



# What's Happening at AHCC?

January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Happy New Year!! Or should I say, "Finally, a new year!" What would you do if someone went into the future, came back, and told you 2021 was going to be even wilder than 2020? I think I'd faint. 😊

If you're like me, you're obviously praying and hoping for COVID to end, a calmer 2021 and a chance to get back to some sense of normalcy. But I also don't want to miss the transformative work God did in me, and our church, in 2020. It was tough, but sharpening. It was stressful, but faith building. It stretched me, but strengthened me. It was isolating, but deeply revealing. Yes, getting back to normal would be great, but even more than normal, I want Jesus. And if that means struggle and hardship, than I welcome that in Christ's name. I hope you feel the same.

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

## COVID-19 Update

Wow! Quite a bit has changed since our last update in early December. Both vaccines, one by Pfizer, and the other by Moderna, have now been out for at least a couple of weeks. As of January 5<sup>th</sup>, there's been over 4.8 million people vaccinated in the US. A third vaccine, by AstraZeneca and Oxford, has already begun distribution in Europe. The US has also purchased an additional 100 million vaccines to be distributed by June of this year. While many factors can affect the distribution, the expected timeframe to have vaccinations available to the general public is mid to late spring.

Locally, the Governor's Office released a new plan yesterday for reopening the state called "[Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery](#)". Attached to this email is a graphic of Phases 1 and 2 of this plan. As you can see, it does not change what we are currently doing and we'll wait to hear as more information becomes available.

As we look over the next couple months, amidst the flu season, we as a church do not anticipate a lot changing. COVID-19 numbers are still spiking, hospitals are at max capacity and restrictions remain in place. We expect to exit this pandemic as we entered it; in a phased approach. As we become aware of developments with the virus, vaccines and the reopening our state, we'll continue to follow our [Pandemic Return Plan](#). This plan was updated in early December and posted in our foyer and on our website.

## Sunday Service

If you have not joined us in a while in person, we are now back to one service with an overflow room in the Fellowship Hall viewing via Facebook Livestream.

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.

- 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”.

## Elder Transition

If you missed our service this past Sunday, I mentioned that after faithfully serving and shepherding our church these past three years, Steve Klein has decided to step down as an Elder to pursue other ministry opportunities. Steve is a man full of God’s Spirit, fervor and love, and while we are sad to see him no longer on the Elder Team, we rejoice in the new opportunities God brings before him. Join me in graciously thanking Steve for his service and love for God’s church.

The Elders and I are currently talking with some individuals to help support us in the next couple months as we pray and seek God’s direction. If you are in the South region of our church, and need prayer support or ministry care, please contact myself, or one of the other Elders, for assistance.

## 40 Days of Prayer

We kicked off our 40 days of prayer this past Sunday! I’m so excited to start off our year in prayer and confidently believe God is going to use this season to grow us and stretch us. If you’ve missed the registration email, you can sign up [here](#). We also launched a new sermon series called “Ignite: God’s Power in God’s People” this past Sunday to correspond with each week’s prayer theme. A reminder as well that prayer resources and videos are available for youth and children.

## New Winter Class

Starting Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, we’re launching a new class called, “Informed to Transform”. You can register for the class on our website [here](#) or on the sign-up sheet in the church building foyer. This was the most requested class from our church that will survey six of the world’s largest religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Mormonism, Jehovah Witness and New Age) and compare them to Christianity. Don’t miss this opportunity to sharpen your faith, grow your love for the lost and pump your apologetic muscles.

## Ministries

### Children's & Family Ministry

Over the past few weeks, hopefully you've heard this coming Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, our Sunday morning kids programming is returning! Kids will start, and end, downstairs while following all COVID protocols and procedures. Leah will be sending out an email to parents later this week with additional info. Stay tuned!

Leah will also be launching a new kid's discipleship group in January for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. If your child is interested in joining, or to find out more information, please let Leah know at [leah@arborheights.org](mailto:leah@arborheights.org).

Lastly, as part of our engagement with families and missions, Leah recently launched our third "country of the month"; Costa Rica! If you missed it, copies of the take home packet can be found in our church lobby or Leah can email you one.

