

“Opening Day” Q & A with Pastor Jay

Common questions that have been asked of Pastor Jay regarding the Re-opening of CPC

Q1. Why are we opening back up for community worship services when there is still so much uncertainty?

- A. I would have to say the number one reason is the biblical mandate and *need for* fellowship and community. Although we have successfully moved to an online platform to provide musical worship, preaching, and small group experiences, we are seeing an online fatigue beginning to occur. People are getting tired of living and watching their lives happen through a tube, and there is a real sense of anxiety and depression that is growing due the isolation brought on by weeks of “shelter in place.” We are seeing an uptick in family violence and self-harm occurring. God never intended us to be alone. And although the world of technology has helped us stay connected, it is still no substitute for real “in presence” community and fellowship.

Q2. Pastor, some may say you are opening up because you want to get the church back in the building for financial reasons, you know, to up financial support.

- A. Actually, the truth of the matter is that from a purely financial standpoint, we have held our own in the last three months. Our expenditures are significantly down while our church body has moved to online support, and we have actually seen an increase in giving to help in this time of crisis. This is a tremendous testimony to God’s goodness and the sacrificial faithfulness of our church family. From a purely financial standpoint, we would be better off staying shut down. Yet, when have we ever been in it for the money? No, the reason for reopening now is as I stated earlier, to get God’s family back around each other. Many in our family need true fellowship and Biblical community. We are now beginning to see our Home Teams picking up, meeting in homes again. They are doing it well, social distancing and taking care of one another. People have always found a way when afforded the opportunity.

Q3. Pastor, again with so much uncertainty about the virus and what will happen, do you think this is the best time to begin meeting back on campus?

- A. Great question! The truth of the matter is people don’t know what will happen in the future. No matter how hard everyone is trying to predict it, it is still a mystery. Yet there are many things we do know. We now have learned the best practices for keeping people safe. We have learned many practices that may become a way of life. We have learned by watching people actually do it in their personal lives. With this in mind, no matter when you open, you will have a learning curve for how to safely operate in this new culture. Regardless of if you open now or later, you will have to go through a season of learning,

training, and adjusting. We intentionally picked this time because, honestly, we know not everyone will come back all at once. It will be a gradual return regardless of whether the culture is fully reopened or not. In surveying our own congregation, 60% said they would return if the doors were open. Of that 60%, 25% said they would return if precautions were put in place. They told us what those precautions are, and we are implementing them. Beyond the 60%, another 25% said they would return after we have been open for a while and have figured out how to do this well. Regardless of when you reopen, every business, organization, and yes churches, will have to go through a learning cycle.

Q4. Pastor aren't you concerned that this could cause an uptick in people getting coronavirus within our church body?

A. Of course, yet before we knew it, we already had 7 confirmed cases of the virus in our church body. (By God's mercy we have had no deaths due to the virus. All have recovered.) All of those cases were early on in this outbreak. All of those who contracted it did so outside the church environment. In the last four weeks we have not seen or heard of any more cases within our church body. The key here will be to put in place the best practices to ensure we can create the safest environment possible. Just so you know, I have been in meetings with the major retailers, food operations and health care professionals (all of which never closed) and learned from them how they remained open while protecting their employees along with their clients and customers. Overwhelmingly, they said they learned from those using their businesses. They said it was actually the clients and customers that taught them how to operate their businesses well. Many of the practices we now see in our culture came by watching the American people adjust how they live their lives in the public settings. The American people are sharp and conscientious. I mean honestly, if you really look at it, more and more people are now living their lives in the public places. They are going back to work, out to eat, and shopping. They are living their lives. Why should worshipping God together be any different? I have always been a little disappointed that God's church always seems to be the last to adjust to new things occurring in the culture. I believe we should be the ones leading the way instead of being the followers. This is why we sent out the survey that we did. We were overwhelmed by the response and what the members had to say. Many of the practices we are implementing are based upon what our members are already doing in their everyday lives. "We asked. You responded, and we listened."

Q5. How has the staff faired during this season, and how will this impact them going forward?

A. Thanks for asking. First, they have crushed it. For some it has been very hard. Actually, we have worked harder than ever before. Although on-campus hours and activities have fallen off, the demand to produce online experiences has skyrocketed. Producing the online experiences we create every week is very demanding. Also, due to the lack of on-campus experiences and in-person home team experiences, the demand on our personal time has been greater than ever. The uptick in personal issues and home issues has greatly increased. You see, when the body does not meet together then there are many of the casual prayer

times, conversations, and simple care that is not occurring. The lack of interaction with others has those in need reaching out to the pastors of the church. I have been incredibly surprised by the demand that has risen on our staff, but they have risen to the occasion. That's why I say all the time, "We are better together." We are all part of the body. We need each other. Now, as we go forward, I see the actual demand being harder in some ways, and easier in others. As far as producing worship experiences, it will grow in difficulty for a while. Now instead of pouring all our efforts into producing one experience to be broadcast online, we will be producing four live experiences along with one online experience. Also, we will see our children's and student ministry programs picking back up. We will see our secondary line of ministries slowly coming back. For the next few months, the demand will be high, but we will adjust and get there. Again, whether we do it now, or later, the start-up will be the same.

Q6. Pastor what do you see as the best thing that could happen in overcoming this pandemic and all the ramifications of it?

- A. That's simple, a cure - a vaccine and a cure - an antiviral medication that works. There is your silver bullet. **Pray for it.** Yet, even so, when it does come I believe that public trust and confidence will still take a while. In talking to many major business owners and upper management of major corporations, they are all planning that it will most likely be the third or fourth quarter of 2021 before we see a returning to a "sense of normal." Many of them are positioning their companies with that in mind, yet, as one of them told me last Friday morning, "**we have to begin to start living again.**" He went on to say, "**We cannot wait for the ideal of a world without coronavirus. We now must begin to live in a world where it exists.**" He said, "**When you figure out how to do that for your organization, then you will find your way forward.**" With that in mind I, along with the staff, are striving to do that very thing. How do we as a body of believers live in a world where a thing such as coronavirus exist? I would like to think this will be the last unknown virus we face, yet in reality, until our Lord comes again, we will always have brokenness in our world.