



## Presbytery of Lake Michigan

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

May 12, 2021

Presbytery of Lake Michigan  
Clerks of Session  
Pastors with congregations  
Church Administrators

Dear Siblings in Christ,

We live as resurrection people infused with hope for redemption and renewal. We look for places in our lives and communities that give evidence of resurrection renewal and change. This spring, we long for evidence especially after the bleakness and uncertainty of this past year.

During the last week of April, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Michigan Governor held press conferences commenting on the effect of vaccinations upon the spread of COVID and on changes in guidelines, recommendations, and protocols. Some congregations and pastors have asked whether the pastoral advice given in March has changed.

The answer is “yes in some areas, and “no” in other areas.

As we noted in our March 5, 2021 pastoral letter, every choice involves an element of risk for us and for those participating in activities in our churches. Our recommendations are for reduced risk but are not without potential danger if implemented.

We recognize that community conditions and practices vary by geographic region and that the demographic composition of each congregation is different. The type of ventilation systems, building configurations, and the number of persons who were hospitalized or died of COVID known by members are different for each congregation. Any of these factors may influence a session’s decision as they chart a path forward. We present these advisory guidelines as they make their decisions.

We are recommending that our congregations not meet in-person/within buildings until:

1. After 70% of those present in person have been vaccinated.
2. All pastors and worship leaders who will participate or lead in worship are vaccinated.
3. The community’s fourteen-day average number of new cases is fewer than eight (8) cases per 100,000.
4. The community’s fourteen-day average positive test rate is lower than 7%.

We recommend the following process steps of faithful stewardship:

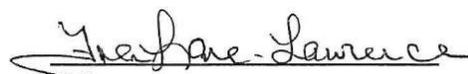
1. That faith communities step carefully from a closed building to a partially open one, leaving five weeks between each new initiative to monitor the effects of each step.
2. That smaller groups begin to use the building while maintaining all the recommended prevention protocols as a first step toward moving forward.
3. That implementation of hybrid worship and ministry is faithful stewardship.
4. That congregations make use of outdoor gathering areas for worship and meetings.
5. That singing as a congregation should be one of the last activities to be re-introduced to indoor worship.
6. That church meals – including funeral luncheons – continue to be places where disease is too easily spread. We do not recommend hosting or attending them. As a ministry to those who are hungry among us, we can modify our options to distribute meals to go until it is safe to host people in a building again.
7. We strongly recommend making wearing face masks indoors mandatory and advise having someone other than the pastor responsible for ensuring people adhere to this policy.
8. Communicate clearly to the congregation to stay home if they feel at all “off,” if they know they have been exposed, or if they are waiting for COVID test results.
9. Use less than the full capacity of your space and increase physical distance between household groups (six (6) to ten (10) feet is recommended). Think about ways to maintain distancing outside the sanctuary – outside the door, in entryways, by coat racks, near and in restrooms.
10. Sessions are urged to recognize that pastors, worship leaders, musicians and other members of staff may have extenuating circumstances that affect their ability to get the vaccines to safely protect themselves and family members during this transitional time. If the Session and any of those mentioned above are not able to come to agreement, then the Commission on Ministry will be asked to assist them resolve the impasse.

Current plans are for the June 8, 2021 Stated Meeting of Presbytery to take place virtually.

Our greatest desire is for our siblings in Christ and their communities to remain safe and healthy while the church continues to answer God’s call to service and worship. We are so grateful to be your partners in ministry and give thanks to God for you always.



Cal Bremer  
Transitional Co-Leader



Fran Lane-Lawrence  
Transitional Co-Leader/ Stated Clerk