



# What's Happening at AHCC?

December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

Good afternoon! Christmas has finally arrived! Even with COVID, has this year gone incredibly fast or is just me? I feel like I hardly remember the fall! While Thanksgiving probably looked a little different for most of us this year, I hope you had a chance to reflect on the boundless grace and mercy of God. As I took a moment this Thanksgiving to review the first Thanksgiving in 1620, I was humbled at how this group, who traveled to the US with 102 people only to have approximately 50 at the end of the first year, were able to give thanks to God for his provision and blessings. Sure puts being thankful in COVID into perspective!

As always, check out the information below to stay up to date on our ongoing coronavirus response and AHCC happenings.

## COVID-19 Update

As we all know, the last month has been especially challenging. Over the past three weeks there's been 48,000 new cases of COVID-19 and 332 deaths along with the additional restrictions. If you missed the announcement of the new restrictions, they came out on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Attached to this email is the list of guidelines. In response to these guidelines, I issued a letter to the church on November 19<sup>th</sup> which I have attached to this email describing our response.

On the positive side, you've likely seen that two new vaccines are on track to be approved by the FDA within the next 2-3 weeks. The vaccine by Pfizer goes before the FDA on December 10<sup>th</sup> and the one by Moderna December 17<sup>th</sup>. If approved, both companies already have millions of inoculations in production. You can find out more about the CDC guidelines for vaccine distribution [here](#). If you google "US COVID vaccine distribution plan" you'll be able to see a host of articles from most news outlets providing additional details and timelines.

This is very encouraging and gives us a light at the end of the tunnel. The word that comes to mind for me is "perseverance". We now know the tiresome and weary journey we've all walked for the last nine months will, at some point soon, come to an end. We just need to hang on during this next season and continue trusting the Lord, following the guidelines and making wise decisions.

Lastly, throughout the coronavirus, we've used our Pandemic Return Plan as a guideline for how we'll return to our original ministries and operations. I've attached to this email an updated Pandemic Return Plan which you can also find on our website on our COVID-19 page. The Plan is also available on our bulletin boards in the church building lobby. This plan is continuously updated as new information becomes available.

## Sunday Service

If you have not joined us in a while in person, we switched back to one service this past Sunday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, with an overflow room in the Fellowship Hall viewing via Facebook Livestream. Going back to one service will allow us to be sustainable with our staff, volunteers and resources. I want to thank the many people who volunteered over the past five months. Thank you for your sacrifice and willingness to help out where needed and use your talents and gifts to serve Christ and His church.

As a reminder, if you have not joined us on a Sunday yet, you will need to review the “Sunday Service Reopening Guidelines & Procedures” document on the [COVID-19 page](#) or on our church [Facebook](#) page. This document details the specific procedures we’re following at our Sunday service and expectations we ask you to follow to safely return.

Please continue checking our website and Facebook page for additional information and updates.

Lastly, while we’re now gathering as a church at our building on Sundays, we’re still offering our service on the platforms below. Please note we will **only** be streaming the 10:00 AM service.

- Facebook livestream - <https://www.facebook.com/ArborHeightsCommunityChurch/>
- On Mondays, after the Sunday service, on our [AHCC YouTube Channel](#).
- On Sunday afternoon, the message is available on our website at [www.arborheights.org](http://www.arborheights.org) under “Resources” then “Sermons”.

## RightNow Media

As you know, we launched a significant new discipleship resource for our church back in August through RightNow Media. Many of you signed up for your free subscription, but with the holidays here, we wanted to remind you of the thousands of video resources available. Check out this holiday introduction [video](#) to find out more!

This streaming service is not only for adults, but has thousands of videos for kids as well. You can get a taste of what’s available [here](#)!

We also now have a page on our website under “Resources” for RightNow Media that includes a promotional video and links to help you get set up. Check it out [here](#)!

Lastly, if you’re interested in videos for the Advent season, just do a search for “Advent” on the site and you’ll get a list of a number of great series to do by yourself or with your family. Happy searching!!

## Ministries

### Children’s & Family Ministry

We have some exciting news to share! Starting January 6<sup>th</sup>, our Sunday morning kids programming will return! We’ve been doing family services since the beginning of COVID, and while this has provided great opportunities for kids to see what “big church” is like, it’s also created some challenges for parents with young children. We’re grateful to be able to open kids programming back up and hope this allows many families to return.

Last week we wrapped up our 4-week marriage class called "Love Talk" with a video series by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott. Thank you to Russ and Leah Barham for facilitating this class and we pray it not only enhanced your marriage, but provided you with long-term tools for healthy communication.

Leah will be launching our third "country of the month" with Costa Rica at the end of December. If you missed it, copies of the Peru packet, for November, are in our church lobby or Leah can email you one.

If you have any additional questions about Children's & Family Ministry, please reach out to Leah at [leah@arborheights.org](mailto:leah@arborheights.org).

## **Community Groups**

Our groups continue to remain the backbone of our church for community, connection and fellowship. If you have not done so already, it's not too late; join one of our community groups meeting around West Seattle and the south end. Don't stay disconnected and alone! Our groups are meeting both in person at the church building and via phone and Zoom. If you're not in a group, let me know at [john@arborheights.org](mailto:john@arborheights.org) or 206-375-2498 and we'll get you connected!

## **Youth Ministry**

God has blessed us with amazing youth at AHCC! If your son or daughter would like to join the Wednesday night youth group, please connect with Linnea at [linnea@arborheights.org](mailto:linnea@arborheights.org) to get the Zoom information. Even though they've had to meet on Zoom, and can't wait until meeting in person, the group is growing and students are deepening in their relationship with Christ.

