



IMAGE: A young Presbyterian is captivated by Rev. Mark Bedford's image on the television screen leading ministry for New Windsor Presbyterian Church (shared with permission)

GOOD NEWS

from the
Presbytery of Great Rivers

*We are called to share Christ's love by partnering in service,
uniting in worship, and risking in ministry.*

April 23, 2020

As the end of the most recent shelter-in-place order approaches, we are currently awaiting instructions from the governor about health advisements into the months of May and June. We continue to urge all presbyters to exercise all available protective measures to protect

against contracting or transmitting the disease by staying at home as much as possible. If you or your congregation are experiencing any hardship, please let us know how we might be able to help. Please continue to check <https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/> for a list of most up-to-date resources!

Let Us Pray



Every week during 2020, we offer up different church names so that we can pray for our entire Presbytery community. You are welcome to follow this calendar as you will! The full list can be found on our website under the Churches tab or by clicking [here](#).

This week on our prayer calendar. . .



Geneseo - First
First Presbyterian Church
133 E North St, Geneseo, IL 61254
Rev. Laurence Tim Doty
Susan Wolf, Admin Assistant
Steven Durian, Clerk of Session
Olivia Melton, Treasurer
[Website](#)
[Facebook](#)



Green Valley - First
First Presbyterian Church
300 S Church St, Green Valley, IL 61534
Melinda Snyder, Admin Assistant
Diana Houston, Clerk of Session

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Forward to a Friend



(This will send this week's newsletter as an email to a friend!)

For Headline News
Happening Around
the PC(USA),
[click here](#)



Mark Your Calendar

APRIL

Committee on Ministry

Tuesday, April 28
10 am - 3 pm
Peoria-First Federated LTC

Administrative Team Meeting

Wednesday, April 29
11 am - 4 pm
Peoria-First Federated LTC

Leadership Team Meeting

Thursday, April 30
10 am - 2 pm
Peoria-First Federated LTC
Springfield-Third

[Click here for the PGR Calendar](#)

WITH SADNESS AND OUT OF ABUNDANCE OF CARE, THIS YEAR'S WILDERNESS CAMP HAS BEEN CANCELLED, AND THIS SUMMER'S COVENANT



Tid-bits and Goings-On from around the Presbytery and PC(USA)

There are a number of things happening worth lifting up even as shelter-in-place orders continue side by side with our faithful ministry:

- **CORONAVIRUS CASES:** At the time of this posting, every county within the bounds of our presbytery except two have at least one confirmed case of the coronavirus. All churches in Great Rivers Presbytery except Mt. Sterling Presbyterian Church of Christ in Brown County have confirmed cases in their county. Up-to-date tracking of the pandemic can be found [HERE](#). Rock Island County is the hardest hit with 242 confirmed cases and 6 deaths, followed by McLean County with 86 cases and 3 deaths, followed by Sangamon County with 69 cases and 4 deaths. We are not aware of any critical cases of the sickness of members of Great Rivers Presbytery. 
- **NO INTERNET?:** We are not the only rural presbytery with limited access to the internet, which makes it difficult to participate in the life of the church virtually. Many pastors have dilligently worked on different "low-tech" tech options for connecting with our people. [HERE](#) is an article on how we can lead ministry without access to the internet, called "Reach your Technology Adverse and Bandwidth Starved Congregants" by Katie Rains. Also, did you know you do NOT need the internet to participate in a Zoom call? If you have even a rotary phone, with nothing but the meeting ID, you can call in to a virtual meeting! You can even mute and unmute yourself using *6.
- **NEW PASTORAL CALLS IN A PANDEMIC:** In a conversation with our national staff responsible for pastoral call support we can confirm that pastoral calls can be finalized without needing to meet physically. Congregational meetings, session meetings, and installations can all be achieved virtually (click [HERE](#) for Advisory opinion on conducting church business virtually). While there is nothing like the helpfulness of an in-person visit, colleges and universities are well accustomed to providing virtual tours, as are real-estate agents. We might need to get creative! 
- **GENERAL ASSEMBLY:** The General Assembly, for the first time in history has decided to be entirely virtual and will be limited to its most essential business. Click [HERE](#) for news article. At this time, the convention center in Baltimore is functioning as a field hospital. Our commissioners will have multiple practice trainings ahead of the General Assembly June date!
- **THINKING TOWARDS REOPENING:** While we do not know yet when it will be safe to gather again, if the situation changes and restrictions do suddenly lift, it will be best to be prepared on how to respond safely and in ways that continue to exemplify wisdom and model community care. [HERE](#) is a popular article called "24 Questions Should Answer Before People Return" by Ken Braddy. It may be more helpful for larger congregations, but it raises some critical questions to think about as you imagine what gathering might look like. The three practices that will most definitely need to be rethought are **communion**, the **passing of the peace/greetings**, and **passing the offering plate**. (One way of thinking about communion may be in how those with gluten allergies cannot have any contact with the bread in order to be safe, and if we can think about how we might lead communion with the same care that we might for those who need to navigate the presence of gluten elements, we might be able to frame this as an accessibility issue for the whole congregation). [HERE](#) is a link to a Sixty Second Sermon made by Ryan Landino that presents some of these guidelines from the CDC back in March that may need to become normal practice as we think about gathering. As we look to the future, we should be prepared to emphasize that we will not be able to return to our old normal exactly as we remember it.

