



Image: Rev. Tim Doty (Geneseo, First) is married to Kathy Gorenson on Saturday 5/17/20, with another celebration planned later)

## 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 21, 2020

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*At this time the governor is beginning to slowly transition into opening different sectors of Illinois communal life together ([here](#) is a news article that serves as a short primer on the four phases of reopening Illinois). Please see the 5/19 Statement on COVID-19 from the Leadership Team in this newsletter for some considerations. If you or your congregation are experiencing any hardship as we endure this pandemic, please let us know how we might be able to help. Continue to check <https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/> for a list of most up-to-date for resources leading the church through this time!*

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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. . .*



LeRoy, First United  
First United Presbyterian Church  
PO Box 88, LeRoy, IL 61752  
Annie McMillan, CLP  
Rita Vollmer, Admin Assistant, Treasurer  
Naomi Chaplin, Clerk of Session  
[Website](#)  
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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**

**COM Meeting**  
Tuesday, May 19  
10 am - 2 pm  
ZOOM only

[Click here for the PGR Calendar](#)

Join Our List





Lewistown, First  
First Presbyterian Church  
101 N Main St, Lewistown, IL 61542  
Penny Frame, CLP  
Deborah Stell, Clerk of Session, Admin Assistant  
Rendy Lange, Treasurer  
[Website](#)

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## **Assembly Notice**

*In compliance with Robert's Rules of Order and our bylaws, our June 2 assembly will be conducted virtually, which means you will be able to access the meeting by internet device or telephone. Our time will be limited to core business items and discipleship building. We request that there be only one voting participant per device so that we may tally votes accurately.*



## **Presbytery of Great Rivers Assembly Notice**

**Tuesday, June 2, 2020 (Virtual Assembly via Zoom)  
Call to Order 10:00 a.m  
Site opens at 9:30 a.m**

*Optional Practice Virtual Assembly Date:  
Tuesday, May 26  
9:30 a.m.*

## PRE-REGISTRATION:

*"Fellow ministry leaders,*

*As Great Rivers Presbytery prepares to hold our first virtual assembly gathering on June 2, we are asking that you help in ensuring the process and business of our gathering is as faithful and fruitful as possible. The registration process we have utilized in the past must change as we pivot to this virtual forum for our assembly gathering. In order to ensure that we are able to recognize and validate every individual with us, as well as ensure the necessary quorum, we are asking that ALL MINISTRY LEADERS FROM ALL CHURCHES WITHIN GREAT RIVERS PRESBYTERY click the link below to register you and other participants from your church for the assembly gathering on June 2, 2020. Thank you!"*

*~Matt Wilcox and Christian Choi*

**RSVP for "Practice Assembly," May 26, 9:30am by clicking [HERE](#).**

**RSVP for "Official Presbytery Assembly," June 2, 10:00am by clicking [HERE](#).**

*Look for separate links to the live meetings posted on the Presbytery [web page](#) and with the presbytery papers. You will need to click that specific link in order to access the meeting.*

### Preliminary Meeting Highlights:

- Clerk's report - item requiring assembly notification
- Mid-pandemic spiritual reflection and discipleship time, led by Lead Presbyter Rev. Ryan Landino
- Nominations of new volunteer members to the work of the presbytery
- Approval of extending officer term limits for select churches
- Adding members to the Administrative Commission to finalize the ministry of Nauvoo-First
- Commissioning of General Assembly Commissioners and Delegates to the 224<sup>th</sup> Assembly, the first virtual PC(USA) General Assembly

*Meeting will conclude by noon.*

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### **[A Statement on COVID-19 from the Leadership Team of Great Rivers Presbytery \(issued May 19, 2020\)](#)**

"We celebrate how seriously the community of churches of Presbytery of Great Rivers has practiced safe distancing and alternate means of ministry as we continue to endure this pandemic. That, at the time of this statement, we have had no reports of infections of the coronavirus within our congregations tells us that our combined efforts to limit the spread of the disease is working, and we see your diligence to boldly refuse to be transmission vectors for the disease for the sake of our communities. As we now cross the threshold of two months of sheltering in place, reopening has become a hot topic in our national dialogue. Let us remind ourselves in good faith that our operation is different than the many services at the center of our cultural debates, for our primary trade is not in goods and services, but rather in relationships and community. As such, churches have unique practices of proximity, sharing, and communicating that makes the easy transference of disease a much different challenge than other sectors.

