



*"I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed,
for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:9*

March 12, 2020

Dear Colleagues on the Journey,

There is no escaping the growing concern regarding the spreading of COVID-19 (Coronavirus). As the virus continues to impact more individuals, government officials at various levels are wrestling with how to respond thoughtfully through social distancing in an effort to slow the spread and flatten the curve related to the capacity of our healthcare systems. As a covenant community called to love our neighbors as ourselves, along with our congregations and related ministries, we are discerning appropriate courses of action.

What has become clear is there is still much unknown about this virus. In the midst of the unknown, we are called to be prepared and diligent about its impact, which is disproportionately affecting populations over the age of 70 as well as those who have compromised immune systems. Given this reality and growing concerns, we are attaching resources that would be helpful for your congregations and ministries. We also invite you to share resources with us so we can include them on our website. As you and your leadership consider the road before you and your ministry, we are recommending the following considerations while gathered as communities of faith.

As you and your leadership consider the road before you and your ministry, we are recommending the following considerations while gathered as communities of faith.

1. Worship: As social distancing has become increasingly important, some of our congregations are taking a Lenten Sabbatical from worship. Others are engaging online platforms for alternative worship spaces, e.g. Facebook LIVE and ZOOM. If you need assistance, please contact presbytery staff at gklimovitz@presbyphl.org
2. Passing of the Peace: Refrain from shaking hands and hugging. Creatively explore alternatives for passing the peace. We can affirm God's grace at these moments with hand signals, a smile, a nod, etc..

3. Lord's Supper and Baptism: Consider postponing the sacraments during this season. Should you continue to offer the Sacraments, pour fresh water in baptismal fonts and consider buying individual packages with juice and wafer. They can be ordered on amazon - https://www.amazon.com/s?k=communion+juice+andwafer&ref=nb_sb_noss
4. Offering: Explore creative alternatives to passing the plate on Sunday mornings. Consider inviting those present to place offering in areas designated in the sanctuary. This could also be the optimal time to set up an online giving possibility. Check out the information through the Presbyterian Foundation: <https://pres-outlook.org/2020/03/pcusa-stated-clerk-speaks-about-in-person-worship-and-the-coronavirus/?fbclid=IwAR3Jt-GZmFDEMI-KJNWl3lgujwjoe4KTK71JyAmh4zqsOa2HAbHKFIMgswQ>
5. Most highly impacted populations and worship: Encourage those who are currently the most affected populations to remain home. Provide ways of connecting with them through social media platforms and the telephone to avoid perpetuating isolation.
6. Caring for Shut-ins: Consider using social media such as FaceTime, SKYPE, and telephone communication to stay in touch.
7. General Meetings and Gatherings: Experiment with virtual forms of community gatherings, to include social media platforms, ZOOM conferencing, Facebook LIVE, conference calls, and more. [Check out this beneficial webinar: : https://zoom.us/rec/play/6Mclf7yt-2o3E4GWsASDAvZ_W47oLaqsgSJL_qEEuU20VncDMVCgMLEQYz_fVgMeg5YoFffFTW8BBe8?continueMode=true&fbclid=IwAR095bXG-hA8C28EMXriDgAA3ZhLU_Yh9z0FKhv-QxXmTqs0t-NnlWg91Bg
8. Leadership Response Team: Name a team to serve as guides for continued awareness and response in your community.
9. Common Sense Reminders for all of us:
 - a. If you do not feel well, please stay home from work and worship, especially if you are in a high-risk category.
 - b. Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds (long enough to say the Lord's Prayer).

The ultimate wisdom of how to engage this critical season is entrusted to the leadership of each of our congregations and ministries. You are deeply aware of the people you serve and the uniqueness of your community DNA.

May we continue to hold one another in prayer as we are once again reminded of the fragility of our global community and human connection. We are hopeful that by God's Spirit, our faithful imaginations and hearts of compassion will enable us to discern best practices as we move through this difficult and complex reality.

In Christ,

The Leadership of the Presbytery of Philadelphia

Related Resource Links

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Statement from the Stated Clerk of the PCUSA: <https://pres-outlook.org/2020/03/pcusa-stated-clerk-speaks-about-in-person-worship-and-the-coronavirus/?fbclid=IwAR3Jt-GZmFDEMI-KJNWl3lgujwjoe4KTK71JyAmh4zqsOa2HAbHKFIMgswQ>
- Synod of the Trinity Collection of Resources: <http://www.syntrinity.org/coronavirus-resources/>
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance: https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/presbyterian-disaster-assistance-releases-pandemic-preparedness-guide/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Presbyterian+Church+USA+Daily+News&utm_campaign=Daily+News+%7C+February+28+2020P
- Guidelines for Pastoral Care During Coronavirus: <https://www.christiancentury.org/blog-post/guest-post/10-guidelines-pastoral-care-during-coronavirus-outbreak>
- ZOOM Worship Webinar: https://zoom.us/rec/play/6Mclf7yt-2o3E4GWsASDAvZ_W47oLaqsgSJL_qEExU20VncDMVCgMLEQYz_fVgMeg5YoFffFTW8BB_e8?continueMode=true&fbclid=IwAR095bXG-hA8C28EMXriDgAA3ZhLU_Yh9z0FKhv-QxXmTqs0t-NnlWg91Bg
- Prayer from the PCUSA: <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2020/2/20/call-prayer-stated-clerk-presbyterian-church-us/>