



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Northminster Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Experiencing and sharing God's love to transform our homes, community and world.

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The Essential Church?

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (James 2:14-17)

Essential?

As state and local governments imposed increasingly strict rules regarding public gatherings in response to the rapidly spreading coronavirus pandemic this past spring, churches found themselves facing a difficult position. "Essential" businesses were somewhat exempt from the closures, but most states did not classify churches as "essential." While most churches and pastors submitted to the guidance (and thanks to the blessings of modern technology were able to continue worshipping online or in outdoor settings), the restrictions chafed, particularly the determination that churches were not "essential." To be honest, for many of us pastors, it chafed because the government was saying out loud what most of us have been feeling for a long time. It's one thing to feel like you don't matter... it's entirely different when someone else says it.

As Virginia and many other states have begun reopening and churches, including ours, have resumed in-person worship, this question briefly moved to the background. But as the COVID-19 numbers continue to increase rapidly, many people think it's just a matter of time before public gatherings are again restricted. Additionally, the Supreme Court recently ruled on a case in Nevada that imposed tighter regulations on churches than on casinos. In his minority dissent, Justice Gorsuch wrote, "In Nevada, it seems, it is better to be in entertainment than religion. Maybe that is nothing new. But the First Amendment prohibits such obvious discrimination against the exercise of religion." This has returned the question of whether churches are essential or not to the foreground.

The Essential Church?



*The Old Cathedral of Saint Louis
and the Gateway Arch*

What is it that makes a church “essential”? Frankly, it doesn’t (or shouldn’t) matter what any government says. The Church is not subject to the government but to Christ. The First Amendment doesn’t give the Church its authority or make it essential, it merely affirms and protects the authority given through Christ to the Church. As Edmund Clowney writes, “The great mark of the church is in the message it proclaims: the gospel of salvation from sin and eternal death through the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life” (*The Church*, pg 103). The proclamation of this message comes through what we say and what we do. We proclaim the Gospel through our words by preaching and sharing our testimony and lives with others. We proclaim the Gospel through our actions by the administration of the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper) and acts of service and ministry in which we love our neighbors as ourselves and care for “the orphans and widows” (James 1:27). It is my belief that we, the Church in general, have become “non-essential” because we have failed to love and serve our communities well in Jesus’ name. A question I often ask myself and the Session is this: “If Northminster (both the building and the congregation) were to disappear from the corner of Clearview Road and Route 29, would anyone notice?” If the answer to that question is “no” then we have made ourselves non-essential.

But there is another reason the Church is essential, one that likely won’t be discussed in many of these conversations. One of the roles of the Church is to intercede on behalf of the world. In addition to the call to pray for governing authorities (1 Timothy 2:2), there’s the example of Abraham’s intercession for Lot and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:22-33). We are here to seek God’s healing and blessing for Caesar, our communities and the world. The opportunity we have through our corporate prayer on behalf of the communities and world around us is an enormous privilege and opportunity.

As we continue through this pandemic, may the question of whether Northminster is essential or not be answered, not by a government edict, but by the ongoing faithful proclamation of the Word through our words and even more through our acts of love and service to our community.

Blessings,
Rev. David Garrison



We’re Still Connected!

Because of the coronavirus, we don’t have any fellowship events scheduled for the near future, but we encourage you to keep in touch with each other through phone calls and the internet. And most of all, let’s keep each other in our prayers! We look forward to the day when God graciously brings us together for sweet times of fellowship.

Life Together

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- 6 Dick Collins
- 11 Tatum Sievwright (2013)
- 21 Jackie Hodges
- 21 Bob Mills
- 23 Margaret Watts
- 25 Emmalynn Kidd (2018)
- 27 Kristin Kidd
- 29 Vonnie Rucker



AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

- 8 John & Linda Lange, 1973



A Word of Encouragement

"I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—He who watches over you will not slumber..."

~ Psalm 121:1-3



What a blessed promise for these uncertain times. The Creator of the world watches over each one of us because we are His beloved children! When we awake in the middle of the night, worrying, He is with us. When life changes and fear overwhelms, He is with us. In the darkness, we can remember with confidence that our help comes from the Eternal God, the Great I AM. He watches over us, day and night, always aware, always guarding, always keeping, always leading us toward our eternal home. Oh, what glorious hope!

I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. Psalm 34:4 NIV



Prayer Requests:

- Jennifer Tucker**, Joel & Virginia Carnefix's daughter, has stage 3 breast cancer. Her chemo began the first week of March.
- John Ledden** is dealing with congestive heart failure.
- Ron Reyburn** has received treatment for prostate cancer.
- Mary Wilhelm's son, Stan**, received a bone marrow transplant on July 21. He is quarantined across from Johns-Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.
- Sue Burnett** continues chemotherapy for lung cancer.
- Rob Sievwright**, recovering from hip replacement surgery.

All medical personnel who have continued serving those with coronavirus in spite of the possibility of getting infected themselves.

