



Image: Barb Casady, Eileen Shoup, and Barb LaBonte of Warsaw Presbyterian Church make protective face masks for the community.

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.*

May 7, 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



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. . .



Ipava - Ipava

Ipava Presbyterian Church
190 E Main St, Ipava ,IL 61441-0140
CLP Dan Colvin
Barbara Golden, Clerk of Session
Marci Woods, Treasurer
[Facebook](#)



Jacksonville - First

First Presbyterian Church
870 W College Ave, Jacksonville, IL 62650
Rev. Jonathan Warren
Janice Briggs, Admin Assistant
Rebecca Spencer, Clerk of Session
Steve Turner, Treasurer

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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



"So, You Wanna Go Back to Church?" Considerations for After Restrictions are Lifted

Here is a fun video from your Lead Presbyter about some things to consider when in conversation about reopening churches for physical worship, made by our Lead Presbyter. See list of resources in this newsletter for further considerations below.

[Click here to view Youtube video!](#)

Follow or like "[Pastor Ryan's Sixty Second Sermons](#)" on Facebook!



Here is the list of considerations shown the video:

1. In times when people may be carrying illness, who is welcome and who is not? How does that fit with your theology?
2. Have you contacted your insurance company about liability?
3. How will you maintain safe physical distancing?
4. What will personal greetings/the peace look like?
5. How will you respond if someone is demonstrably ill?
6. What might be the place for an influx of guests from other churches that remain closed?
7. How might you secure masks, hand sanitizer, or temperature checks? How does that fit with your theology of hospitality if you cannot?
8. How might you limit the spread of germ spread through congregational singing and projected voices?
9. How can you safely lead communion or baptism? If encouraging bringing your own elements, how might you safely maintain a theology of an open table if people arrive without bringing their own elements?
10. How will you enforce any of the above?

Valuable links:

<https://www.cdc.gov>

<http://www.dph.illinois.gov>

<https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/>

(Hat tip to Rev. Adam Quine for creating conversation spaces in our presbytery for lifting up these kinds of considerations)

[List of Resources for the Consideration around Reopening In-Person Worship Gatherings](#)

Here is a recommended resource list to empower ongoing conversations about reopening churches, for when the time is right to begin transitioning into the new normal ahead.

Resource document: "Returning to Church - Ministry during the COVID-19 outbreak", a comprehensive model plan by the Wisconsin Council of Churches (April 23, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Resource document: "Beginning Conversations on Reentry" PC(USA) Theology, Formation & Evangelism ministry area (May 4, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Resource document: "Returning to Public Worship: Theological and Practical Considerations" by the PC(USA) Theology, Formation & Evangelism ministry area (May 4, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Resource document: "The Least of These: Guidelines for Churches in a Pandemic" developed by two pastors from the Presbytery of Columbus. this gives a more theological/missional/Scriptural guide to the discussion: [Click Here](#)

Insurance Guidelines: "For Reopening Considerations" from GuideOne Insurance (April 27, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Article: "Are You Ready for Hybrid Online/In-Person Worship? A Presbyterian Pastor Suggests 'The Truly Fresh Start You Need'" by Richard Hong, via Presbyterian Mission Agency, (May 4, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Article: "Outdoor Sanctuaries: Churches Find Potential in their Property, Ministry Flourishing in Church Lawns and Fields" by Donna Frischknecht Jackson, from Presbyterian Mission Agency (May 4, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Video: "So, You Wanna Go Back to Church?" Considerations for Once Restrictions Lift" by Ryan Landino, two minutes and 14 seconds, (May 1, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Video: "All CDC and Health Department Recommendation in One Video," by Ryan Landino, one minute and 30 seconds (March 14, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Article: "Churches Should Not Be the First to Reopen", from Christianity Today (April 23, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Resource Document: "Questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return" by the Presbytery of Boston: [Click Here](#)

Resource Document: "Considerations Peace Presbyterian Church Must Address Before Reopening to In-Person Worship" by Pastor Becky Durham to her own church, Peace Presbyterian Church, Fayetteville, NC: [Click Here](#)

Church Consulting Blog: "Finding Our New Normal" by Susan Beamont, on the adaptive and cultural considerations to making the transition back into reopening: [Click Here](#)

