

Cy-Fair area churches acclimate to coronavirus restrictions

BY DANICA SMITHWICK



More than 100 cars fill the parking lot as Christ the Redeemer Catholic Church holds its first "drive-in benediction" event for its congregants March 20. (Courtesy Christ the Redeemer Catholic Church)

John Ogletree, a senior pastor at First Metropolitan Church on Beltway 8 and a member of the Cy-Fair ISD board of trustees, preached a sermon titled "This too shall pass" via livestream March 22. He said he made the call to cancel in-person worship services out of wisdom—not out of fear.

"I want you to know that with all that we are experiencing in this country and even in this city, that it will pass. We've just got to listen to the word of God," he said in the video. "Our nation is at war—not with an enemy from another country—but with the coronavirus COVID-19, and it has affected our church and churches all across this nation."

While Gov. Greg Abbott deemed churches essential and gave them authority to meet in person March 30, churches of all denominations across the Cy-Fair region have temporarily closed their doors, moved their services online since mid-March, and are coordinating efforts to continue serving their members and their surrounding communities in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

At TheMET Church on Jones Road, enhancements to the Sunday morning service livestreams were made, including making live chat hosts available for individuals to interact with during the service.

“Even though we’ve been streaming for years, we’re ramping up to a platform that’s called Church Online, which has some expanded capabilities,” said Michael Turk, the executive pastor of organizational development at TheMET Church, in a phone interview March 19. “It’s actually a free platform, so for smaller churches it’s a great option for them.”

Volunteers at the church have called senior citizens in TheMET’s database as well as individuals who are not connected to a small group and are noting needs for prayer, supplies or transportation that the church can help meet, Turk said.

Turk said TheMET depends on financial contributions from its congregation to sustain ministry and operations but giving slowed after the first week of halting in-person services. He said church leaders are not concerned about this decrease, but they are encouraging members to give online.

“We’re not approaching it from a fear-based mindset because we truly do believe that God calls us to be the church, [and] he’s going to provide the resources that we need,” he said. “I think it’s hard too for folks because I think everybody’s trying to brace financially, and so that’s the thing when that fear sets in is being able to step out in faith and know that when we’re obedient in continuing to give that God’s going to take care of us.”