Remember others who cannot be with us in church: **Dick Collins, Dot Stinnett, Leonard Rowe, Margaret Watts, Dot Rucker, and Betty Reed.**

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT 2020

	June	Y-T-D
Income	10,738	67,493
Expenses	<u>10,188</u>	<u>61,989</u>
Balance	+550	+5,504

PC USA DEBT – 50,785

What In-Person Worship Looks Like At Northminster

As of Sunday, June 28, we have resumed in-person worship at Northminster. We've missed seeing you each and every Sunday and are glad to have you with us. As with most other places, things aren't entirely normal, so here's what to expect when you join us on Sundays:

• Social Distancing

- Plan to practice appropriate social distancing.
- Try to limit hand shaking and hugs.
- Every other pew will be closed to help facilitate social distancing.
- Bulletins will be placed on the table outside the sanctuary. Please pick one up on your way in as we will not be handing them out.
- Offering plates will be on a table just inside the sanctuary doors. Please place your offering in the plate on your way in or out of the sanctuary. We will not be passing them during the service.

• Masks

- Masks are encouraged, per the request of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

• Communion (celebrated the first Sunday of each month)

- Instead of passing the elements out, each person will come forward to pick up the elements.
- An elder will dismiss each row at the appropriate time.
- Please come down the center aisle, and return to your seat by way of the outside aisles, maintaining appropriate social distancing with the person(s) in front of you.
- The bread and juice will be served in individual, disposable cups. Please pick up both elements and take them back to your seat. We will partake of them together as is our custom.

• Sanitation

- The church will be thoroughly cleaned before and after the service.
- Most doors will be propped open to minimize contact with surfaces.

If you have symptoms similar to those of COVID-19, we encourage you to err on the side of caution and stay home. If you are anxious about returning to public spaces, please feel free to stay home. We will continue to broadcast the livestream on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/npcmh) for those who are not able to join us in person.

At this time, all other programs and ministries are still postponed. The Session will continue to monitor how things are going and make further decisions at their meeting in August. We appreciate your prayers and support for one another during these highly unusual times, and look forward to seeing you in worship!

www.facebook.com/npcmh

Website: www.npcmh.com

DAVID GARRISON, *Pastor*

ELDERS

Ron Reyburn, *Clerk of Session,*

Michael Babcock, George Brine, Maggie Brockman

Sharon Bryant, John Lange, Anne Wilkins

Bob Mills, *Director of Music*

Liz Boothe, *Organist*

Sharon Bryant, *Superintendent*

of Sunday School

Vonnie Rucker, *Treasurer*

Online Worship and Giving

As we continue to adjust to the “new normal” we find ourselves in, Northminster is working hard to help **everyone** stay connected, especially those who find it wiser for them to not attend in-person services.

Here’s a basic tutorial if you want to join us Sundays online or give online.

Worshipping with us through Facebook Live

On a Phone or Computer

On any internet-connected device, go to www.facebook.com/npcmh to find our worship service. You *do not* need a Facebook account to access this. If you don’t see the Live feed, refresh your browser to reload the page. We expect to start the live stream right at 11am (or whatever time the service is scheduled), but we might be a minute or two late every once in a while. To make it easier for you, if you have a QR scanner on your smartphone (built into the camera on most newer phones), you can scan the code you see to the right.



If You Have a Facebook Account

Make sure you “Like” our page and set it to notify you whenever we go live, and Facebook will send you a notification when the service starts. You can find our page by searching for “npcmh” in the Facebook search bar, or scanning the above QR code.

We do encourage you to watch the service on the largest screen you have available, to help give the sense of “being there.” Many modern TVs allow you to “send” a video from your phone or laptop directly to the TV.

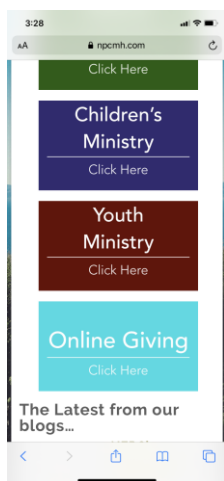
On A “Smart” TV, Roku device or Apple TV

If you’ve purchased a TV in the past 5 years or so, most likely it is a “smart” TV that includes a variety of streaming services and apps. On those TVs, or if you have a Roku or Apple TV, you can download the Facebook Watch app. Again, you do not need a Facebook account to use this app. Once downloaded, search for “npcmh” to find our page and our videos.

Download the Bulletin Each Week

To assist your worship, the bulletin will be available on our website at www.npcmh.com/sunday-bulletins. Be sure to download and print it off prior to worship. The bulletin will have all the liturgical elements as well as hymn and song lyrics included each week.

Making Donations Online Through tithe.ly



You can now make donations online! You can do this on a computer, phone or tablet. Simply go to our homepage, www.npcmh.com, and scroll down until you see the blue “Online Giving” button (pictured on the left). Tapping or clicking on it will send you to a secure donation page. Once there, you can make a one-time donation or set up a recurring donation. There is a small processing fee for each transaction, and you can choose to include those fees in your donation if you would like (otherwise the church absorbs those fees).

If you have a smartphone with a QR scanner (built into the camera on most newer phones), you can simply scan this barcode to go directly there.