While the decision on how, when, and where to conduct worship remains the faithful discernment of the local session, the Leadership Team of Great Rivers Presbytery encourages everyone to:

- Abide by the CDC's, the governor's, and local health department's orders and recommendations for in-person gatherings, as well as the guidance of your insurance company.
- Exemplify leadership in containing this disease to an anxious culture struggling to endure today's challenges.
- Articulate clear and (literally) healthy boundaries for ourselves and our elderly and vulnerable populations.
- Facilitate open, loving dialogue with employed staff and pastoral leaders that prioritizes their needs with compassion and safety. (While there are many who may welcome the opportunity to return to office spaces, remember too that we have many pastors and staff who are susceptible to the disease that may not feel safe returning sooner than others).
- Center our theology of interconnection and community care, how we are ONE BODY with many parts, seeking to safeguard the health of the entire body.
- Exercise grace for each other and ourselves to adjust plans in response to changing circumstances, including changing our own minds when necessary, knowing that providing safe space for others to listen and to speak is at the heart of our theology of discernment.
- Encourage patience with and self-care for pastors and church leaders experiencing work fatigue (see 5/7/20 blog post by our Lead Presbyter on "[Top Ten Reasons Why Your Pastor Needs A Break](#)," and three minute pastoral video by our PC(USA) Stated Clerk on "[Practicing Self-Care During COVID-19](#)" posted to Spirit of GA on Facebook, 5/18/20).
- Be anchored in the Word of God and its responsible application, making space for healthy lament consistent with the Biblical tradition of the Wisdom Literature of Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations.
- Be affirmed that you have permission to continue suspending in-person gatherings; may we challenge ourselves to be blameless in our responsibility to each other.
- Continue being creative in making adaptive accommodations for the safe pursuit of God's mission in your context, centered in the Great Commandment to love God and neighbor. One does not need a church building in order to build the church!

Even as we face challenges we have never imagined, we trust the Scriptures that God is with us in exile and wilderness, in crucifixion and resurrection, in death and in life.

*"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God... We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another... Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor."*

*Romans 12:2a,5,10*

The Leadership Team of Great Rivers Presbytery:

Rev. Elissa Bailey, Stated Clerk of Great Rivers Presbytery, Second Presbyterian Church of Bloomington

Elder Julio Garcia, First Presbyterian Church of Milan

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

Elder Diane Ludington, Moderator-Elect of Great Rivers Presbytery, Commissioned Pastor of Warsaw Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Keokuk

Rev. Maura McGrath Nagle, Moderator of Great Rivers Presbytery, Rio Presbyterian Church and Sunbeam Presbyterian Church

Elder Bill Strawbridge, Treasurer of Great Rivers Presbytery, Washington Presbyterian Church

Elder Gary Terpstra, Hope Presbyterian Church of Springfield

Rev. Ann Elyse Van Winkle, First Presbyterian Church of Galesburg

Rev. Jonathan Warren, First Presbyterian Church of Jacksonville

Elder Kathie Whitson, Commissioned Pastor of United Presbyterian Church of Biggsville

Rev. Matt Wilcox, First Presbyterian Church of Normal"

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## **Round Two of 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 22, at 8:30 am Central Time**, with a second meeting for **Monday, May 25, 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](mailto:pastor@preslincoln.org) with questions.

