Preparing and Worshipping from Home

From the earliest days of the church till today, it has been recognized that the gathering of believers together to worship the Father through Jesus, as empowered by the Holy Spirit, is a sacred experience. In the midst of worshipping together, we spur one another on to good deeds and encourage one another. This is why scripture tells us to "not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing…and all the more as you see the Day approaching," (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Despite these truths, the frailty of our bodies, the brokenness of this world, or the persecution of those who love Jesus may present obstacles to gathering together. Rather than being discouraged by this, we should all the more readily praise God that we live in a time where we can congregate from a distance. Whether gathering together in a building, streaming a service live, or viewing a recording, God's Spirit makes all believers one with Christ (1 Corinthians 6:17). In that unity, He makes us all united to each other (Romans 12:5). It is in this sense that Paul can say, "though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit" (Colossians 2:5).

However, this does not mean that we can just log into our streaming service or press play on the recording and make no preparation for the time of worship that we are going to experience. What follows are recommendations that we encourage all those who stream/view our services to consider before they worship together with us from a distance.

- ***Avoid Distraction:*** Before viewing the service, try to choose a place in your home that will limit distraction and allow you to best focus on the service. When viewing the recording, choose a time when it is least likely for there to be interruption. While for some a TV is the only option for viewing, we discourage you using your TV to view the service if there are other options available. Our reason for this is because it can be very difficult to distinguish the manner in which your TV serves as a venue of entertainment. Since worship is not entertainment, it is better if you have another mode of viewing.
- ***Consider your Appearance:*** It would be tempting, since you are in your home, to presume that you do not need to worry about dress or the way you look. However, remember that you are not just passively viewing a service, but you are participating in it. As such, you should get ready the same way that you would if you were gathering publicly with others because, as noted earlier, in spirit you are joining the rest of the body of Christ; not to mention coming before God Himself as you worship.
- ***Consider your Posture:*** Again, because you are in your home, it would be easy to ignore your posture as you view the service and comfortably lounge as you watch. However, this also has important impact on your worship of God. Just like sitting, standing, or kneeling in a normal church gathering assists in posturing ourselves before the God we worship, your posture as you view the services assists you in presenting yourself before God. We recommend a place where you can sit at attention and readily stand or kneel as the Holy Spirit guides you in worship.

- ***Be Prepared:*** Our services will always reference scripture. Often during the service, we will encourage participants to open their bibles and we would encourage that you do the same at home. While it would be easy to just bring up the scripture passage on the device you are viewing the service on, we have found that even this simple action can often distract people (see the first bullet) as they navigate through the internet to the bible site. We encourage you to have your bible ready. In addition, we will provide you with a liturgy of our service and the song lyrics that we will be singing. You should have that file opened so that you can follow along.
- ***Participate:*** This, perhaps more than anything else, is most important. It would be easy, being in your own home, to not follow along in unison or sing or turn to the scripture readings. Whether you are by yourself or with others, it is strongly recommended that you use your voice and your body to join together in the worship. This is what will transform your viewing of the service from something that you passively observe into an endeavor of active worship.
- ***Communion:*** The comfort level of participating in the Lord's Supper from a distance will vary from person to person.
    - Some will believe that this practice should only be done live with a spiritual leader. If you are in the area of Sky Valley Chapel, please email the church and we will have our pastor come to your home to serve you communion. If you are not in our area, we encourage you to call local churches to find someone who will come to you to serve you.
    - Some will be comfortable following along with the service they are viewing but feel as though they should have blessed elements (bread/juice). If you are in the area of Sky Valley Chapel, let us know and we can drop off pre-packaged elements to your home. If you are not in the Sky Valley Chapel area, you can find these elements online (for instance, search Amazon for 'Communion Packets').
    - Otherwise, if you have bread and juice in your home, you can follow along in the communion service from home with the elements that you have available.

It is our prayer that you will find your time of worship from a distance one that uniquely allows you to experience the unity of the Church, expresses your worship of God, and encourages you in the maturing of your faith. If you ever have any questions or need clarification on this or anything at Sky Valley Chapel, do not hesitate to let us know.