

"LOVE & PRAYERS"

The elders of HFFBC met for the first this morning since we made the decision to suspend our large public gatherings due to COVID-19. As we came together to meet, we had two real priorities in mind: **prayer and planning**.

Our **prayers** during the meeting and in the future are for:

- The elderly, those with chronic illness, and those most vulnerable to this virus.
- Families:
 - for kids who are home for school who are now having to learn in new ways, and feel isolated from their social groups
 - for parents who are now particularly taking on the additional responsibilities of school teacher and activity director, in addition to the normal care for all the other needs of their children.
 - for parents who are now working from home and juggling multiple responsibilities
- Workers:
 - for those who work at grocery stores or other public settings and are more exposed to people on a continual basis
 - for those who have temporarily lost their jobs
 - for those who fear the potential of permanently losing their jobs
 - for those in vulnerable businesses or positions who are now financially at risk
 - for our medical professionals and researchers who are combating the virus everyday
 - for teachers and workers in schools who are now having to greatly adjust their day-to-day responsibilities and long-term plans
- For our local and national leadership and government
 - for President Trump, Governor Sununu, and many others
- For our local church and our ministry moving forward
 - for other churches in our surrounding Seacoast area who are having to make decisions regarding gatherings and worship services going forward, some with less technological capacity
- And more...



Our **planning** during this meeting included important discussions like:

- Our ongoing healthy use of technology for ministry during this season and beyond
- Caring for the vulnerable and how to mobilize our church to care for those around us well
- Our process for making decisions in the weeks ahead about whether to have large gatherings or not
- The financial implications of not having in-person gatherings and the importance of online giving

But out of that 1.5 hour meeting emerged something even more important, and that was our collective **love** for each of you and for the church. While we had some difficult planning conversations and had to deal head-on with the reality of the affects of this virus on so many things relating to the church and to the daily lives that you all are facing, the Holy Spirit brought us all back around to the centrality of **love**. I am reminded of Paul's beginning to the letter of Philippians and it reflects our feeling toward each of you:

*"For God is my witness, how I **yearn** for you all with the **affection** of Christ Jesus. And it is my **prayer** that your **love** may abound more and more..." **Philippians 1:8-9***

John says that "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18) and Paul elsewhere assures us that God gave us a "spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Tim. 1:7). It is in these times that Christian love - towards each other and towards a watching world - shines brightly. So that's the encouragement this day - to be united in the love of Christ, the same love that sent Jesus to the cross to ransom and redeem the Church for Himself and the love that binds believers together around the world... no matter the day.

With deep love in Christ,

Pastor Steven

QUESTIONS:

1. Who are you praying for today?
2. What can the church in Hampton Falls look like in these days of "social distancing"? What plans are you making?
3. How are you seeing the love of God powerfully at work in these days?

