



Christian Reformed Church of Pease

Building with Faith • Laboring With Love • Inspiring with Hope

May 8, 2020

Dear Church of Jesus Christ at Pease CRC,

It is said that absence makes the heart grow fonder. In this time of social-distancing I can certainly say that's been true for me. This is my fourth update to you since mid-March. That means that it has now been nearly two months since we have been able to see each other in person on Sundays (and other days for that matter!) Even as I write that sentence, I can hardly believe it's true. I, like many of you, want us to be back together again. But, as is so often the case, our desires and our circumstances do not always match up.

The administrative team met again this past week to evaluate the latest developments in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and consider what those developments mean for us as a congregation. Specifically, we discussed the question so many of us are asking: "When will we be able to get back to church?"

It seems that the most likely scenarios for opening churches back up for regular corporate worship involve a weeks- or even months-long progression that will start with small gatherings and gradually increase in size. Right now, we simply do not have a timeline for when this process will start, how long it will take, or how we will go about implementing a plan. As a result, for the time-being corporate in-person worship will continue to be suspended until further notice.

Secondly, we have also decided to cancel our plans for Vacation Bible School for this year as well as our annual 4th of July celebration. Please know that these decisions were reached in consultation with those involved in the planning and implementation of those events. It was determined that we needed to make those decisions now because of the need to order supplies early, secure volunteers, and make other arrangements for those events. At this time, we cannot guarantee that they will be able to take place safely and legally so we felt that it was wise to make those decisions now.

No doubt this news comes as a disappointment to many of you. It's disappointing to us too. I'm sorry that it has to be this way this year. But as with so many things right now, we hope that "absence makes the heart grow fonder."

Despite all that we know now will not be happening this year and despite all the challenges and changes we are facing right now, I want you all to know how proud and humbled I am to be serving as your pastor. I am humbled to be serving with a wonderful staff and volunteers who are doing all sorts of things that they never imagined they would be doing just a few months ago. Things like recording Children's Worship lessons on video, singing and playing worship music in an empty sanctuary, making phone calls and sending notes in numbers they never would have done otherwise, learning to attend online meetings, and so much more. I am grateful for your continued prayers and financial support and words of encouragement that strengthen us to keeping moving forward in faith, hope, and love.

Finally, I am hopeful. Hopeful for the future strength and vitality of this congregation. This is hard, but I am confident that God, by his Holy Spirit, is using this time, and what we are learning in it, to make this church better, stronger, and even more like Jesus than it was before. By the grace of God we will be together again. For now, God is using your absence to make my heart grow fonder...fonder for Jesus and fonder for all of you. May the Lord bless and keep you all!

In Service to the King,

Pastor Michael

