

SPECIAL ALL CHURCH EDITION: 'The Prayer 20/20 Impact' March 22, 2020

Dear Praying Friends, and Partners In Prayer Team, and
Whole Church Family,



“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13 (NKJV)

*“This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I hope in Him!’”
Lamentations 3:21-24 (NKJV)*

Are we remembering our hope? Remember our church verse from 2018 from Romans 15:13? *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* During these next two weeks while the church is not hosting public worship services March 22nd and March 29th, we are reaching out to all our folks in three ways: this prayer letter, a pastoral devotion on Nehemiah, and an updated newly formatted Prayer Sheet. These three items will be emailed to you through the next two weeks and, we will mail them to each of you who prefer physical mail and don’t have computers, email, or online access. I will make a great attempt to get these to you, but if you have this preference, please let me know.

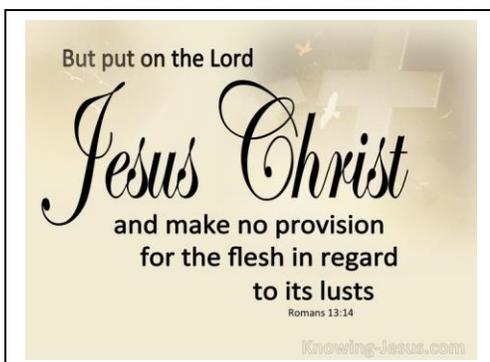
What you and I are experiencing right now is nothing short of extraordinary. Coronavirus fear has gripped the nation—and it’s being fanned by media coverage which, too often, irresponsibly stokes anxieties instead of offering a balanced picture. As I was praying about our decisions to close our worship services, I was reading through Ephesians 4 and just asking God “What do you want me to do as PCBC’s pastor?” Do you know that words jumped off the page? *“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church:pastors and teachers. Their [...yours, Pastor Corvin...] responsibility is to equip God’s people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13 NLT).* My job is to equip so you are all healthy and full of love. God wants me to keep building you up so we can all become mature and more like Jesus Himself. That is what I want to do with these prayer letters and sermons these next two weeks. This chapter in Ephesians also gives us as believers a strong encouragement to “make our light shine” through uncertain times.

Paul writes: *“With the Lord’s authority I say this: ‘Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for*

they are hopelessly confused. Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against Him. They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity. But that isn't what you learned about Christ. Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from Him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy” (Ephesians 4:17-23 NLT). What is really amazing is that the image and verbs “put off” and “put on” are the very same words that I found while studying Romans 13:11-14: “This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living. Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, clothe [put on] yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires” (NLT). I love J. B. Philips' translation of this last verse: “Let us be Christ's men from head to foot, and give no chance to the flesh to have its fling.” (Romans 13:14) J.B. Philips. The word for indulge or fling is a word that means “don't set a date.” In other words, don't make a date to sin! Put on Christ, and stay away from sin like the virus! Don't make a shopping list with details of how to do wrong. We need to put off the “sin-flu”, and “put-on the mask and clothes of Jesus”! That is the way to live! This is how we keep from being trapped into the agendas and accusing currents of this world. This is how we reach lovingly into the lives of those who want to follow Christ and truly love Him. This is what it means to be a real Christian- dress up, put on Christ before this world.

Puritan Preacher, John Gill said it this way: “As a man puts on his clothes when he rises in the morning, we dress ourselves in Christ's righteous apparel. We slip into His sleeves of strength, we button up His attitudes, we tie on His manners, and we dress in the coat of His character. We don't do that without the help and power of our livery valet the Holy Spirit.” I had to actually look up the words for “livery” and “valet”. I discovered an on-line article called, “Seven Downton Abbey Terms American's Don't Know,” that the word “livery” is the Old English word for lively and colorful clothes which servants wore when they were upstairs serving in the

main rooms of the English Lords. They had to be dressed in wonderful apparel to be in the proximity of the royal residents; different from being downstairs. Also “valet” isn't someone who parks cars, as we use the word today; valets were the man servants who helped dress the Lord for the day. He would stand by putting on the clothing, pressing out the wrinkles, and brushing, in order to help the Earl dress rightly. That is a



great picture of what the Holy Spirit wants to do for us in this counter-cultural world. He wants to help us be “like Christ!” Who doesn’t want to understand the change that our salvation brings to all of us? We need to address today’s issues by “putting on the hope of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Many are panicked, living in fear. How should we respond to this evolving situation? So, here are seven ways to help us “put on the things of Christ”, and I’m calling them our “Seven hope builders” which are practical guidelines from God’s Word.

