

Old Providence ARP Church

Old Providence News

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Dear Old Providence Family and Friends,

Unprecedented. If you look up the definition of “Unprecedented” you’ll find that it can be defined as something “never done or known before”. I personally can not think of a better word to describe the situation we have faced and continue to face with COVID-19. Another word I often use to describe our current state of affairs is “confusing”. Isn’t there so much confusion in the world today? How do you even know what to believe in a time when knowledge abounds but wisdom is severely lacking? There are just so many questions.

When will it be safe to return to normal activities? Will things ever be “normal” again? If not, what will the new normal look like? Is the virus growing or shrinking? Are we coming to the end of Round 1, with Round 2 lurking ahead? Why hasn’t _____ re-opened? Did those places open up too soon? Do I have to wear a mask? Why don’t they wear masks? What will the impact of all this be? Will I have a job in another month? What will happen to that family? These are just some of the questions folks are asking. But what about the church? The big question that seems to be on all of our minds is “When will we get back to having church?”

If you’re familiar with the internet and popular culture, then you have most likely encountered something called a “meme”. A meme is a picture on the internet that often is accompanied with words or a statement of some kind with the intent of conveying a message. Some memes are funny. Some are downright ridiculous. But some memes are quite serious and can be used as an excellent tool to convey a point that otherwise would be difficult to get across. One such meme that has begun making its rounds across social media is comprised of a series of comments in dialogue bubbles, all surrounding a bubble in the center of the circle. The bubble in the center simply says “Pastor”, but in the case of Old Providence and many other churches it would be better if the center bubble represented “The Session” or “Church Leadership”.

Surrounding the center of the circle which represents church leadership, are comments like “You can’t open the church building yet! It is a huge health risk!”, yet right beside this comment you’ll find another that says “We need to open the church building! What are you waiting for?” Still another comment surrounding church leadership is “It’s all a big hoax! A conspiracy! A media frenzy!”, and beside it, “Here are the 25 things you need to do in order to re-open your church building if you ever want to meet again.” and yet another which reads “such and such a church has opened, why haven’t we opened yet?” The point of the meme is that, in some ways, there is no way to make a right decision about starting church services. When folks have so many differing opinions it is impossible for any group of church leaders to make decisions that will please everyone.

I am writing this newsletter article on Wednesday, May 27th. I include this tidbit of information because I met with the Session last night (at length) to discuss a strategy for re-opening the church and once again holding services in person. This is a complicated scenario for any church, but it has become especially complicated for Old Providence due to the very recent rise in COVID-19 cases. Numbers have doubled in our area and communities that have previously been unaffected are starting to see a sharp rise in virus cases. It is our profound hope and prayer that this rise in cases will be brief. However, our decision-making process was obviously (and we believe, rightly) affected by this recent turn of events.

As the elders discussed possibilities and options, several realities came to the surface, not the least of which is that Old Providence is a family church. Some are family by blood relation, others are family through the bonds of Christian fellowship, but in general we are a very close and loving church. As we started to consider how services would be divided and what precautions should be taken, we came to the consensus that no amount of requests we make of the congregants would make a dangerous situation safe. When we see one another again we are going to want to talk with one another. We are going to want to congregate. Currently, the level of restrictions that would have to be put into place would be so restrictive that, to put it plainly, church wouldn't even feel like church. And none of us want that. When we open, we want to do things right. Also, the reality we came to accept last night is that when services resume, we, as leaders of the church, are saying that it is safe to attend church. The fact of the matter is that we are not willing to make that statement at this point.

So, again, when will church services resume? The answer is that the Session is working diligently to process information that it is receiving from very reliable sources about the spread of COVID-19. In addition, we are going to reassess numbers, procedures, and other criteria for re-opening in 2 weeks' time. Again, it is our profound hope that the next two weeks will show a decrease of the virus in our area and that re-opening the church will be safer. We want to do that which is best for our church, what is practical for who we are, but most of all, we want to honor God by using the wisdom He has given and listening to the direction of His Holy Spirit. We hope that you will understand the difficult nature of this decision-making process and that you will continue to pray for our church's leadership.

In addition, we hope that because we are a family church, that you will continue checking in on one another. We encourage you to call folks over the telephone. Write letters. Send cards. Remember one another in prayer. The Lord has preserved Old Providence for 278 years. I do not believe He is finished with us yet. Not even by a long shot. Let us be patient and wait on the Lord. He will make His will known. In the meantime, do not forget one another.

Your Pastor,

Patrick



June 2020 Announcements

Our pastor will continue his Daily Devotions live on Facebook, Monday – Friday at 7:00 a.m., with recorded versions on sermonaudio.com/oldprovidence, and Sunday sermons live on Facebook at 9:00 a.m. with recorded versions on sermonaudio.com/oldprovidence. A link to sermonaudio can be found on the left hand side of our church webpage: oldprovidencechurch.org. Also, please let us know if you would like audio copies of the Sunday sermons on CD by calling the church office at 540-377-2911.

Sunday, June 21 – Father's Day



PreSchool Registration Reminder

PreSchool Registration is in Process for the 2020/2021 School Year. Applications and details are available on the church website www.oldprovidencechurch.org and in the Church Office.

July 2020

(Tentative)

2 Women's Ministries	26-29 Special Services
3 Church Office Closed- Independence Day	27 ARP Women's Ministires Annual
12 Diaconate Meeting	Meeting at Bonclaken
Session Meeting	27-30 Family Bible Conf at Bonclarken
26 HOMECOMING	30 Women's Ministries visits Beulah Land

(Remember, these dates could be cancelled or rescheduled after publication of this Newsletter.)