### **Meeting Info for Both Friday and Monday Offerings:**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94342962474?pwd=cnMwUjZHRnpDc2tOMGRJYUxsNGVRQT09>

Meeting ID: 943 4296 2474

Password: 263266

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,94342962474#,,1#,263266# US (Chicago)

+13017158592,,94342962474#,,1#,263266# US (Germantown)

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 943 4296 2474

Password: 263266

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/adbZyAnK5F>

## Call for Vigilance: Zomb-bombing Incident in our Presbytery

Many of you are aware of the phenomenon of "Zoom-bombing," in which strangers come uninvited into virtual meeting spaces with the goal of disrupting the gathering. Sadly, one of our congregations has been recently victimized by an intruder of ill will who, in spite of robust preparedness protocols, was able to hack past the existing security measures in order to expose the congregation to illicit material involving child trafficking of a sexual nature. Fortunately, a designated response crew was able to eliminate that intruder from the virtual space relatively swiftly, yet a number of our people were still exposed to approximately four seconds of access. The church is currently working with the cybercrimes division of local law enforcement, and because this particular case is identical to those in other states around the country, the FBI is involved as well. We are reminded of the pervasiveness of evil in our world, the injustices around child trafficking, and also the call to remain vigilant against those seeking harm in our communities. Unfortunately, this behavior is not exclusive to Zoom, but exists also on other platforms like Webex and Google Hangouts as well. We commend the pastor and the congregation for confronting this challenge resiliently and pastorally so that safe connection among God's people and the building up of beloved community may continue. One emerging piece of shared learning for those seeking to protect their online meeting spaces is that because it appears "Zoom-bombing" activity tends to occur at the beginning of virtual meetings, it may be advisable to consider starting your meeting with the audio and video locked for all participants as you begin hosting your space, with sharing of open fellowship time later in the meeting. If you have specific questions concerning this incident that will empower you to better protect your sacred spaces, feel free to contact Ryan Landino, [rlandino@greatriverspby.org](mailto:rlandino@greatriverspby.org), and he can connect you with the pastor of that congregation."

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## A Friendly Virtual Guest Preaching Offer from our Friends from the Synod Next Door

*Please see this message from the Synod of Mid America, offering the gift of preaching links for those who need a break from their virtual preaching.*

"Hello, Preachers. We are honored to have been able to take one thing off your plate this week. We truly hope you are able to rest a little bit between now and Sunday.



We have heard from a few of you with very good suggestions and requests regarding these 4th Sunday Sermon offerings. We hope to incorporate some of them in future iterations.

Please find below links to sermon files for Sunday May 24, 2020.

Direct Video

Download: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pjNuIFZf6FIFttuu8G2c7I3lfsJ7pswf/view?usp=drivesdk>

Direct Audio Download: [https://drive.google.com/open?id=1NCIH38dksuFOauqPF8jqT7P52Qh-\\_p6W](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1NCIH38dksuFOauqPF8jqT7P52Qh-_p6W)

YouTube link: [https://youtu.be/WeWCzuhXZ\\_8](https://youtu.be/WeWCzuhXZ_8)

Transcript: [https://drive.google.com/open?id=1re\\_K193l1fiuTfn-sKoRK8KEGWyS\\_1lb](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1re_K193l1fiuTfn-sKoRK8KEGWyS_1lb)

The next 4th Sunday is June 28. We'll send information for that service on or before June 17. All relevant Worship service files will be sent to you on June 24.

I can tell you now Synod Stated Clerk Brian Ellison will be the preacher next month, so you're in for a treat. He is, in my opinion, one of the best preachers in our denomination.

Again, thank you for all you do for us in normal times. Thank you, especially, for the ways you've cared for us even amidst your own struggles these past two months. You are the embodiment of Psalm 133's "precious oil." We cannot express our gratitude enough.

