

Image: Rev. Paul Stroup from Clinton Presbyterian Church preaches into the living room of his family in Maryland.

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 30, 2020

As we battle this pandemic, at this time the governor has extended shelter-in-place orders through to the end of May. 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](#)

In This Issue

[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. . .



Greenview, United
United Presbyterian Church
PO Box 378, Greenview, IL 62642
Donna Edwards, Admin Assistant
Janice Ishmael, Clerk of Session, Elder
Rosalind Dirks, Clerk of Session, Elder
Janet Langford, Treasurer
[Facebook](#)



Hamilton, Bethel
Bethel Presbyterian Church
1421 Broadway St, Hamilton, IL 62341
Robert Wagner, Commissioned Lay Pastor
Daniella Jones, Admin Assistant
[Website](#)
[Facebook](#)

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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

MAY

Visioning Team Meeting

Tuesday, May 12
10 am - 2 pm
ZOOM only

COM Meeting

Tuesday, May 19
10 am - 2 pm
ZOOM only

[Click here for the PGR Calendar](#)

Join Our List



Leadership Team Sneak Peak on the June Assembly



On April 30th, the Leadership Team of Great Rivers presbytery, which is responsible for planning the assemblies, has decided that the June 2nd assembly meeting will be held virtually by Zoom, though streamlined to a shortened meeting of core items of worship and business that most immediately empower the ministries of our congregations. We are offering an optional "practice assembly" a week prior on Tuesday, May 28th at 10am by Zoom. We will be working hard in the coming weeks on details and logistics. This will be something new! Fortunately, our bylaws do permit us meeting in this way, and this should be a good opportunity to practice adapting to swiftly changing ministry

landscapes.

A Word from Your Lead Presbyter: "This is Hard"

Friends, this is hard.

I confess I was not surprised by the news of the governor's order that we had another month of sheltering-in-place until the end of May.



What did surprise me was the weight of how it made me feel.

Recently I found myself sharing a story of a chapter of my life ministering to victims of Superstorm Sandy when I lived in northeast coastal New Jersey. I cannot think about that time without a crushing sense of "I didn't do enough, and what I did wasn't good enough." I also remember that feeling of dissonance I experienced when I received a letter from the city's mayor personally thanking me for what I had done to help coordinate the disaster response. How was I to make sense of that praise, and why to this day am I still not able to accept it? Only later did I begin to accept that cultural trauma, often caused by natural disasters, has certain effects that impact the way we see ourselves and our part in those disasters.

Based on what I am hearing out and about my circles, I believe we are sharing a similar moment of shared cultural trauma that is affecting us all. So I want to give myself permission to name with you that this is *hard*. Not by virtue of our lack of skill, experience, fitness, or versatility, but by virtue of the reality it is hard simply because this is hard.

We are social creatures, made for each other. As much as it remains the right, wise, and responsible thing to do, at the same time it is not in our nature to be self-isolated. We were designed upon our creation to be recipients of touch and proximity. One of the most insightful things I heard about this pandemic came from one of our pastors, who said our reality has taken from us the ONE thing we do and are most good at and live for in this work: *sitting alongside our people* (Thank you naming this, Cheyanna Losey). Pastors are professionals at fostering communal connections to the divine and to each other, and we are ministering in a time where the exact kind of human connections we are most accustomed to are simply not available. Many of you had to build new pathways of connection with steep learning curves, and sometimes completely from scratch and on short notice.

This is hard also because we have been disconnected from the nonverbal cues we have come to rely on to measure our interactions. Especially when we preach into screens of people we can't see, or click emails into homes we can't enter, or even call people we cannot touch--we are missing valuable information that help us understand the impact of our work or help us self-regulate the ways we relate to one another. While of course we know we shouldn't rely on the feedback of others to measure our own performance, at the same time tracking live signals of how people are engaging our presence is critical to helping us measure the effectiveness of our efforts to connect. We can't see nods, or follow people's eyes, or feel the energy in the room. While live video-streaming together helps a little, we are still only engaging two dimensional disembodied heads with sometimes unmuted voices. In many cases the only feedback we get in our ministry is limited to likes, comments, shares, and view counts as a measure of successfully engaging others. If we are not careful, we will come to rely on social media engagement for personal validation.

