

## Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

April 24, 2020

Pastors and Clerks of Session

Grace to you and peace,

We commend sessions, congregational leaders, musicians, technicians, liturgists, and pastors for your creativity and adaptability both in worship and in other aspects of ministry to your congregations and communities. You have encouraged us to pour out our hearts to God and find strength in our mighty rock and refuge. Thank you for your leadership, energy, and commitments.

Many of you have spoken about the adrenal rush that we feel as we learn new ways of ministry, experiment with some things that work well and discard other experiments that did not live up to our expectations or desires. Many of us have responded well to this journey that was forced upon us by a pandemic that we did not anticipate and still do not completely understand. It seems that each new day and week brings with it a new understanding of the complexity of this threat and its continuing impact.

COVID-19 struck our state with greater intensity than many other states; and our state instituted “Stay Home, Stay Safe” orders. These “shelter in place” directives were followed by more detailed instructions regarding essential and non-essential activities. And now it appears that the return to the “new normal” most likely will be modulated, possibly regionalized, different for different segments of the population, and that restrictions on the size of gatherings will likely be lifted incrementally over time.

We are Presbyterians. We like to have a plan and then implement decently and in order. Some of you have asked for advice and guidance about worship services and other meetings. We have examined the guidelines from the CDC and the list of indicators to be used by the Michigan state governmental bodies, and we have consulted with leaders from other presbyteries.

It is apparent to us that our knowledge about the nature, transmission and longer-term effects of the virus is expanding and becoming more refined over time. There are a host of questions that churches will need to answer before beginning to worship in person. A few of the more obvious are: How do we clean our sanctuaries, halls and bathrooms? How do we navigate our way when there are multiple conflicting opinions on the internet about transmission, effects and safe activity? How do we protect persons from others who fail to maintain appropriate social distancing?

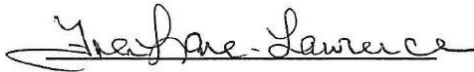
Recent developments demonstrate that there will be multiple other questions that will arise as we discover more about the virus and its effects. In the interest of safety for ourselves and the communities we serve, recommend the following:

- **Congregations do not meet for worship services in person through at least July 5, 2020 but rather continue to utilize various technologies to provide worship experiences for congregational members and others.**
- **That other church meetings (Bible study, Session meetings, committee meetings, etc.) honor the applicable maximum number of persons limit (currently 10) permitted for your area, and then only to the extent that the social distancing guidelines (currently six feet) can be maintained.**

If you have questions about these recommendations, please contact either of us.

While the recommended style of worship and meeting within our homes is not something that we would have chosen prior to the pandemic, some astute observers have pointed to the parallels with the New Testament church. We hope that their fervency in prayer, reliance on Holy Spirit for direction, and expectant hope in God will also characterize this time for the Presbytery of Lake Michigan.

Serving God and God's people in the Presbytery of Lake Michigan,



Fran Lane-Lawrence  
Transitional Co-Leader/Stated Clerk



Cal Bremer  
Transitional Co-Leader