



*Greetings in the name of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ!*

Last year, when we established the date for this Presbytery meeting, we did not have a clue about the outcome of the national elections, but we knew that it would be a time to focus on healing no matter the outcome. Recent events have only amplified the need for unity and healing and I pray that this meeting reaffirms our shared commitment to be bridge-builders and healers of the breach.

As I look back on the events of this year, the common theme I see is fragility: a new recognition of how fragile our health is with the pandemic - a growing recognition of the fragility of our social structure and the impact of systemic racism on that structure – the instability and fragility of our democracy. In light of these concerns, it is ever more important for the Church to reassert the power and supremacy of Jesus and the unifying force our faith provides. We are called to connect individuals and institutions that feel separated and isolated.

Prompted by the fragility and anxiety in our communities, I am once again drawn to Acts 11:27 *<sup>27</sup> During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. <sup>28</sup> One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) <sup>29</sup> The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. <sup>30</sup> This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.*

True to the spirit of these disciples, we have demonstrated the same response to the issues in our society. I am blown away by the gifts and resiliency of our pastoral and lay leaders and the faithful assistance our congregations have offered to their communities. Your faithful response to the recent survey has created a Covid recovery resource database for our shared benefit. You have shown steadfast support for individuals suffering from food insecurity and the other consequences of recent events. There is a growing commitment to address systemic racism by intentionally threading the awareness of diversity and bias into our ongoing formation as

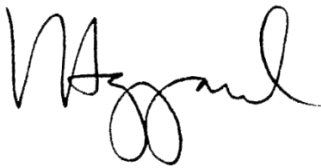
leaders. These are hallmarks of an engaged Presbytery and the faithful discipleship of the congregations in our midst.

At this Presbytery meeting we are honored to have the newly appointed Chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives offer a word of inspiration. We will celebrate the faithful work and ministry that has created the New River Presbyterian Church, a critical milestone in the regenerative life of our Presbytery. You will also hear of the exciting grant from the Lilly Foundation that provides expanded resources for clergy that will encourage and support them as they lead congregations of this Presbytery.

It has been a tremendous blessing and honor for me to serve as your Moderator during these last 12 months. Throughout all the events of this year, I am eternally grateful for the loving and capable support of the leadership and membership of our Presbytery. I end my term secure in the knowledge that the Rev. Ashley Rossi, our new Moderator and the Rev. Ted Mingle our new Vice Moderator, will lead us through the challenges of the coming years and to new heights as a community of faith. We will be blessed by their service.

I look forward to our by-now familiar gathering on zoom with the hope that we will be able to gather again face-to-face in the near future.

*Grace and Peace,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Aggarwal', with a stylized, flowing script.

Vijay Aggarwal, Moderator of the Presbytery of Philadelphia