

PITMAN ROAD
CHURCH OF CHRIST

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PITMAN ROAD POST

Our Mission

Meet others where they are and together be transformed into the image of Christ.

A PEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

VOICES FROM THE PAST



Joey Peacher
Preaching Minister

Our routine schedules and life strategies have been rocked. Altered plans and ways to fight off the boredom are quickly becoming the norm. What is the new “normal”? I've heard statements like, “there's not enough wine if school is canceled for the rest of the school year,” or “I don't know if I'll survive this.” Recently, we have been reminded that some people, both young and old, will not survive this pandemic. There is much uncertainty. Uncertainty can lead to fear. Yoda, the great Star Wars Saga Jedi, would say, “Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.” In other words, overall panic. I don't know about you, but I don't want to live in fear and constant panic.

We can and should take all the necessary precautions to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe through this pandemic, but we should also remember that this virus is not a cause of God's lack of love or presence, but a product of the sin-cursed world we inhabit. We have no frame of reference for the unprecedented time in which we are living. But, history does not leave us floundering for how to respond.

Voices from the past call to us and remind us we are not alone. We should remember the words David uttered during the chaotic episodes with King Saul, **“The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.”** (Psalm 18:2)

There are two other wise men who lived through chaos in their lifetimes and were stalwarts of the Christian faith. C.S. Lewis wrote to calm fears of an atomic bomb. In his essay, “Present Concern,” he says this:

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways... This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds.

The 16th-century theologian Martin Luther wrote about something a bit closer to home: the bubonic plague. While one-third of the population was dying from the spread of disease, Luther wrote this in a letter titled “Whether One May Flee From a Deadly Plague”:

You ought to think this way: “Very well, by God's decree, the enemy has sent us poison and deadly offal. Therefore, I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person, but will go freely.”

May we, like Luther, do what we need to do to protect ourselves and our loved ones, but not shrink back in fear from loving our neighbors. We live in a time of great uncertainty; but we don't need to be gripped with fear, because the Lord has given us a spirit “of power, love, and self-discipline” and has encouraged us to “pray about everything,” telling him what we are scared of, worried about, and dwelling on (2 Timothy 1:7, Philippians 4:6).

(Excerpts from Tré Goins-Phillips, Faithwire)

AMID CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, A THEOLOGY FOR NOT 'ASSEMBLING'

PUBLISHED IN *THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE*



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We are used to arguing about the importance of the church "assembling together." We've debated the importance of Bible classes, Sunday nights and Wednesday nights for years. **Now we are trying to justify not meeting. Who saw that coming?**

Of course, the church has ignored government bans before. Rome didn't want Christians meeting and "advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice" (Acts 16:21). They still met. Courageous Christians in China and Iran have met underground in defiance of government regulation for years. But this time is different. It's not because of our conviction that "Jesus is Lord" that the government has asked us not to assemble. Instead, the government has requested we not meet out of concern for our neighbors. Ironically, they are calling on businesses, schools and churches to practice justice and mercy. We are being asked to love our neighbor. Government officials have even called for people of faith to pray.

The church is being asked to be the church. They want us to live out the meaning of our confession. And our confession is much bigger than our assembly. That's not to say being together is unimportant. In moments of fear, the church assembled to pray (Acts 4:23ff). In times of doubt, Christians were encouraged to continue meeting (Hebrews 10:25). "Forsaking the assembly" has nothing to do with canceling meeting times out of love and concern for our neighbors, older members and others most at risk. It has nothing to do with reorganizing or repurposing times of assembly for other kinds of ministry. "Forsaking the assembly" is a conscious effort to avoid being with other Christians, selfishly turning your back on the community of faith and refusing to live out the responsibilities of our calling. Elders and church leaders choosing to cancel or reimagine assemblies are doing anything but "forsaking the assembly."

Being together is not the end in itself. **The church assembles because we are saved, not to be saved.** Assembling is how we encourage each other, lift each other up and blend our voices in praise to the God who saves us. Thankfully, many of us are blessed with modern technology allowing us to accomplish some of these objectives in different ways. It is not a perfect replacement, but it is helpful. (Our resident church hugger declared last Sunday that this virus is clearly of the devil.) Technology allows us to receive many blessings of community without threatening to harm our broader community. It turns out, not assembling for a short time may be the best way to be the true church in these difficult times.

God sent Jeremiah to encourage the Babylonian exiles to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile" (Jeremiah 29:7). Now is our chance to do the same. The religious police of Jesus' day accused him of ignoring the Sabbath when he chose to "do good" and restore a man's withered hand (Matthew 12:13). Jesus reminded them how God desires "mercy, not sacrifice" (Matthew 12:7). His desire is unchanged. If God chooses, this crisis will pass. But this crisis has created unlimited opportunities to live out our confession. Our brothers, sisters and neighbors are sick, hungry and anxious.

If the Gospel is real and relevant, and the church is truly bigger than our buildings, now is the time to show it!



DEARLY LOVED, DEEPLY MISSED

BROTHER RAY EUGENE HOLMES

"A golden ray of sunshine. A feeling of warmth. A hug, a smile. A genuine greeting. A gentle presence. Comfort. Care. Empathy. A quiet strength. Celebration, dance. Love. A beautiful soul. One I'm grateful to have known." (an excerpt from a tribute written by Mallory Keeks)

The tribute written above is one of many written to honor our beloved brother Ray, who passed on to his reward early Tuesday morning after testing positive for COVID-19. How perfect a description. He was all these things, and more!

What an honor it was to know this God-fearing man who lived out the definition of "agape love".

Our hearts and prayers go out to Cordelia, Brandon, Tim, Paige, Olivia, and all other family and friends who were blessed by Ray and the life he lived. We grieve, but not as those who have no hope!

MANY THANKS. YOU ARE SUCH A BLESSING!

Even during very difficult times, our Christian family continues to give generously!

- * Since Sunday, March 15, our E-giving total is **\$5,302..**
- * Our total contribution for Sunday, March 29, was **\$2,850.**
- * Our special COVID-19 donation total so far is **\$4,805.**
- * We have assisted **11 families (42 individuals)** through our church pantry these past couple of weeks.

We have also sent a special contribution to **Brother Ebenezer and his family in Ghana**, due to the difficulties there caused by COVID-19.

To God be the glory!

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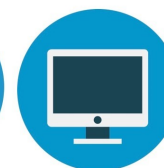
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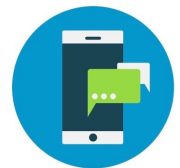
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