1. Stay informed! This will help you put on hope!

In times like these, it’s easy for misinformation to spread. Check with your local health services and organizations, as well as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), to stay up-to-date about what’s happening in your community. *“Let the wise listen and add to their learning” (Proverbs 1:5).* But also stay up-to-date with the needs of our church folks. Call and text each other.

This week we were called to emergency prayer on Tuesday night because we found out Steve and Kelly had to cross borders without kids to renew papers and permissions to remain in the country. They drove two hours to the borders (and I’m leaving details which can’t be shared because of where they are) and God miraculously provided for them. I want to give you just a snippet of this great provision: *“Thank you prayer warriors! We successfully renewed our visas by going into [country] and coming back across the border into [country]!!! The Lord supplied a parking place for us near the border. (We had to walk across the border). Someone with immigration saw we were in the wrong place and took my passport (I was a bit flustered at first) walked us all the way around back to the correct place. Amazing! Then while we were coming back in on the [country] side, the Lord provided a lady who SPOKE English to direct us back through immigration. You usually have to give up your passport for at least an hour and wait on the [country] side to re-enter. We waited 2 minutes while they processed our passports and handed them right back to us. While we were walking back to our car, the Lord even provided a key maker on the street corner- (we only have 2 house keys but now we have 5) Thank you Lord!!! Our Lord is the God of amazing details! Never doubt His faithfulness. He always hears your cries for help and provides peace and provision way beyond our expectations.”* It was also shared through Kelly that when they reported their experience to the mission, that they were amazed at what was a clear “act of God.”

So remember to stay informed with our brothers and sisters around the church. Also, Neil said that he is holding off Judy’s service for a while, and also Siscos are planning to reschedule Ruth’s service to be later. So many



needs occur through this time. Keep informed!

2. Take precautions! It will keep you remembering hope!

Listen to what your health officials tell you—wash your hands, stay home from work if you're sick, avoid unnecessary travel, keep your living and work space clean. Also, pray that when April comes we can plan and have Easter services. I'm not sure what particularly that may look like this year. We may have all the traditional events, or change it all. No matter, take precautions. We want to help you if you are in need of shopping. I or others in the church can run and get things and drop them outside for you. Actually, this idea makes me smile, because it reminds me of mischievous days when we as kids would ring a door bell and run away to tease our neighbors. Nonetheless, "*A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions*" (Proverbs 27:12 NLT). Make sure that you are taking precautions.

In the *Screwtape Letters*, by C.S. Lewis, senior demon Screwtape gives his disciple Wormwood advice on tempting his human subject:

"The humans live in time but our Enemy destines them to eternity. He therefore, I believe, wants them to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself, and to that point of time which they call the present. He would have them continually concerned either with eternity (which means being concerned with Him) or with the Present – either meditating on their eternal union with, or separation from Himself, or else obeying the present voice of conscience, bearing the present cross, receiving the present grace, giving thanks for the present pleasure.

Our business is to get them away from the eternal, and from the Present. It is far better to make them live in the Future – thought about the Future inflames hope and fear. Also it is unknown to them, so that in making them think about it we make them think of unrealities. Nearly all vices are rooted in the future. Gratitude looks to the past and love to the present; fear, avarice, lust, and ambition look ahead." — C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

Satan wants us focused on anything but eternity or today. Worrying about the future is a futile exercise, because most of what we are concerned with will never happen. We spend all kinds of time consumed with and fearful of unrealities – things that don't even exist. We worry and try to work out all kinds of scenarios in case of this or that contingency, most of which will never materialize. Worry is like a child's rocking horse, it makes a lot of back and forth movement, but it doesn't get you anywhere. Take precautions against Satan's devices such as worry and anxiety.

3. Don't live in fear! Hope will be your protection!

In times of uncertainty, fear seems inevitable. Remember that even in troubling times, God is with you—to help you and uphold you. I shared one of my most favorite verses I shared with Oliver Jervis during his last days with us is: "*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand*" (Isaiah 41:10). I used to

love how he would whisper that verse in his strong brogue accent. We need to keep searching out verses that tell us to “fear not” and text and send them to each other.

