



THE LITTLE PILGRIM

*A weekly update of church happenings for
Preston City Congregational Church
Week of June 1, 2020*

Have a question? Need help?

Please call:

The Office

860.887.4647 or 860.886.7200

During this unusual time in Connecticut, our country and our world, we want to be available to you should you need something. Call the office between 9 and noon and we'll do our best to help you. Numerous people in the congregation have graciously volunteered to pick up items at the store and deliver them to those who are not able to help themselves.

WEB STREAM SERVICES

Services continue to be web streamed *live* on Sunday mornings starting at 9, at prestoncitycongregational.org. You can also watch the service later in the day via the archive system also on the site. If you can't join us in person, we hope you'll tune in for the service this Sunday. Why not tell your friends about it? Did you know that 139 viewers tuned in from 23 states last Sunday? Were you one of them?

A MESSAGE FROM THE TRUSTEES and MINISTER

Information about reopening the church for services

In preparation for our church reopening on **JUNE 7th**, the Minister and Trustees met to discuss the safety of doing so. Following the state's recommendations for religious gatherings (portal.ct.gov/coronavirus), the Trustees have determined that for now the maximum number of attendees is 50 per service.

IMPORTANT:

Those who wish to attend a service **MUST** contact the church office (860.887.4647) by Wednesday each week and give their name, as well as the number of people who will be attending, and which service. This information will be given to a Trustee who will determine a safe seating arrangement based on the number of worshipers planning to be present.

FOR NOW:

- Face masks **MUST** be worn at all times during the service, and social distancing is expected as much as possible. *Rev. Stan will not be wearing a mask while leading worship.*
- Each worshiper will have his/her temperature taken by the church nurse before entering the building. Those with a cough and/or sneezing should remain at home.
- All worshipers will enter and exit the church through the double doors (only) located in the upper parking area. This lot will be designated for those with physical limitations.
- There will be no congregational singing during the service. Hymnals and Bibles will be removed from the Sanctuary.
- Trustees will assist in seating worshipers. They will do their best to seat you where you want to be seated, however, there is no guarantee.
- An offering container will be placed by the upper level elevator. Collection plates will not be passed during the service.
- Hand sanitizer will be available upon entering the building and the Sanctuary.

Service times will be 9 and 11 a.m. (please note the hours). Pews will be wiped down between services, and mid-level bathrooms will be cleaned. There will be no coffee hour, and no hand shaking.

We suggest that the elderly and those with health concerns/conditions view the service from home. However, the decision to attend is yours to make.

Please be patient as we work through this new way of worshiping. Hopefully, in time, we can ease up on some of the guidelines. Please contact Trustee Rich Chalifoux with any questions you have: (860.639.0149). We hope to see many of you on Sunday.

THE FINANCIAL STATE OF OUR CHURCH

The Finance Committee met on June 3rd to discuss the finances of our church. They meet four times during the year to review where things stand in regard to the income that comes into the church (tithes and offerings, donations, etc.) and the expenses incurred from month-to-month. Likewise, they consider ways to keep our church "on track" with the 2020 budget.

Unfortunately, we are now beginning to see the financial impact of COVID-19 upon our beloved church. Like so many other churches, near and far, we are facing some fairly serious challenges (at the moment)

that our congregation must be made aware of, namely our financial health. Thanks to careful oversight and management of funds over the years, the Finance committee believes we can meet the expenses anticipated for 2020, but it will be very tight doing so. All projects and plans that we hoped to begin this year have been put "on hold." The priority of the Finance and Standing Committees is to stay afloat during this difficult time, and to pray for better days for our families, church, country, and world.

Thus far, in 2020 there have been no fund-raising events, and none are planned for the foreseeable future either. Through the years we have counted on these events to off-set our budget. Last year, just over \$40,000 was raised. We hope as summer and fall approaches, and health conditions improve, that we will be able to hold at least a few smaller income-producing events to help meet our budget. As of June 3rd, we are \$20,000 behind where we should be at this time of the year. Without fundraisers and the continued financial support from the members and friends of our church, this amount will continue to increase.

I am *concerned* about the financial state of our church, but am counting on the faithfulness of God (once again), and the people connected to our amazing church to help us through this unprecedented time. If you are able to do so, consider increasing your giving. If you haven't been supporting your church because you've been away from it since the pandemic began in March, now is the time to give. Your church needs your help, your presence, and your prayers!

Personally, I think God is testing our faithfulness to Him. Yes, God does test His people. Will we remain faithful? He has been faithful to us for 321 years! A pandemic will not change the future of our church, we will by the way we respond to the times in which we live. I hope you agree with me; our church needs to continue being an effective witness in the communities we serve – a *Light* in days of darkness, a symbol of *Hope* in times of uncertainty. I don't know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future. He has a plan to prosper us, to give us hope, and a bright future. Don't forget this.

Our Financial Secretary (Sue Creamer) collects all offerings on Friday and deposits them in the bank in a timely manner. Be assured, if you give online, your contribution will be credited to your pledge. Thank you for remembering your church. Contact Bob Vescovi with questions: RVesco2010@comcast.net or (401) 583.7840.



NEED FOOD?

Do you or someone you know need food? If so, please contact Stella Dawley or the church office and arrangements will be made for food to be picked up. We appreciate the many financial contributions and donations of food that have been dropped off at the pantry since the pandemic first began. *Thank you!*

NEWS FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

I am sad to announce that *Vacation Bible School* has been canceled this summer. I have been working hard to send children songs, activities, crafts and fun games to do at home. Please check your e-mails every Sunday for new ideas each week. I would love to see your pictures, or hear about your summer. I hope some are doing the summer Bible challenge. I can't wait to see you in church soon! -- *Mrs. Van Alst*

BOOKS AND MORE BOOKS!

Many people have looked over the books that are available for "free" in the back of Dudek Hall. If you're interested in looking them over, please call the office and we'll arrange a time to let you in the building.

THE FINAL WORD

I listen to a lot of Christian music. One of my favorite songs is "Church" by "Cochren & Company."

*Take me back to the place that feels like home.
To the people I can depend on,
To the faith that's in my bones.
Take me back to a preacher and a verse,
Where they've seen me at my worst.
To the love I had at first.
Oh, I want to go to church.*

Funny, as we're preparing to reopen, this song came to mind. Can't wait for Sunday! -- *Rich Chalifoux*

YOUR TURN

Got a *brief* and encouraging message to share with your church family during this time? Send it to me: SEWhite3022@gmail.com and you may see your message in next week's *Little Pilgrim*.