

Drive-In Church Fosters Community During Quarantine

Drive-In Church was “different, but great,” said David Turner, senior pastor at Central Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia.

“It was great in spirit and just great to be together,” he said, as the congregation worshipped in the church’s parking lot from their cars last Sunday.

The idea was the brainchild of Central’s associate pastor for worship and adult ministry, Mary Richerson Craven, and her husband, Adam Craven.

They were sitting on the couch, discussing how the COVID-19 virus was forcing churches to adapt their regular routines. Thinking about Central’s response, both asked, “What are we going to do?”

“Drive-In Church,” they excitedly concluded. After consulting with Turner and checking to see the feasibility of such an idea, Adam began ordering equipment online.

Mary started diagramming logistics, making sure staff and members maintained the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidelines regarding social distancing.

She quickly sketched the parking lot on poster board, using Fisher-Price Little People for worship leaders and Hot Wheels to demonstrate where congregants should park.

When Sunday morning came, church leaders were uncertain what the response might be.

They were worried people might be frightened to leave their houses or start getting out of their cars once they arrived. Their fears proved unfounded as the response was unbelievable.

Church members and guests alike started parking their cars according to instructions.

Safely tucked into their cars, church members began to wave at each other, appreciative of the congregational connectedness they were experiencing.

As the service began, the ministers standing outside six feet apart from each other asked worshippers if they could be heard through the AM transmission that was established. Cars started honking their affirmations.

When the time came to pass the peace of Christ, worshippers were instructed to wave at the cars next to them.

“It was so great to see people smiling and waving at each other,” Turner said. One member told him it was so nice to feel “somewhat” normal again.

The church was truly “being priests to one another,” Richerson Craven pointed out. “No one was worried about worship style or personal preferences; it was such a joy to gather and celebrate our faith together.”

When the time for the offering rolled around, Home Depot buckets were placed strategically on poles in the parking lot. As members drove away, they dropped their offerings in the buckets.

With each gift, members began honking their horns again to say thank you and goodbye.

To hear more about the service, an interview with both Turner and Richerson Craven will be featured next week on the [Good Faith Weekly](#) podcast.

As Central prepares for this Sunday, Turner is confident that while this current crisis is cruel and devastating, a “renewed energy” is emerging.

Churches and people of faith are adapting to the pandemic by tapping into their creativity and compassion.

Long after this crisis has subsided, it would not surprise anyone at Central if they returned to the parking lot during March 2021 to remember and rejoice that the church continued to be the church, a place where the love of neighbor still matters.