Blog: "24 questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return", by Ken Braddy (April 18, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Blog: "Singing, the Church, and COVID-19: A Caution for Moving Forward in Our Current Pandemic," by Heather R. Nelson, Ph.D., on the dangers of congregational singing during a pandemic (April 29, 2020): [Click Here](#)

Blog: "Avoid this Big Mistake: Stepping Back into the Past When You Step Back into Your Building" by Carey Nieuwhof, on adaptive considerations for the future (April 30, 2020): [Click Here](#)

On the Front-lines of a Pandemic: Mobilizing the Church to Make Face Masks

Below is abridged article by Diane Ludington, Commissioned Pastor of Warsaw Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Keokuk, Iowa, shared in her newsletter, about their efforts to provide masks for the community including health professionals in need of them.



We have all heard the arguments for not wearing face coverings. "I'm not sick and it won't protect me from getting Corona, so I don't need to wear one" While, the first claim is unverifiable and the second is likely true, the conclusion is irrelevant. Covering my face, like slowing down for school zones, is not about my personal vulnerability. When I drive past a group of children near a road, my slowed speed is not to protect myself or my car from damage. I slow down to protect the children. That is

all, no other reason needed. Youngsters at play are susceptible to impulsive choices like running into the road to chase a stray ball, a floating bubble, or perhaps their own shadow. Reduced speed heightens my awareness and allows me to react more quickly should the light of someone else's world come bounding into the roadway unexpectedly. Wearing a mask is like that...

Consistent with faithfully responding to Jesus' command to love others as yourself, we are working to provide as many face masks as we can turn out. Eileen Shoup began this effort as her own way to respond in the community and as a fundraiser for the local food pantry. It has now grown to a small corps of volunteers based out of the church basement (while maintaining 6 feet of distance). **As of May 6, we have supplied over 200 masks and raised over \$1,500!** We will continue as long as there is need. If you would like to join the effort, call or email Diane Ludington (319.795.8118, jod.diane@gmail.com). We need: *cotton fabrics and elastic as well as people to cut, iron, sew and prepare work pieces*. No experience or special skills needed! We limit our work group to 6 at a time.



Covering my nose and mouth in public is akin to slowing down for a school zone; a small personal inconvenience that can prevent life-altering tragedy for someone else's family. The main difference is, I may not know if I cause such heartache by spreading COVID-19 because many carriers are asymptomatic. So, I do what I can to be reasonably assured that I am not causing harm to others - keep my germs to myself when I am out and stay home when I can.

If you would like help doing the same, call the Warsaw Presbyterian Church office (217.256.4555) and leave a message to get a mask. First priority is given to those who are working outside the home or need to go to medical appointments.

Top Ten Reasons Why Your Pastor May Need a Break (A Special Message for Clerks of Sessions and Elders)

Hello! This is a special message just for you, the wonderful clerks of sessions and elders of Great Rivers Presbytery. It's very simple: please, encourage your pastor to take a break. They are probably reading this right now thinking they don't really need one, so I (Ryan Landino) am taking this opportunity to speak directly to you because you have worked together for years now and are in a great position to help them understand the value of their grounded presence. So, in order to help you do that, here is a TOP TEN LIST OF REASONS why your pastor very likely needs a break right now. I invite you each to share this list with your pastor as a way of showing them that you see them and the work they are doing, and that for all these reasons and more they should find a way to take a break.

1. **THE EMOTIONAL TOLL OF BEING A HUMAN LEADER IN A CRISIS:** Those anxieties we are all feeling? Those symptoms of depression that overwhelm you whenever you see the news? By virtue of our shared humanity, your pastor has them too. Preexisting conditions we may have been managing quietly and out of notice are now an amplified struggle. Very often in difficult situations, leaders go into "emergency mode" where we put our humanity aside and take care of everyone else's needs before our own. Pastors want to do well, and they want to be seen doing well. Furthermore, there is research that one of the heaviest sources of anxiety for all people is comparing ourselves to others: when pastors see that cool thing other pastors are doing, it adds to the fear that they aren't doing enough when the truth is they are doing all that they can. Not to mention the sleepless nights your pastor has about your wellbeing and safety and those most vulnerable in your congregation. (And yes, your pastor loses sleep over you.)
2. **CARRYING EVERYONE ELSE'S ANXIETY:** One of the blessings of having a pastor is being able to have someone who can be in solidarity with us through life's highest highs and lowest lows. Pastors have received self-differentiation training and a battery of tests in order to ensure they are able to maintain their sense of self through carrying the emotional energy of others. At the same time, pastors usually have high levels of empathy and are very sensitive to emotional burdens of those around us. However, at this time, when so many in our congregations are ALL experiencing low lows at exactly the same time, our pastors are carrying a lot of anxiety ON TOP of their own. This can put pastors at their full emotional capacity, which can make it harder for them to be fully present with their spouses and loved ones.
3. **LEADING SUDDEN ADAPTIVE CHANGES WITH TECHNICAL CHALLENGES:** On exceptionally short notice, this pandemic has required a plunge into new demands of adaptive and technical thinking, which require two very different kinds of