4. Pray fervently! Hope is just around the corner!

Pray for local, state, national, and international leaders, that God will help them make wise decisions to help stop the spread of this virus. Pray for those who are ill, that God will heal them. Pray for those who have lost loved ones, that God will comfort them. Pray for all health care workers, to be protected and have strength to help those who are sick. Remember in our message on Romans 13 we are told to pray and submit for all. *“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:1–4).*

I want to share another great answer to prayer this week for us as a church. Aline and Drew and Oliver had been planning a visit to San Paulo, Brazil with family for over a year now. We were expecting Aline and Oliver to leave this last Saturday, and Drew was going to join them at Easter and they would all return. Not only was this a very important reunion with the Brazilian family, Aline’s brother William is getting married. If you know the Brazilian closeness and connections, this is a very big deal. They also were expecting to celebrate Oliver’s first birthday there with the family. We don’t understand that in their culture, they make children’s birthdays a huge extravagant event. They have a huge family celebration. So it was very important to Aline that they get to Brazil. So she was on the phone with the Brazilian console and the airlines, and was told to move her flight to this last Wednesday the 18th. So Lori and I headed up to help them pack, and get things for their trip, and Andrew drove Aline and Oliver to JFK airport for a 7:00 pm flight to San Paulo before the airlines shut down and canceled all the flights. We are happy to share that Aline and Oliver made it to her family. They are staying longer, and Drew will most likely not go to be with them because of his job. But we were so thrilled that people were praying at prayer meeting for God to work a miracle and give wisdom to Aline and Drew for this flight and trip. We are praising the Lord for His provision! We don’t know how our prayers will be answered, but we must pray!



5. Be an encourager! That is how the hope pours out of us to others!

Even though many institutions have temporarily closed and social contact is limited, there are still opportunities to reach out and love others. Through

phone calls, text messages, emails, video calls, and social media—you can check in to see how loved ones are doing and encourage others with prayer, a kind word, or sharing a passage of God’s Word. *“Encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*. Have you noticed how the world and the entertainment industry are picking up on the importance of “encouraging others who may be alone during this time?” Several entertainers are putting out ads and commercials saying: “Hey, we are in this together, we will get through this!” I don’t feel especially touched personally by L.L. Cool or Justin Bebers’ message that I saw on TV last night, but I was thinking that we as God’s people can make that happen when we keep calling and sending words of encouragement. Keep using our spiritual gifts to help others. Keep hope alive!

6. Trust God! Hope comes every morning!

This virus is a reminder that there are many things in this world beyond our control. However, we can choose to trust God, who is in control of all things. The Bible says that God *“works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11)*. We can trust that the Lord will use this situation to fulfill His plans for our good and His glory. *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you” (Psalm 56:3)*. I love the message from Jeremiah when he was weeping for the destruction of the walls of Jerusalem in his day. He said these words which we all know so well: *“This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I hope in Him!’” Lamentations 3:21-24 (NKJV)*

Another answer to prayer this week was of course our concerns for Josie needing to visit CHOP on Wednesday. This was Jamie’s’ answer to prayer and you may have already read it, but it is such an encouragement so I want to include it: *“Well, we came into CHOP this am and it is a ghost town! We maybe saw 15 people total— as in, in the entire building while looking at the atrium/open areas, regardless of the floor we were on. We talked with 3 of them- the security guard who greeted us off the elevator, and the 2 women who checked us in. We had 1 nurse and our 2 docs. We armed ourselves with gloves, and off we went to the elevators!*

They drained nearly 3 liters off again and she is back to her normal self again. We are NOT spending the night. IR cannot get her on the schedule for tomorrow, and rather than us having to hang out for 2 days for no reason, it’s best to send us home. The bummer is, we will need to have another IV placed, which is a huge bummer. This morning’s stick was rough- it took 2 tries, and nearly a call to IV team, but Sarah got it, thankfully! The bonus is, we don’t have to stay with germs, and she will get drained again on Friday before the biopsy, another dose of albumin, so it gives us another day of “free draining” to buy us some more time. Results from the biopsy will not happen until Monday. Pray for good news! :)

