



From the Pastor

Much has happened in the last month. A virus has spread around the globe. Most people have recovered, but many have died. Businesses have closed temporarily, and some may have closed permanently. The stock market has taken a huge hit. Governors from several states have issued shelter in place orders. Schools have closed through the end of April. Heroes of many stripes have stepped up and done courageous things, especially first responders and medical personnel. People have gotten in touch with their neighbors. And people have hoarded toilet paper and hand sanitizer. Crazy times.

In these crazy times, churches are no longer gathering people for worship or fellowship. Churches have begun using adaptive technology to keep in touch with people, Facebook Live, video streaming, YouTube videos.

My question is how are you doing? You. Personally. How are you handling the stress of not knowing when this will end? How are you handling the fear of being infected by the virus, or someone you love being affected by the virus?

I have been busy. I still come into the office. I am trying to adjust to the new “normal”, trying to figure out what to do. The meme on the right is pretty accurate for Dempsey and me, as we have taken many walks. In fact, I will finish the first three months of the year having walked 1,000 miles.

But the busy-ness is indicative of an inner sense of unease. It is a distraction from what is going on in my heart. In some ways, when we are barely able to handle normal, how in the world are we to handle this upset to virtually everything we have known and counted on?

My friend and former colleague at Azusa Pacific University, Scott Daniels, has written some interesting reflections on our current conditions. He likens them to the biblical “exile”. The Jewish people were exiled, removed from the land of their birth, and relocated to a land that had unfamiliar customs, language, food, religion. And worse, the Jewish people had absolutely no control over their lives. Where they had been their own masters in Israel and Judah, they were now slaves. Exile. It is an appropriate image, I think. Scott writes,

In times that feel like exile, God’s people have to lean hard on the story of hope. Hope is not an attitude. It is not optimism or pessimism. It is the conviction that God is good, that God is able, and that God is working to bring about the divine purposes. Hope is willing to lament and acknowledge the pain and suffering as real. Hope trusts that God is not absent - even if we might feel otherwise. Hope isn’t living foolishly, putting God to the test. However, hope is being convinced that darkness, evil, sin, and death will not have the last word in creation.



Scott continues,

Second, in times that feel like exile, God's people have to keep practicing their faith daily. I think this is the primary point of the book of Daniel. Even when we can't worship together, we have to lean on the practices that sustain love of God and love of neighbor.

I was in Shanghai a number of years ago meeting with state church leaders in the city. We met with an elderly Christian gentleman who told us his story of living through the "cultural revolution." He told us, with affection, of his life as a young person worshiping, praying and being shaped by God's Word in this particular church building. With tears, he told us how wonderful it was now to worship, pray, and be shaped by God's Word in this same sanctuary again - only now with even more people present. I asked him what he did during the cultural revolution when the church was shut down and they could not worship freely. He looked at me oddly, like I had just asked a really dumb question, and said, "We worshiped, prayed, and were shaped by God's Word. We just did it home."

At some point we will re-gather with tears of joy. But for now, we will keep worshiping, praying, and being shaped by God's Word... at home and with neighbors.

Finally, in times that feel like exile, it is possible for God to do very formative work in God's people. That is why I find it somewhat ironic (or providential) that this is going on during Lent. During these times of fear and uncertainty, the worst - and the best - in us will be exposed. We will walk through seas and we will build golden calves. It will be vital to be able to acknowledge, confess, learn from, and give grace to one another when the ugly moments are exposed. However, we hopefully will look back some day, like Israel and Judah did, and give glory to God for the ways we were shaped to be reflections of God's goodness because of this current experience and not despite it.

I think these are very wise words. Live in hope. Practice your faith daily (keep reading your Bible, keep praying, keep serving as best and responsibly as you can). Because God is forming you and me for some greater work.

Christians have sometimes referred to difficulties like this one as OTG's (Opportunities to Grow). That's a good perspective on this.

The good thing about using Exile as a way to understand our current situation is that at the end of Exile, there is a return. Not a return to the same old same old. And not a return as the same people. The whole purpose of the Exile was not simply to punish, but to reshape, to re-form, God's people.

Blessings from Exile

You go nowhere by accident...



