

March 22, 2020: Our regular services were not held this morning due to governmental instruction to maintain "social distancing" and avoid assemblies of more than ten people. This has been ordered as a means to limit the spread of the very contagious Coronavirus (covid-19). As a result, we have held our first ever "virtual church" meeting for OCPBC this morning. While we were not able physically to be with one another, as is the proper manner for conducting church and worshiping as a "called out assembly" in accordance with scripture, we recognize the wisdom of these containment efforts and our responsibility to comply with governmental instruction not intended to discriminate against or otherwise harm the church or her worship of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Our Pastor, Elder Jonathan Cook, opened our "virtual church" worship service with the acapella singing (which is in our customary manner) of the hymn "Because He Lives," while we at home sung along with him. He then reminded us that God is still in control and that we all need to be in prayer for our communities, nation and its leaders, care-givers and other first responders on the front lines, teachers and students, pastors, parents and families. He then he shared a number of specific prayer requests from our church members and others. Next, Elder Cook provided a very robust prayer on behalf of the congregation to open the worship services.

Next, our Pastor provided an extremely powerful and edifying sermon using Exodus 14:10-14 as his primary text with additional support from 1st Kings 19:10-12, 1st Corinthians 14:33, Leviticus 13 and 14, 2nd Timothy 1:7-10, John 19:30, Romans 8:34, Proverbs 29:25, Psalm 27:1 and 18:2, and various other scriptures. Elder Cook began his sermon by reflecting on how Israel, after leaving captivity and never having fought a single battle while in captivity, found itself being pursued by the fiercest army in the world while having no army or weapons of their own. He further reflected how the situation appeared to the people of Israel to be totally out of control and widespread fear and panic had set in. Elder Cook then proclaimed that God used Moses to declare that the people should fear not, be still, and watch and see God provide for their salvation (i.e., deliverance) from this apparently inescapable predicament. Elder Cook also reminded us that we today also need not fear and stand still -- yet we need to be mindful of our time and pray for God is always open to the prayers of His people. Elder Cook also proclaimed that God is not the author of confusion and that there are many things in this world that the Lord is not in -- evil and chaotic things which are of Satan -- yet God is always in control and sees and knows all. Elder Cook declared that God has even set up the concept of a quarantine in order to protect His people. He further declared that God has not given His people a spirit of fear but rather has given us a spirit of power, love and a sound mind. He further proclaimed that in regeneration we have been given a reverential and respectful fear of God and a new heart that the world doesn't have nor is capable of comprehending -- one that can never die and which places all hope in Jesus Christ, and Him alone. Next, Elder Cook strongly proclaimed that we have a gospel that doesn't bring eternal life but rather brings that life and immortality to light because it is based solely on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary and is not based on any work or deeds on our part. Elder Cook taught that fear is a snare or a trap set by Satan which holds and constrains us. Elder Cook also explained the Lord is our strength and we should not operate in fear for nothing is too great for the Lord -- He is our Rock, unmovable, and we can trust Him for our salvation, both temporally and eternally.

Elder Cook then sang "Blessed Assurance" as our closing hymn as many of us again joined in from our various homes. Lastly, Elder Cook then closed our services with a very lovely prayer.