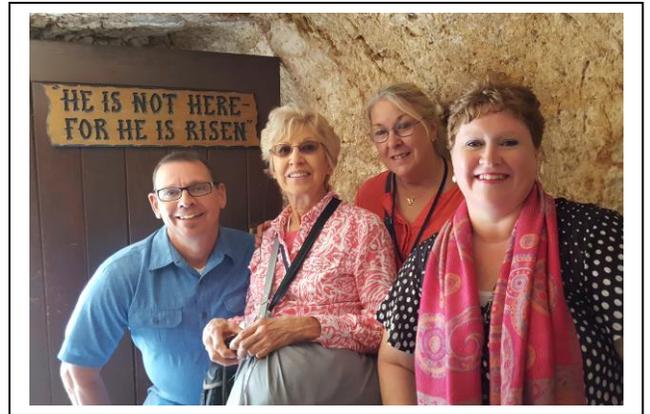
We did not get lab results back yet, as her lab sample was not a good one, so they re-drew them and we are waiting to hear. Regardless, the biopsy is on to figure out how to best treat her.

Thank you for your prayers- they were felt! Again, I’m surprisingly calm, though I

should not be surprised! God is good all the time. He's always been faithful!"
Remember to choose joy and encourage others during this time!

7. Remember your hope! That is how we dress in Jesus!

In the coming weeks, we will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter is a reminder that even in the worst circumstances, there is hope. Because of Jesus, our future is secure and we always have a reason to hope. While the Lord has not promised that we will escape pain and suffering in this life, He does promise to be faithful and to love us each day. As I was thinking about Easter coming, I happened to remember when Lori, Robin, Jean, and I visited the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem in 2017. I remember standing inside and thinking, "Hey, there is nothing in here to see! Wait, that's the whole point!" And as we were getting a picture together, we turned around and saw on the door: "He is not here, He is risen!" (Going to include that picture)



So, as we get closer to Easter, I am reminded of the joy and wonder and awe and sacredness that God gave my heart when the truth of Christ being alive hit me at that time. That hope just astounded me. I heard a story told through a missionary who was in India who met and was talking to a Muslim about the coming celebration of Easter. During their conversation, the Muslim said, "Look, we Muslims go to Medina and we can look for a coffin and touch it, that is the proof of Muhammad, who was such a great prophet! We know that our message is true! You Christians go to Jerusalem and all you have are an empty grave and you are not sure which site it is!" The Christian smiled and said, "Yeah, that'S the whole point! It's what separates Jesus from everyone else in the world, He was not there, and still isn't there! The hope of the resurrection proves that when He died, our sins are forgiven. He paid in full our atonement. So, what do you have to pay to get your sins forgiven?" That is the hope we are holding out during this covid19 crisis.

So prayer team, loved ones, praying friends, here is a prayer for us:
"Loving heavenly Father, You are our God of Hope! We praise You! We sing out our love and praises to You today, even let our voices be heard up and down the neighborhood and the 611 corridor as we cry out 'our hope is in Jesus, today!' You alone are Creator and Sustainer of all things. It is our great privilege to live under Your omnipotence, righteousness, wisdom, mercy, and grace. You love us with better love than any we could ever know here on earth, and we stand in awe of Your power and commitment to cherish us! Jesus, thank You for being our hope! We marvel that You would consider us a joy worth suffering for, and we bow humbly before You and offer You our praise, our thanks, and our very lives!"

Holy Spirit, teach us to be still and know that You are God during these next two weeks. Don't let the world's fear touch us. Show us the unstoppable hope of our Savior, who stands in heaven as our powerful Advocate. Captivate us, and ravish us with the truth of the Gospel, 'He is not here!' Open the blind eyes of those around us to see the hope of a relationship with You. Make us more contagious as we 'put on Jesus' during these days. We ask in Jesus' Name, amen."

***Beginning our days, resting in God's hope,
Pastor Corvin <><***

Quotes on hope:

"As Christians, we have no reason to lack hope. Christ has shown the trustworthiness of God and of His Word." ... Chuck Colson

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."
Jeremiah 29:11

"True faith means holding nothing back. It means putting every hope in God's fidelity to His Promises." ... Francis Chan

"And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end." Hebrews 6:11

"A Christian will part with anything rather than his hope; he knows that hope will keep the heart both from aching and breaking, from fainting and sinking; he knows that hope is a beam of God, a spark of glory, and that nothing shall extinguish it till the soul be filled with glory." ... Thomas Brooks

"If God can bring blessing from the broken body of Jesus and glory from something that's as obscene as the cross, He can bring blessing from my problems and my pain and my unanswered prayer. I just have to trust Him." ... Anne Graham Lotz