Blessings to you on your day of Sabbath,  
Landon Whitsitt  
Synod Executive"

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## **Great Rivers Presbytery Condemns Anti-Semitism and Hate Images**

Many of you are aware of the recent public protests against the governor's response to the coronavirus pandemic. Our presbytery is blessed by being home to the state capital within our geographical bounds, where some of these protests took place. While it has since emerged that these efforts are largely "[astro-turfed](#)" by well coordinated and funded gun advocates, lobbyists, and other conservative activist groups from around and out of state, the participants marched in our territory and may be from our communities. Evident in these protests are hurtful displays evoking confederate battle flags and anti-Semitic parallels between the Nazi regime and our state government, messages that misappropriate the horrors of the Holocaust and belittle its trauma for the communities that carry it to this day.

On behalf of Great Rivers Presbytery, we condemn the use of words and images that minimize the horrors of human trafficking and the Holocaust and belittle its living memory. We urge the pastoral leadership of central Illinois to find ways to speak out against anti-Semitism in our midst. We honor proper and respectful Holocaust remembrance and education, and we commit to being vigilant in stemming the propagation of such messages in our community. If you are interested in joining a local anti-hate organization in your community, such as [One Human Family Quad Cities Area](#), please let me know and I can try to connect you with community leaders in your area.



source: [Twitter](#)

Click [here](#) for a local news article of local leaders condemning anti-Semitism, racism, and hatred in the protests, and [here](#) for a resource page on anti-bias and anti-hate resources by the Illinois Board of Education.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Rev. Ryan J. Landino, Lead Presbyter for Transformation, Great Rivers Presbytery, [rlandino@greatriverspby.org](mailto:rlandino@greatriverspby.org)

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## **Committee on Ministry Highlights, May 19, 2020**

The regular meeting of the Committee on Ministry met virtual by Zoom on May 19. 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).



Highlights from the May meeting include:

- Received a request from the Greenview United Presbyterian Church for assistance with their ministry, and committed to direct action in partnering with them to discern their current and future ministry and mission.
  - Welcomed Ken Green from the Board of Pensions, to share updates from the BOP that are relevant to supporting our pastors and churches through this pandemic.
  - Approved a new weekly, six month "companion" program for incoming pastors, which would pair them with a selected companion from within the presbytery to be available for on-boarding and settling into our presbytery context.
  - Explored available resources for assisting churches uniquely affected by the pandemic crisis, particularly through group therapy options for uniquely affected churches.
  - Approved a number of contracts to ensure fair and equitable pastoral arrangements between pastors and congregations.
-

## Weekly Ministry-in-Place Photo Newsletter Contest!

***Congrats to this weeks winner, Tim and Kathy!***

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](mailto: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 20th to be considered for next week!**



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## 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 let us know if there have been any changes so we can keep our list updated!*

- Alexis-Norwood Presbyterian Church, Commissioned Pastor Gary Denise Pullen, 10:30 am on [Facebook](#) live, on his personal page.
- Bloomington-Second Presbyterian Church, Rev. Trey Haddon, Rev. Elissa Bailey, 10 am, streaming "drive-in-worship service" online, [secondpres.com](http://secondpres.com).
- Bloomington-St Luke Union Church, Rev. Andy Gifford, 10:30 am on [Facebook](#) live. Buffalo Hart-Buffalo Hart Presbyterian Church, Rev. Sarah Iliff-McGill, 9:30 am, via [www.buffalohartpc.com](http://www.buffalohartpc.com)
- Chatham-Chatham Presbyterian Church, Rev. Jim Reitz, by newsletter and email, to access, email [jareitz@chathampresbyterian.com](mailto:jareitz@chathampresbyterian.com)
- Coal Valley-First Presbyterian Church, Coal Valley and Beulah, Rev. Tim Snart, worship posted on YouTube [https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCiqgUcXCqN\\_ftlk5EP8Odeg](https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCiqgUcXCqN_ftlk5EP8Odeg)
- Delavan-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Jean Sparks, found on their webpage [firstpresdelavan.org](http://firstpresdelavan.org) or directly at <http://firstpresdelavan.org/virtual-worship>.
- East Moline- Presbyterian Church is posting pre-recorded services on YouTube and can be found here [www.youtube.com/channel/UCo0q4ViGTm1-qHYv02Ubbqw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCo0q4ViGTm1-qHYv02Ubbqw)
- Elmwood-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Marla Bauler, worship led by Zoom (link can be obtained by pastor), then posted afterwards to [Facebook](#).
- Farmington-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Andy Sonneborn, 10:30 am by [Facebook](#) live.
- Galesburg-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Ann Elyse Van Winkle, 10 am by [Facebook](#) live
- Geneseo-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Tim Doty, 10:30 a.m. streaming brief worship service of Scripture, meditation and prayer to [Facebook](#) live
- Jacksonville-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Jonathan Warren, 10 am by [Facebook](#) live.
- Leroy-First United Presbyterian Church, Rev. Annie McMillan, recorded YouTube videos of their services posted later on their [Facebook](#) page.
- Lincoln-First Presbyterian Church of Lincoln, Rev. Adam Quine, 10:00 am by [Facebook](#) live (older recorded sermons also on church website)
- Monmouth-Sugar Tree Grove United Presbyterian Church, Faith United Presbyterian Church, Monmouth, and Monmouth College collaborating on joint 10:30 am Sunday worship service, posted to Youtube: <https://m.youtube.com/user/monmouthcollege>
- New Windsor-New Windsor Presbyterian Church, Rev. Mark Bedford, worship videos and links shared by [Facebook](#)
- Normal-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Matt Wilcox, 10:00 am by livestream and saved upon ending: <https://livestream.com/firstpresnormal>