So, between the cultural trauma of helplessness, the lack of hardwired socializing we are accustomed to exercising, and the inability to sense nonverbal communication, we ALSO have the compounding anxiety of being at the mercy of the competencies of our elected officials, the very real life-and-death fears we have for our family and loved ones, the uncertainty of what future(s) to prepare for, and also how we will fit into the new world that will emerge.

Please take a breath with me (1...2...3...4...5).

The hopeful part is that it is hard also because we are bringing our full humanity into this. We are rediscovering what we've always known: we are not machines, we are not cogs in a wheel of capitalism that binds our worth to our work, and are not, nor were we ever intended, to be alone. And God would not have us any other way.

Let me offer some encouragements:

You cannot do everything; but you can do some things. Do that.

The style of others' is not your style; you have your own voice. Use that.

Next week's challenges will be different from this week; we don't know what those are yet. Let's get through today.

I'll be honest: I do not know how long all this will last. I remember not too long ago we were hoping for Easter. Now we are hoping for Pentecost. As difficult as it is to say, perhaps we will need to be prepared to wait for July, or, please God forbid, autumn. Let this be a time for both lament and imagining new possibilities that await us and how we might create them together. Know that I share with you the weight of your questions about tomorrow, your weariness, your frustrations. Right now you are keeping someone's loved one safe by keeping the distance you are. And for that I thank you.

So for all those feeling a staggering sense of incompetence right now, here is a quick word that you are being AWESOME simply by virtue of surviving, and being there for your people in the ways that you can. We are showing great, sacrificial love to each other by sheltering-in-place. When the virus is contained and the restrictions lifted, our endurance *will* be honored.

In faith and love, we got this. One day, one challenge, one checkbox, one step at a time.

I have found a lot of comfort in Carrie Newcomer's folk song, "You Can Do This Hard Thing." I bless you now with the chorus:

*You can do this hard thing
You can do this hard thing
It's not easy I know
But I believe that it's so
You can do this hard thing*

Prayers for safety, protection, and wellness to you all,

Rev. Ryan J. Landino, Lead Presbyter for Transformation
Great Rivers Presbytery
rlandino@greatriverspby.org

Discussions for Life Together Post COVID-19 for Small(er) Parishes, Hosted by Rev. Adam Quine

Please see this message from Rev. Adam Quine, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Lincoln:



"Hey, small church clergy friends. Anyone want to have a zoom talk about how small parishes will proceed when covid-19 orders are lifted?! I love tall steeple, 100+ member churches. Y'all are tremendously good people. But there are unique challenges for smaller parishes. I've created two meetings: meeting 1 for this **Friday, May 1, at 8:30 am Central Time**, with a second meeting for **Monday, May 4, at 7:00 pm Central Time**. I'll post that link after our Friday gathering...My hope is that our time together is less of a 'one-up-personship' and more of a sharing of ideas, concerns, and strategy for our different but similar parish situations." Please contact Adam at pastor@preslincoln.org with questions.

Friday Offering:

Time: May 1, 2020 08:30 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/92457517606?pwd=NTVNTG5sYThwOEZjZHkrVG1HMTM2dz09>
Meeting ID: 924 5751 7606
Password: 363545

Monday Offering:
Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/92225374743?pwd=Vkg4ZkVQW5UKzNzLzJCczV5L01wZz09>
Meeting ID: 922 2537 4743
Password: 883803

Expanded Teleconferencing Grants

On April 30, 2020, the Leadership Team expanded the Zoom grant to include the following:

For the purpose of establishing connections in the life of your ministry, we will extend grants to any teleworking needs, including technology software, hardware, or other telework or virtual meeting platforms. Please follow the process below for reimbursement. We kindly ask that you assess your finances to discern your level of need so we can make our resources available to as many as possible!

From 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.