### Community Groups

As COVID continues in 2021, it's now more important than ever to be in community. Encouragement, conversation, fellowship, gospel growth, friendship, sharing burdens, praying for one another; all these happen in community and we all need them. 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 and experience what God intended for all people. 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

If your son or daughter has not done so already, let them know about our Wednesday night Zoom youth group gatherings by emailing Linnea at [linnea@arborheights.org](mailto:linnea@arborheights.org). While it certainly would be ideal meeting in person, the youth are having a great time connecting, laughing and learning how to integrate Christ into everyday life.

Also, we're looking to start back up Grapple in February. We're so excited! It's been almost a year since we had to postpone it because of COVID and know our middle schoolers are anxious to get back. Stay tuned for more information as details come together in January!

### Preschool

Amidst the challenges of COVID, ARK Preschool has been a huge success! We're serving around 27 students and giving many parents a much needed break! Also, if you missed it last month, please welcome Valerie Kepu to our teaching staff as she joined us in late November. 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 group is starting a new study in January called "Children of the Day; 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians" by Beth Moore. The group is also transitioning to meeting on a weekly basis on Tuesdays from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm on Zoom. The study guide can be purchased at [Lifeway.com](http://Lifeway.com) (hard copy is recommended). Contact Joy at [newburn316@gmail.com](mailto:newburn316@gmail.com) for the link if you're interested or have questions.

## **Missions**

Praise God! We ended 2020 with our highest giving to our Great Commission Fund in at least the last 5 years! Only God! Thank you for supporting over 700 global workers who are sharing Christ, discipling new believers, developing leaders and providing healthcare for those in need. We are being the hands and feet of Christ!

Also, we have invited back IncaLink founders Rich and Elisa Brown to join us in mid-May for our annual Global Missions Week. We invited Rich and Elisa last year, but with COVID, they were unable to come. Hopefully, things will have opened up enough for them to join us in person and share what God is doing through their ministry in Latin America.

## **Events**

### **Issachar's Descendants**

We just launched a new video series today available on our YouTube Channel and Facebook page called "Issachar's Descendants". This online series explores how we as disciples can winsomely engage culture with the gospel. Starting today, January 6<sup>th</sup>, and each Wednesday thereafter, I'll post a short 5-10 minute video going 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!

### **All-Church Prayer Night**

Join us on Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, at 6:45 pm in the Fellowship Hall as we pray for our church, community and nation. The prayer night will also be available on Zoom. The Meeting ID is 966-3988-6896. Please contact the office at [info@arborheights.org](mailto:info@arborheights.org) with any questions.

### **Annual Celebration Meeting**

Save the date! Our Annual Celebration Meeting is on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Each year, we take this opportunity to reflect back on what God did in the previous year and look ahead to where He's taking us. Because of the uncertainty of COVID, we're still not sure what time, and venue, this will be at so stay tuned for more details as we closer.

## **Finance Update**

We serve an awesome God! We ended 2020 in the black. I don't know about you, but I'm going to chalk that up to a miracle. I know many other churches this past year that experienced significant financial

shortfalls. It would only make sense in COVID that we would see a drop in giving. But instead, God has done more than we could ever ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20-21).

We also adopted our new 2021 budget in mid-December. We'll review our 2020 finances, and our new budget, at our Annual Celebration Meeting in late February.

## **Benevolent Fund**

Are you struggling to make ends meet? Have a bill you can't pay? 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!

## **Transparency**

As all of you know, we had our first COVID-19 case in mid-December. After cleaning and following all protocols, we're back open and returning to ministries. If we have any future cases of an AHCC member being infected with COVID-19, the church body will be notified (privacy for the individual) and appropriate action taken.

## **Saturated in God's Glory**

Last Sunday I preached on Isaiah's vision of God in His temple. The seraphs that flew around Him called out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of His glory". "Full of his glory". Wow! A world enveloped in COVID-19, a country marked by division and future immersed in uncertainty. Sure doesn't appear like a world full of God's glory.

The Hebrew word for "glory" means "weightiness, substance or density". Saying God is "glorious" means he has substance and is weighty. I need to hear this. Amidst COVID-19, political division and global uncertainty, we need to be reminded that all things, outside of God, are light and temporary (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 4:16-18). He is the anchor that gives substance and stability to our lives, the rock that provides refuge from the storm and the solid core we orbit around. While it may not always seem like it, God's glory truly does fill the earth, and hopefully, our hearts and lives.

May God Be Glorified,

Pastor John