Each member actively worships/prays wherever he or she is (Keith will make available online or mailed helps: messages, prayer guides, etc.).
- Each member of our church family checks on their neighbors and those in their own family.
- Each member looks for little opportunities to pray for those they know and bring Christ's love to them.
- Each member continues to financially support the church as they are able (by mail to the church P.O. Box if meetings are canceled for more than a couple weeks).

The Praise Page

As we approach Easter, I anxiously anticipate one of my favorite moments of the season. It's the familiar scene on Palm Sunday when the choir begins singing "Hosanna" as the children enter the church waving their palm branches. Reflecting on the excitement of our little shepherds and the hay throwing in the Christmas pageant, I was extremely excited to see how the palm waving went on this Palm Sunday. Given the current situation in our country, I realize restrictions may mean we possibly won't even be together on Palm Sunday and will miss out on the palm branch waving altogether.

For weeks, the choir has been practicing the anthems for Palm Sunday and Easter. In a perfect world, we would be able to sing them in the Sunday worship service for which they were scheduled. However, all of our plans didn't foresee the disruption of our lives as being played out on the global stage as it is today. One day soon, we will take delight in hearing our voices raised together in song when we are able to gather again. As we encounter this most wonderful season of celebration in our Christian calendar, the resurrection of our Risen Lord, I encourage you, in your quarantines and isolation, to sing and shout "Hosanna" and "Because He Lives" and all of your favorite Easter songs. Raise your voices in praise remembering the promise in Psalms 30:5b: "Weeping may endure for a night, but *joy comes in the morning.*"

In Christ,

Cindy

30 Day Bible Challenge: Hiking Up Through The Songs of Ascent

Psalms 120-134 are called the "Psalms of Ascent." Their theme is pilgrimage to God's Temple. They climb from the distant lowlands of painful separation and worldly hardship to joyous worship on the hill of Jerusalem. As we trust God in our own journey through this time of physical separation, let's hike with patience and hope. We remember that this world is not our home, and that we will all soon be united in worship again—both in this life and in heaven. Start the challenge by prayerfully reading through the Psalm of the day (see below). Use a translation that you understand well. We'll be taking two days for most "Songs of Ascent," because



on the second day, you may notice things you didn't the first time around. Follow these steps as you climb:

- 1) Take a deep breath as you ask God to speak to you. Then prayerfully read the day's Psalm.
- 2) Where on a pilgrim's journey do you think this fits? The beginning? Difficulties on the way? The joyous end?
- 3) Is there a particular verse that really "jumps out" at you? Go back to that. What might God be saying to you?
- 4) Pray for Jesus to lead and help you on today's journey. Ask Him to show you how you can help someone else.

Day #1: Psalm 120

Day #9: Psalm 124

Day #17: Psalm 128

Day #25: Psalm 132

Day #2: Psalm 120

Day #10: Psalm 124

Day #18: Psalm 128

Day #26: Psalm 132

Day #3: Psalm 121

Day #11: Psalm 125

Day #19: Psalm 129

Day #27: Psalm 133 (once)

Day #4: Psalm 121

Day #12: Psalm 125

Day #20: Psalm 129

Day #28: Psalm 134 (once)

Day #5: Psalm 122

Day #13: Psalm 126

Day #21: Psalm 130

Day #29: Psalm 135

Day #6: Psalm 122

Day #14: Psalm 126

Day #22: Psalm 130

Day #30: Psalm 135

Day #7: Psalm 123

Day #15: Psalm 127

Day #23: Psalm 131

Day #8: Psalm 123

Day #16: Psalm 127

Day #24: Psalm 131

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