Weekly 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, May 6th to be considered for next week! **Congrats to this weeks winner, the family of Paul and Kathy Stroup in Maryland, for your submission!**

Committee on Ministry Highlights, April 2020

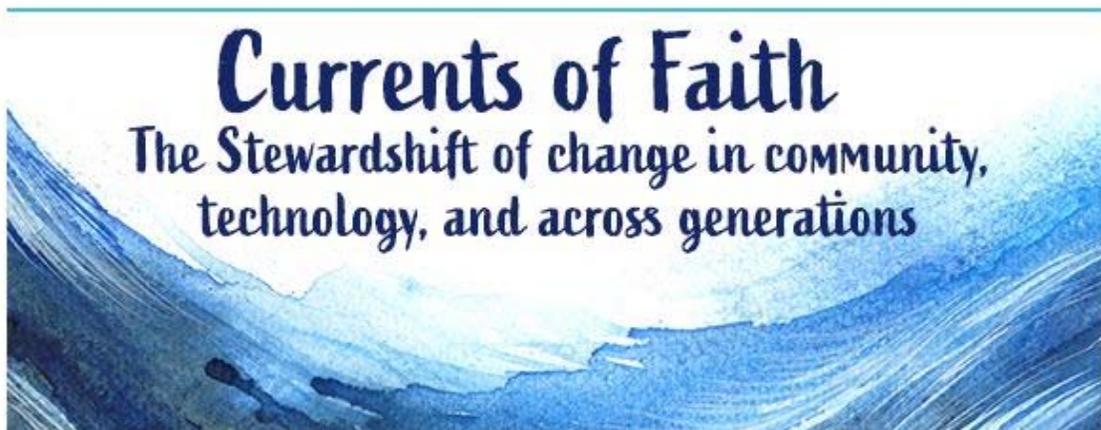
The regular meeting of the Committee on Ministry met on April 28, from 10-12:30 via Zoom. The C.O.M. is responsible for "*enhancing and strengthening pastor/congregation relations, enhancing and strengthening skills for the professional ministry, and the performances of all duties required by the PCUSA Constitution (G-3.0307)*" (Article X, Section 2a of Manual of Operations). The Committee on Ministry is chaired by Kathie Whitson, commissioned pastor of United Presbyterian Church of Biggsville.



Highlights from the April meeting include:

- Broke out into our specific focus area grounds on tending to pastoral contracts, managing pastoral transitions, and training and resourcing each other.
- Spent time collecting a list of best practices for leading virtual meetings (to be posted in the newsletter)
- Discussed how to conduct and guide churches in installations of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and elders while sheltering-in-place.
- Worshipped together where we thanked God for each other

Looking Ahead: Stewardship Kaleidoscope



Stewardship Kaleidoscope 2020 Registration is Open

Over 40 workshops, networking, and learning with stewardship experts

Registration is Live!

Early bird pricing and group discounts are available starting with just 2 attendees!

The impact you can have for your church is greatly expanded if you have a team - so this year we have group discounts to make it easier to bring more people.

Join us September 21-23 in Cincinnati for inspirational speakers and over 40 workshops.

Get more information and **Register Now!**

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/UCiqgUcXCqN_ftlk5EP8Odeg
- 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>
- Rio Presbyterian Church, Rio (and Sunbeam Presbyterian Church of Aledo), Rev. Maura McGrath-Nagle, 9:00am by [Facebook](#) live.
- 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!

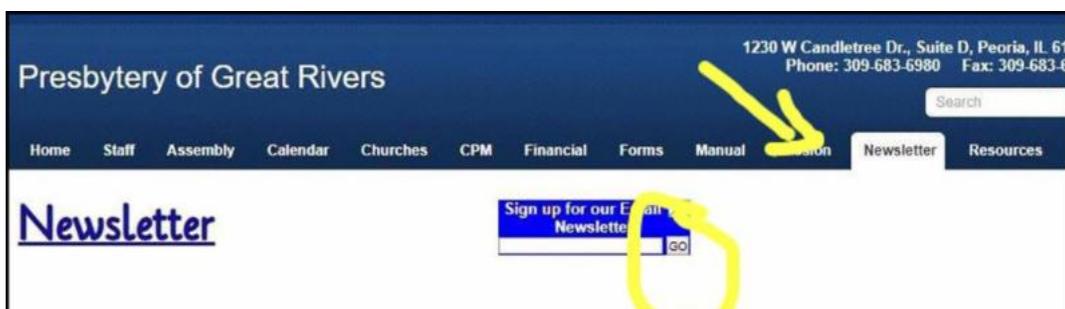
There are three primary ways we as a presbytery are able to keep in touch with new resources and information during the pandemic: our weekly newsletter which goes out Thursday or Friday, our Facebook page, and our website. Please make sure you are connected!

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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