

Livestreaming Statement

During the COVID-19 pandemic, CPC started to livestream our worship services. We are thankful for the technology that allowed us to connect and worship remotely during the challenging days of the pandemic. Unfortunately, one of the negative consequences of COVID is that many Christians, who were faithfully attending church before its outbreak, are no longer participating in the church's life. While this is not necessarily the case at CPC, it is a fact for many evangelical churches. Therefore, we have been considering the question of whether to continue the livestreaming of our worship services. After much discussion, study, and prayer, we believe CPC should continue offering the livestream. The livestream has proved valuable for many in our church community who are ill, bedridden, living in medical facilities, or want to view the service for a second time. We have also heard from many people that they first found us online and watched a service before coming in person. Thus, we plan to continue to livestream our worship services.

However, we also believe that the live stream should not be used as a substitute for regular in-person worship. In other words, if you **do not** have health-related issues or are not providentially hindered in some capacity, as your leaders, we strongly encourage you to be present when God's people gather to worship on the Lord's Day. Scripture is clear that Christians are not to forsake the assembling of themselves (Heb. 10:25). God has given the means of grace to be exercised in the local church. It is in the church that the Word of God is preached, the sacraments administered, and discipline exercised (WSC Q. 88).

Moreover, the church is the sphere in which believers have fellowship, encourage one another, grow in grace together, show acts of mercy, and exercise their gifts for the common good (WCF 26.2). To voluntarily remove oneself from God's people could stunt and hinder one's sanctification and the growth of all believers in the church community (Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 12: 7, 12). Unfortunately, our individualistic culture reinforces the view that the church is not essential for Christians. This perspective violates Scripture and ignores the truth that human beings flourish in communities and enjoy embodied relationships with each other (Gen. 1:26-27). Part of what it means to bear the image of God is that we are creatures designed for community.

The word "church" in the New Testament means "congregation" or "assembly." The congregation consists of professing believers and their children who gather together to worship God according to the Scriptures under the authority of Jesus Christ (WCF 25.2). The idea of the church is that Christians have been called into fellowship with

God and one another. While it is certainly true that Christians have been called out of the world, it is more precise to say that we have been called “into” the body of Christ and fellowship with other believers. Thus, Christians are the “called together ones.” To forsake this aspect of our identity is to deny one of the most fundamental realities in the Christian life. We understand the appeal in our technological culture to watch non-local church services that either livestream or are recorded. While we do not believe anything is wrong with this (and it can be good to hear other voices preaching God’s Word), it is important to remember that these men are not your pastors. You may learn about them during the course of their sermons, but they will never learn about you. Knowing others and being known is part of what being in a church family is all about.

We have also heard from some of you who are uneasy with the livestream and have reservations about its continuation. After considering your objections, we agree that the livestream does make it possible for people to stay at home on Sunday morning, that it leads to more individualism and an unhealthy reliance upon technology, and that it can violate the family atmosphere of the church community. We want you to know that we take these objections very seriously and believe they have merit.

Therefore, to address these concerns, we plan to offer a disclaimer at the beginning of the livestream, reminding congregants that the livestream is not a substitute for attending in-person worship services. We will also encourage those watching to consider returning to church if they can do so safely.

We thank you for your patience while we worked through these details. Don't hesitate to contact your pastors or elders if you have questions or concerns. We join you in praising the Lord that things have returned to normal for most people and that we can gather together to worship our great God.

In Christ,
Your Pastors and Ruling Elders of CPC
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