headspaces. At the most simplistic, the "adaptive" are those challenges that we have never faced before that we need to create new solutions for on the fly which require listening, creativity, and coalition building. "Technical" challenges are those tasks that require specific expertise to work through, which requires training, resourcing, and the humility to refer. Your pastors have been expected to navigate a course through uncharted waters while figuring how to do that very thing along the way. This often meant doing the adaptive work of figuring out what it means to be a community during a pandemic, while juggling the technical work of how to work a camera phone. For both adaptive and technical challenges, this means a lot of new learning, steep learning curves, and being in that uncomfortable space of the unknown. Even for those who understand these mechanics, this is hard work.

4. **DISRUPTION OF SPIRITUAL & SELF-CARE PRACTICES:** Many of us have different self-care mechanisms to help us connect with the divine and recharge our spiritual batteries. For some, it's walks in the park, for others it's quality time with family. For others, it's going to a favorite coffee shop, working out at the gym, or going to the movie theater. Consider how the pandemic has disrupted so many of our beloved spiritual and self-care routines. For pastors to be able provide meaning and spiritual grounding through this pandemic, they need to be able to provide it for themselves first. This goes for the availability of Sabbath as well. Speaking of which...
5. **THE TOLL OF CONSTANT REMOTE AVAILABILITY:** When we have "regular" working hours, we have much clearer boundaries on when we focus our energies on our availability, and when we can lower our "on-call" attentiveness and give our brains the blissful rest of tuning out. Without consistent scheduling however, situated against the instant availability of a number of different technological means of communicating, this often translates into the expectation of instant access to each other far exceeding our old normal. This might look like text messages during what would other be off-hours, and notifications interrupting our screens whether we are working or resting. Some of us took advantage of our driving work commutes to get ourselves in and out of working headspaces, and now we don't have that buffer time anymore. Please don't get me wrong--the issue is not the volume (continue contacting your pastor as you need!). The issue is the overlap, when it becomes hard to tell whether we are working from home or homing from work. Because our attention spans are always present for all things, whether parenting, taking care of bills, or taking a pastoral phone call, it can make it harder for a pastor to be fully present with any one thing. That's exhausting.
6. **CANCELLED POST-EASTER VACATION.** Sustaining any of the above for longer than two months is especially hard, but when we are sheltering-in-place it can feel like dog-years in the way two months feel like six. Right in the middle of that time was a traditional time of rest I am not sure your pastor was able to take. I don't know about your pastor, but in my eight years of parish ministry I heavily relied on that Sunday after Easter to recuperate, gather my strength, and take a breath. Because of the pandemic, it is very likely your pastor never took that vacation. Speaking of which, when was the last time your pastor had a break from preaching?
7. **CANCELLED ANTICIPATED CON ED EVENTS:** It's not only vacation that lets us recharge. As someone who recharges his spiritual and emotional batteries through learning, conferences always give me the chance to get out of my space and into a different environment to reflect on the effectiveness of my ministry. These events are often designed to help pastors get out of their rhythm and give them renewed energy when they return with new ideas and fresh enthusiasm. Springtime is PRIME conference season, and nearly all of them were cancelled or made virtual. I myself lost four out-of-state teaching/speaking opportunities, three conferences, and a seminary reunion, all of which I was looking forward to feed my soul and reconnect me to community. That loss causes me to feel grief. Those losses weigh heavily on your pastor too.
8. **LACK OF READILY AVAILABLE SUPPORT FROM CO-LABORERS:** One of the graces I am hearing from churches everywhere is how critical it's been to have good people side by side with their pastor (six+ feet apart) with tech support, secular world expertise, and other ways you have helped your pastor through this. Our collaborations together, especially as a session, are a for-granted part of our constitutional life together. However, the pandemic has isolated pastors from their key support volunteers, and they are finding, out of necessity, that have had to carry a lot of ministry alone. That's a heavy burden, and pastors need to be reminded that they are supported and they do not need to go it alone.