- Peoria-First Federated Church, Rev. Frosty Krummel, look for streaming and video on their [Facebook](#)
- Peoria-United Presbyterian Church, Rev. Debra Avery, 10 a.m.
  - their [Facebook](#) page
  - YouTube from any smartphone, computer, or tablet: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAf9XQ9MUHNGaXdQQRSk6yQ>
- Peoria-Westminster Presbyterian - Peoria Rev. Denise Clark-Jones, 10 am, streaming online <https://westminsterpeoria.org/>
- Petersburg-Central Presbyterian Church, Commissioned Pastor Stephanie McCullough, worship posted on website <https://www.central-pres.org/worship>
- Reynolds-Hamlet Perryton is posting pre-recorded services since Easter weekend. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJY95CjdOLr4Vs1bzK0SX3g>
- Rio-Rio Presbyterian Church, Rio (and Sunbeam Presbyterian Church of Aledo), Rev. Maura McGrath-Nagle, 9:00 am by [Facebook](#) live.
- Rock Island-Gloria Dei Presbyterian Church, Rev. Drew Nagle, 10:30 am, by [Facebook](#) live, and posted afterwards.
- Rock Island-Good Shepherd, Rev. James Benson, sermons posted on website on Sundays, [www.goodshepherdpres.org](http://www.goodshepherdpres.org)
- Rock Island-South Park Presbyterian Church, Rev. Blake Severson, worship shared by YouTube, [https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCWRIYrkt6ZkaejzWVAj\\_yDQ](https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCWRIYrkt6ZkaejzWVAj_yDQ)
- Springfield-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Susan Phillips, [www.LincolnsChurch.org](http://www.LincolnsChurch.org) has links for Sunday 10:30 live worship and Wednesday 5:30 service.
- Springfield-Hope Presbyterian Church, Rev. Chuck Goodman, 9:30 am by [Facebook](#) live
- Springfield-[Korean United Presbyterian Church of Springfield](#) Rev. Jaechul Kim, streaming by YouTube live (Korean language) [Facebook](#) page.
- Springfield-Third-Presbyterian Church, worship recorded and posted later on Sunday to [Facebook](#).
- Springfield-Westminster Presbyterian Church, Rev. Blythe Kieffer, Rev. Trajan McGill, Rev. Christian Choi, 10 am worship streamed online, [www.wpcspi.org](http://www.wpcspi.org)
- Woodhull-United Church, Rev. Cheyanna Losey, recorded YouTube videos of their services posted on [Facebook](#) page.

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

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## **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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