Linnea is also looking to start back up Grapple in the first quarter of 2021. Stay tuned for more information as details come together.

Also, sneak peak, we're looking at some really fun opportunities and activities for youth in 2021 when COVID restrictions and guidelines open up. Trust us; it's going to be awesome!

## **Preschool**

ARK Preschool has been open for almost three months now and serving around 27 students! Parents are enjoying a morning off! Also, please welcome Valerie Kepu to our teaching staff as she joined us last week. Welcome Valerie! If you have any questions about the preschool, contact our Director Loretta Kimball at (206) 650-1801 or [lkimball@arborheights.org](mailto:lkimball@arborheights.org). Please continue praying for safety and health for both students and teachers.

## **Women's Ministry**

Joy Newburn has been facilitating a women's Bible study since early October with a great group of ladies. The study curriculum is Beth Moore's "Living Free by Praying God's Word." The group meets the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of each month from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm on Zoom. The study guide can be purchased at Lifeway.com (hard copy is recommended). Joy is also looking to start a new series after the first of the year. Contact Joy at [newburn316@gmail.com](mailto:newburn316@gmail.com) for the link if you're interested or have questions.

## **Missions**

Wow! Only God! We celebrated our Great Commission Sunday this past week and as a church you gave \$6,511 towards global missions. Along with the \$100,000 matching donation from our C&MA National Headquarters, this means we contributed over \$13,000! We serve a generous God who is powerfully working through a generous people. Thank you for your sacrificial giving and passion for the lost!

Also, it's been an honor and privilege to support Hidden Creek Church during this season as they lost access to their church building in August due to an arson fire. Since October, we've given \$4,025 to their Fire Relief Fund and \$1,500 to their Source Fund. Way to go AHCC!

We had the joy of hearing from Tim Heffer, their lead pastor, in early November at our morning service share about how they continue to serve their community with food and rebuild their church. Please continue prayerfully considering donating to their fire relief fund or food distribution fund for support. If you would like to do this, you can give either in person at our Sunday service or through our mobile giving platform "Cash App". Just specify the gift is for Hidden Creek Church Fire Relief or Food Program.

## **Events**

### **40 Days of Prayer**

I'm so excited to announce that we're launching 40 days of prayer starting on January 3<sup>rd</sup>! This is something our entire C&MA denomination is doing to kick off 2021 and begin our year humbling ourselves and seeking God's presence and power. You can sign up to receive the daily devotionals and prayer topics [here](#). During these 40 days, I'll be preaching a 6-week series that coincides with each week's prayer focus. Devotionals, videos, webinars and other content will also be rolled out to our children and youth ministries. Please don't miss this awesome opportunity!

### **Issachar's Descendants**

I'm also excited to launch a new video series available on our YouTube Channel and Facebook page called "Issachar's Descendants" that will explore how Christians can winsomely engage culture with the gospel. Starting January 6<sup>th</sup>, and each Wednesday thereafter, I'll post a short 5-10 minute video that will go through a book by Daniel Strange called "Plugged In". This video series will hopefully give us the theological framework, biblical knowledge and missional toolkit to engage our co-workers, neighbors, family and friends with Christ's redemptive work. Check it out on January 6<sup>th</sup>!

### **Mom's Night In**

Join the ladies on Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall for a time of connection and conversation. If you're not able to join in person, contact Leah Barham for the Zoom invitation.

## **Finance Update**

God continues to bless our church abundantly!! We're currently meeting our budget and on track to meet our annual budget. We also remain committed to keeping our expenses low and practice prudence in the midst of COVID-19. We'll also be adopting our new 2021 budget in mid-December. Join us in prayer to trust God as our provider and steward His resources for His glory.

## **Benevolent Fund**

Are you going through a difficult time financially? Lost a job during COVID-19 or struggling to pay bills? Let myself, or one of the Elders, know and we can help you with our Benevolent Fund. Through generous gifts given during the past year, our fund has adequate resources to assist you with your needs. Let us know! We're here to care for one another!

## **Transparency**

As of December 2<sup>nd</sup>, there are no confirmed cases of AHCC members contracting the virus. If any AHCC member is known to be infected with COVID-19, the church body will be notified (privacy for the individual) and appropriate action taken.

## **Not What I Planned**

If you're like me, you say this phrase at least once a day. That meeting didn't go as planned. My schedule didn't go as planned. That conversation didn't go as planned. My attitude didn't go as planned 😊.

And if you're like me, when things don't go as planned, I get frustrated, blame anyone but myself and try to get my plans back on track as quickly as possible. But I'm learning, albeit slowly and painfully, that God's work is not tied to my plans. I know, crazy huh? It seems the perfect fulfillment of my plans equals God's perfect work in my life, but I'm learning that is dead wrong. As my plans often come crashing down, I'm learning that Jesus was there the whole time and can now truly begin working with my mess. I'm learning that my plans are oftentimes a subversive way to gain control of my day and be my own savior. Thankfully, Jesus is unraveling my plans and showing me I'm not God (let's all be grateful for that), I need daily saving and when I put my plans in His hands and seek Him first (Matthew 6:33), He gets put on display and I grow in humility and thankfulness.

Put your plans in His hands this week and trust your interruptions and inconveniences are all part of His beautiful plan.

Trusting in the Best Planner Ever,

Pastor John