9. **UNAVAILABILITY OF IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK:** Pastors are used to being able to effortlessly read the room and immediately see how their presence is landing. Because sending emails and preaching into screens doesn't give us the immediate feedback we are used to receiving, pastors have no way of measuring whether their message is getting through or not. It's much like throwing darts in the dark, which will lead pastors to work harder on multiple fronts, regardless of how effective it is, in order to better ensure some form of community connection is achieved. For example, I as a church member might not need a video stream, email, phone call, AND text message--but because pastors don't always know what your preferred way of connecting is, your pastor may be doing all of the above, just in case. Those levels of redundancy can triple or quadruple a workload.

10. **PASTORS HAVE NO TRAINING OR EXPERIENCE IN THIS:** There was no course in seminary that taught how to do ministry during a pandemic. There is nothing in the Book of Order, in our Committee on Ministry Handbook, or in our living experience that could have prepared us for this particular challenge unseen since the 1918 flu pandemic. This means that your pastor has been doing ministry the likes of which has not been seen for at least four generations. This means that the skills, experience, training, networking, resourcing, and best practices have all needed to be created and learned in real time.

What can YOU do? Elders and Clerks of Session: encourage your pastor to find ways to take a break, and empower them to do it. For example, consider extending a Sunday without preaching sometime this month. Pastors: since I KNOW you are listening, please feel free to share this list with your sessions. (Tell them *I* instructed you to send it to them and you are just following the advice of our Lead Presbyter.)

As an expression of appreciation, Landon Whitsitt, Executive of the Synod of Mid-America, our neighboring synod to the west, is offering to make a monthly sermon video link available to pastors who want to take a break, starting May 24th (he can be emailed at landonsoma@gmail.com). Likewise, for Great Rivers pastors and sessions, if you would like me to offer a short video link for a guest sermon, please contact Ryan Landino (rlandino@greatriverspby.org) with at least a week's notice from when you want it uploaded. For you sessions to encourage your pastors to prioritize their self-care can be a great way to say "thank you" and "I see you" for all the work your pastor is doing!

Thank you all for being such a vital part of your church's life and work right now.

In this together,

Rev. Ryan J. Landino, Lead Presbyter for Transformation
Great Rivers Presbytery

Weekly Ministry-in-Place Photo Newsletter Contest!

Congrats to this weeks winner, Diane Ludington, for your submission, and thank you to everyone else who submitted (we may use your photo later!)

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 13th to be considered for next week!**



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_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>
- 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!

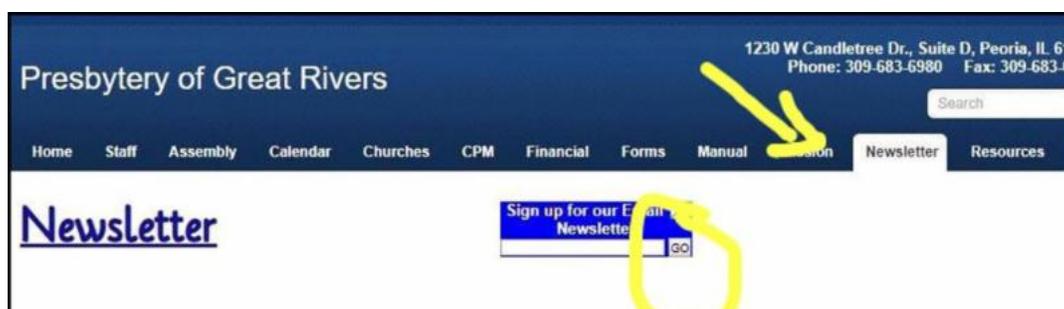
There are three primary ways we as a presbytery are able to keep in touch with new resources and information during the pandemic: our weekly newsletter which goes out Thursday or Friday, our Facebook page, and our website. Please make sure you are connected!

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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