- EARTH DAY: This last Wednesday, April 22nd was Earth Day, which, in a surprising turn of fortune in the midst of all of this death and disease, experienced substantial temporary reductions in carbon emissions by the three largest carbon emitters in the world: China, the EU, and the United States ([source](#)). We have one officially recognized PC(USA) Earth Care Congregation in Westminster Presbyterian Church in Springfield. More information can be found [HERE](#).



- OUR WORK CONTINUES! Because we have been practicing as a presbytery with virtual meetings and working from home for approximately two years, as well as permitting official business to be conducted electronically and delegating certain decisions to the Committee on Ministry and Administration teams, the official work of presbytery is better suited than most to continue unimpeded in the midst of this pandemic. The Committee on Ministry, Administration Team, and the Leadership Team of Great Rivers Presbytery are all meeting next week. All other committees have either met or are continuing to function. Our staff is currently working from home. We will continue to be in conversation about how to be in support of the wellness and ministries of our pastors and congregations in this time, and how we can adapt to the unique challenges of serving God and God's people in the middle of a pandemic.

[180 Days of Prayer for the 224th General Assembly](#)

This year, the PC(USA) Stated Clerk's Office has invited leaders from around the country to participate in 180 Days of Prayer, with a new prayer posted every day leading up to this summer's General Assembly. This week due to the pandemic it was announced that this will be the first General Assembly in history to be entirely online (see article [HERE](#)). Our brave commissioners and youth advisory delegate will be achieving something we have never before attempted! Please keep them and all involved in our prayers.

Here was Wednesday's prayer contribution by our Lead Presbyter:

Day 122

The Reverend Ryan J. Landino
Lead Presbyter for Transformation
Presbytery of Great Rivers

180 Days of Prayer

(Still) Sovereign God of the 224th General Assembly (2020),

This is hard. This wasn't supposed to happen. Not the pandemic, not the deaths, delays, disruptions, nor shut downs.

Yet we are here. And You are already waiting for us.

And so we bring before You our homebound selves, with our questions, our worries, and our doubts. In pjs and comfy shirts we lay at your feet the folly of our perfectionism, and the false illusion that we are in control where we are not.

Meet us where and as we are, O God, as we work in and outside the lines, building from scratch and necessity new models to replace the ones that once told us that what we are achieving could not be done. Bless us with the assurance that we are the particular people, called to *this* particular moment, in *this* particular place. And that when You call, You also provide.

We don't know what this assembly will be like, God. But we do know it will be different-with or without a pandemic, it will be different because *we* are different. Even as we are transformed and are transforming, be with us and fill every space between us. May our wi-fi be stable and our bandwidth be broad. Grant that humor be heightened and grace may abound. As the structures are challenged may justice arise. And may beloved community be built even now.

