

Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

April 9, 2020

Dear Siblings in Christ:

In these last few days of Holy Week, as we observe Maundy Thursday, and take deeply in our souls the commandment that Christ gave us to love one another as he has loved us, and to serve as we were served - humbly in God's name, a command given even as Jesus knew that he would be betrayed by one of his own. As we contemplate the consequences of that betrayal and the horrible death Jesus suffered for each and every one of us, we pray that you experience the miracle and wonder of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ with complete joy and praise. We pray that as a result of remembering Christ's death and resurrection and God's love for us our perspective will be that our current world circumstances will seem nothing in comparison to the glory to be revealed in us. That is our most sincere prayer.

In the meantime, we all have miles to go before that celebration. When the celebration of Easter is over, the current slight affliction of the COVID pandemic will continue as will our faithful responses in caring for God's people. We are in awe of, and humbled by, the energy, intelligence, imagination and love you have shown in caring for members of your congregations and the most vulnerable in your communities. We are grateful to God for the great witness of Christian faith you are showing the world. The Gospel of Christ is indeed being proclaimed in Southwest Michigan by those of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan. We pray that all we do is faithful and pleasing to God.

As we write this, Michigan has currently experienced more the 20,000 cases of the Corona Virus and nearly 1,000 people have died. Those are staggering numbers, and predictions are that we have not yet reached the apex and numbers will continue to rise. So, our work is far from done.

The Michigan legislature has approved the extension of the shelter in place order and we heard this afternoon from Gov. Gretchen Whitmer that the Stay Home, Stay Safe order will be extended at least through April 30, 2020. Therefore, the Presbytery is strongly urging and encouraging the congregations within the Presbytery to continue to meet electronically for worship, bible study and other church activities. We pray that you continue to protect the community and yourselves by social distancing. **The presbytery office will continue to be closed through April 30, 2020.** Members of the staff will be working and can be contacted as usual by email or phone. We are here to help and support in any way that we are able.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is both immediate and long term. In many communities, including our own, it will fall upon churches to provide stability during the period of physical and economic recovery. **We are encouraging each of our pastors and sessions to thoughtfully consider the financial impact the COVID-19 virus will have on the ministries of your congregation and take steps now to assure your ability to continue the ministries God has called you to do and to assure that you are able to provide that stability.**

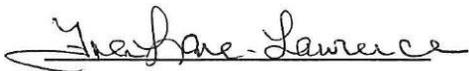
There are a number of opportunities for financial support designed to keep our churches strong and financially stable. The government is offering the **Payroll Protection Program** and we encourage each church to participate. Additionally, **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance** is offering two grant opportunities:

- Initial Assistance Emergency Grants with applications accepted until April 30, 2020, and
- Short/Long Term Grant with applications to be submitted starting May 1, 2020.

And the **Board of Pensions** is offering two programs: the dues relief program for small churches and deferral for larger churches. Information about all of these opportunities for financial support may be found on the presbytery's coronavirus response page at <https://lakemichiganpresbytery.org/coronavirus-response/>. **Again, we encourage participation in these opportunities so that your churches can remain vital and continue to be a stabiling influence in your community.**

Please know that we continue to pray for you every day. We love you, and we have every confidence of God's presence and guidance during this difficult time. Please contact us if you need us.

In the Holy Name of Christ,



Rev. Fran Lane-Lawrence
Stated Clerk/ Transitional Co-Leader



Rev. Cal Brown
Transitional Co-Leader