What's Happening

- 1) The Session has decided to cancel live worship services through the end of April, while everyone shelters in place.
- 2) Our services are being recorded on Saturday mornings. You can request a CD (audio) version, or a DVD (video) version of the service.
- 3) You can watch the weekly worship service online at the Harvest Church Ceres YouTube Channel. A link to the service will be emailed each week.
The 3/22 service is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiK7LHd1xX8>
The 3/29 service is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajV0fQ-Vw2U>
- 4) All face to face meetings have been cancelled, including Alpha Circle, Mariners, HYPE, AA, Griefshare, and the Emmanuel services.
- 5) Each Session member has been assigned names of people to call each week. You can expect a regular call from one of our elders. Please be encouraged to call others in the church that you know to check up on them, too!
- 6) Please call or email the church office if you have a prayer request.
- 7) The Session has voted to keep paying all our staff through April, whether they are working or not.
- 8) The Session urges you, if possible, to remember to continue giving. You can always drop a check off at church during office hours, or mail it. Or you can try online giving.
- 9) To give online, you may give one time, regularly, weekly, monthly, etc. You can use your checking, savings, debit card or credit card.
- 10) You can use this QR Code.
- 11) You can download and use the Give+ App on your phone.
- 12) You can use the "Give Now" button on church website:
www.harvestpres.org



Use this QR Code

Men's Bible Study via Zoom



The Men's Bible Study will continue via Zoom on Friday mornings at 8:15 a.m. On your computer, join Zoom Meeting here <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/643614633>

To join a Zoom meeting via telephone, dial (408) 638-0968

At the prompt, enter the Zoom meeting ID provided by the facilitator of the meeting (643614633) and press #

To disconnect from the meeting, hang up the phone.

Harvest Presbyterian Church
1813 Moffet Road
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POSTAGE



Mission Statement ~ With God in control, the mission of the Harvest Presbyterian Church is to proclaim and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and nurture the faith of our church family.

Harvest Leadership 2020

Deacons

Virginia Bathe (Moderator) (2021)
Betty Baughman (2022)
Patty Correia (2021)
Kate Hendrix (2020)
Martha McNamara (2022)
Judy Salyer (2020)

Elders

Tom Bennett (2021)
Michael Cousins (Treasurer) (2020)
Karen Edwards (Clerk/Mission) (2020)
Brandy Meyer (2021)
Larry Mitchell (2022)
Paul Moran (2022)

Church Information

Church Office Phone: (209) 537-3519
Website: www.harvestpres.org
Pastor Jim Stochl—harvest.pastor.jim@gmail.com
Prayer Requests—prayer@harvestpres.org
Bonnie Middleton—secretary@harvestpres.org

Office Hours

Tuesdays: 2:00—6:00 p.m.
Thursdays: 2:00—6:00 p.m.

APRIL

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31 Office—2:00-6:00 pm	1 	2 Office—2:00-6:00 pm	3 Men's Bible Study via Zoom – 8:15 am	4 Bookkeeper
5 	6	7 Office—2:00-6:00 pm  World Health Day	8	9 Office—2:00-6:00 pm	10 Men's Bible Study via Zoom – 8:15 am	11 
12 	13	14 Office—2:00-6:00 pm	15 	16 Office—2:00-6:00 pm	17 Men's Bible Study via Zoom – 8:15 am	18 Bookkeeper
19	20  AA—7:00 pm	21 Office—2:00-6:00 pm	22 	23 Office—2:00-6:00 pm	24 Men's Bible Study via Zoom – 8:15 am	25
26	27	28 Office—2:00-6:00 pm 	29	30 Office—2:00-6:00 pm	1 Men's Bible Study via Zoom – 8:15 am	2 Bookkeeper 

Sunday School Schedule *

* This schedule may change! Check with Brandy Meyer or Bonnie Middleton if you have any conflicts or questions.



Regular Prayer List

Health Issues:

Susan Bennett
Warren Cawley
Leon Edwards
Kate Hendrix
Dorothy Nelson
Frank Reed
LaVeta Rhoys
Casey van Rys
Bettye Welsh

Other Concerns:

Coronavirus outbreak



9—Jacob Holleman
22—Hannah Holleman
22—Frank Reed
28—Keith Meyer
29Kendall Meyer



30—Richard & Isabel McKay