With Advent readiness and Lenten lament,
we look for you God on the unknown road.

May we do our ministry nonetheless.

"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress ... or famine?... For I am convinced that neither death, nor life ... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8: 35, 38)

Amen.

To subscribe to 180 Days of Prayers for the General Assembly, click [HERE](#)

Ministry-in-Place Photo Newsletter Contest!

Do you have an image that captures what it is like to experience ministry during a pandemic? It could be participating in online worship, a spiritual practice, service to a neighbor, or something that makes you feel the presence of the divine. Share your image with the name of your church community as well a short sentence on "why this makes me feel close to God"

to rlandino@greatriverspby.org or post it in the comments section of the Facebook post of this newsletter. Your image might be selected for the header of next week's newsletter!

Please send by end of day on Wednesday, April 29th to be considered for next week!



NO WEEKLY CHECK-IN ON APRIL 30th

Next week will be a busy week for committees as we plan the work of the presbytery for the coming months. For this week alone, we will be skipping our weekly check-in. Let's us it as an opportunity to check-in with somebody else!

ZOOM Teleconferencing Grants (NEW) and Coaching Grants

On April 1, 2020, the Leadership Team approved grants for churches for a one year subscription to ZOOM for teleconferencing. You may be reimbursed monthly for as long you need it up to a year, or be reimbursed for a single year.

Reimbursement Process:

1. For those purchasing a 1 year subscription:

- a. Pay the cost of the subscription
- b. Print off the invoice that shows it has been paid
- c. Black out any credit card number that might have been used and scan the invoice.
- d. Email the invoice and who the check should be issued to:

Bill Strawbridge, Treasurer at: bnc.sbridge@gmail.com

***include a mailing address for where the check should be sent.**

- e. A check will be written to the individual or church as indicated.
- f. Copies of all documentation will be stored in the locked bookkeeper's office pending her return.

2. For those purchasing it by the month, checks will be issued quarterly following the same process as above. Retain monthly invoices, scan three of them at a time, and email them per the above instructions.

Questions: call Bill Strawbridge at 309 258-4015

Also, a friendly reminder that on January 22, 2020, the Leadership Team approved grants of up to a limit of six sessions of professional coaching for Great Rivers Presbytery pastors serving congregations (including elders serving commissions, through the directory of the Presbyterian Coach Network, up to \$1,000. Information on coaching and a directory of coaches can be found by clicking [HERE](#). The process for reimbursement will be the same as above.

Both of these are resources are available to help you navigate ministry during this pandemic crisis.

Looking for Alternative, Online Worship?

Here are several possibilities for connecting to different worship spaces around the presbytery. This is a listing of the last Sunday's offerings of different churches providing worship. Please check the presbytery's Facebook page (click [HERE](#)) for most up-to-date listing with direct links.

- Second Pres Bloomington, Rev. Trey Haddon, Rev. Elissa Bailey, 10am, streaming "drive-in-worship service" online, secondpres.com.
- St Luke Union Church, Bloomington, Rev. Andy Gifford, 10:30am on [Facebook](#) live.
- Buffalo Hart Presbyterian Church, Rev. Sarah Iliff-McGill, 9:30am, via www.buffalohartpc.com
- Chatham Presbyterian Church, Rev. Jim Reitz, by newsletter and email, to access, email jareitz@chathampresbyterian.com.
- First Presbyterian Church, Coal Valley and Beulah, Rev. Tim Snart, worship posted on Youtube https://m.youtube.com/channel/UClqgUcXCqN_ftk5EP8Odeg
- First Presbyterian Church of Delavan, Rev. Jean Sparks, found on their webpage firstpresdelavan.org or directly at <http://firstpresdelavan.org/virtual-worship>.
- First Presbyterian Church of Elmwood, Rev. Marla Bauler, worship led by Zoom (link can be obtained by pastor), then posted afterwards to [Facebook](#).
- First Presbyterian Church of Farmington, Rev. Andy Sonneborn, 10:30am by [Facebook](#) live.
- First Presbyterian Church Galesburg, Rev. Ann Elyse Van Winkle, 10am by [Facebook](#) live
- First Presbyterian Church Geneseo Rev. Tim Doty, 10:30 a.m. streaming brief worship service of Scripture, meditation and prayer to [Facebook](#) live.
- First Presbyterian Church, Jacksonville, IL, Rev. Jonathan Warren, 10am by [Facebook](#) live.
- First United Presbyterian Church of Leroy, Rev. Annie McMillan, recorded Youtube videos of their services posted later on their [Facebook](#) page.
- First Presbyterian Church of Lincoln, Illinois, Rev. Adam Quine, 10:00am by [Facebook](#) live (older recorded sermons also on church website)
- Sugar Tree Grove United Presbyterian Church, Faith United Presbyterian Church, Monmouth, and Monmouth College collaborating on joint 10:30am Sunday worship service, posted to Youtube: <https://m.youtube.com/user/monmouthcollege>
- New Windsor Presbyterian Church, Rev. Mark Bedford, worship videos and links shared by [Facebook](#)
- First Presbyterian Church of Normal IL, Rev. Matt Wilcox, 8:30am and 11am by livestream and saved upon ending: <https://livestream.com/firstpresnormal>
- The Norwood Presbyterian Church, Commissioned Pastor Gary Denise Pullen, 10:30am on [Facebook](#) live, on his personal page.
- United Presbyterian Church of Peoria, Rev. Debra Avery, 10 a.m.
 - their [Facebook](#) page

- YouTube from any smartphone, computer, or tablet: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAf9XQ9MUHNGaXdQQRSk6yQ>
- First Federated Church of Peoria, Rev. Frosty Krummel, look for streaming and video on their [Facebook](#)
- Westminster Presbyterian Church - Peoria Rev. Denise Clark-Jones, 10am, streaming online <https://westminsterpeoria.org/>
- Central Presbyterian Church, Petersburg, Commissioned Pastor Stephanie McCullough, worship posted on website <https://www.central-pres.org/worship>
- Gloria Dei Presbyterian Church RI, in Rock Island, Rev. Drew Nagle, 10:30am, by [Facebook](#) live, and posted afterwards.
- Good Shepherd, Rock Island, Rev. James Benson, sermons posted on website on Sundays, www.goodshepherdpres.org
- South Park Presbyterian Church, Rev. Blake Severson, worship shared by YouTube, https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCWRIYrkt6ZkaejzWVAj_yDQ
- First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois, Rev. Susan Phillips, 10:30 via Zoom, click this link: <https://zoom.us/j/395770581>
- Hope Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Rev. Chuck Goodman, 9:30am by [Facebook](#) live
- [Korean United Presbyterian Church of Springfield](#) Rev. Jaechul Kim, streaming by Youtube live (Korean language) [Facebook](#) page.
- Third-Presbyterian Church of Springfield, worship recorded and posted later on Sunday to [Facebook](#).
- Westminster Presbyterian Church of Springfield, IL, Rev. Blythe Kieffer, Rev. Trajan McGill, Rev. Christian Choi, 10am worship streamed online, www.wpcspi.org
- United Church of Woodhull, Rev. Cheyanna Losey, recorded Youtube videos of their services posted on [Facebook](#) page.

Here is a link to the lectionary readings for today:
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/.../revised-co.../2020/3/15/>

FRIENDLY REMINDER TO NOT FORGET TO MAKE SPACE FOR THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF GIVING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS!

Get Connected!

There are three primary ways we as a presbytery are able to keep in touch with new resources and information during the pandemic: our weekly newsletter which goes out Thursday or Friday, our Facebook page, and our website. Please make sure you are connected!

Be sure to encourage your congregations, sessions, and even your church newsletter editorial staff and volunteers to be sure to sign up for our presbytery newsletter and follow our Facebook page so you don't miss out on what is going on in our community of churches!

Have you liked our "Presbytery of Great Rivers" Facebook page?



Have you signed up for our "Good News from Great Rivers" email newsletter?



Presbytery of Great Rivers, 3601 N Sheridan Rd, Peoria, IL 61604

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