



Image: behind the scenes of the 224th PCUSA General Assembly (image from PCUSA News Agency)

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.*

July 2, 2020

The governor has declared that we have moved into Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (read more by clicking [HERE](#).) It continues to be the recommendation of the presbytery that you be safe and wise as you fulfill your mission during this pandemic. For an official statement on guidance from the presbytery, please see the [5/19 Statement on COVID-19](#) from the Leadership Team. For the most up-to-date resources on worship during this pandemic, please see <https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/>. 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.

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New Windsor, New Windsor
New Windsor Presbyterian Church
414 Walnut St, New Windsor, IL 61465
Rev. Mark Bedford
Ola Robb, Administrative Assistant
Matt Branch, Clerk of Session
Peggy Scranton, Treasurer
[Website](#)
[Facebook](#)



Niota, Appanoose Faith
Appanoose Faith Presbyterian Church
1176 E County Road 2700, Niota, IL 62358
Marcella Gnann Johnson, Clerk of Session
Ned Woolverton, Treasurer
[Facebook](#)



from **Lament to Hope** *Lamentations 5:20-21*

The Virtual Gathering of 224th PCUSA General Assembly comes to a close

We wish to thank our commissioners Maura McGrath Nagle, Diane Ludington, Chuck Goodman, and Penny Frame for serving as our commissioners to the 224th General Assembly! They will now serve as interpreters, communicators, and ambassadors of this particular assembly (circumstances prevented our Young Adult Advisor Delegate from being able to participate this year). There will be opportunities for our commissioners to share their experience, as well as future article postings here as they are published in the coming weeks. Please do not hesitate to approach them with questions about their experience!

We also wish to congratulate Rev. Dr. Blythe Kieffer for her election to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) for the class of 2024, and also Rev. Christian Choi for his election to the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations for the class of 2024, both from the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Springfield. It is an honor to serve on the national church level!

Here are some articles to share now:

- Outlook article: "General Assembly committee asks: What are the lessons of the 2020 GA?" [CLICK HERE](#)
- Blog posting (*shared here upon Committee on Ministry request*): "Watching White Supremacy: On the 224th General Assembly, from a member of the Special Committee on Racism Truth and Reconciliation" written by Rev. Ryan Landino [CLICK HERE](#)
- Statement (*shared here upon Committee on Ministry request*): "A common statement on racism, advocacy for Black women and girls, and the 224th General Assembly (2020) — From past moderators, co-moderators, and vice moderators of the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and predecessor Church" [CLICK HERE](#)
- Presbyterian Outlook Article: "PC(USA) General Assembly affirms that Black lives matter; pledges to work against systemic racism" [CLICK HERE](#)
- PCUSA News Article on technical achievement of assembly: "Historic 224th General Assembly (2020) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in the books" [CLICK HERE](#)

Reflections on the 224th General Assembly ***from G.A. Commissioner Diane Ludington, CLP of Warsaw and Keokuk churches***

Friday, June 26th:

On Discussion on 00-29 "On the Church in This Moment in History – Responding to the Sin of Racism and a Call to Action": I am deeply grateful to the commissioners of the 224th General Assembly for taking the time and doing the hard work of specifically naming the cultural barriers that bring, perpetuate and normalize injustice. We could have/should have taken more time to address the specific concerns of the Black women and girls task force. There is more work to do. It is tedious confessing work done on behalf of the congregations of the PC(USA) and the Euro-centric white church established in the Doctrine of Discovery.



Saturday, June 27th:

[Newly Re-elected PCUSA Stated Clerk] Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson calls the church to examine ways we evaluate our work and discern congregational vitality. He challenges congregations to “move from success models to significance models.” I find this reframing particularly relevant to our context as we consider life in the heartland. We must reject the comparisons to mega-church flash and instead, strive to live into our calling to be a significant presence in each community where we serve.

Moving forward:

As we lead the churches of west-central Illinois, where whiteness is in the air we breathe, we must endeavor to wisely draw our communities (because the churches are not in a vacuum) to see the realities of our BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, People of Color] siblings’ ongoing oppression without strengthening walls of defense. At the beginning of this journey, I see three points we need to address in the white church, though this is discussion only, so there are more, this is just what is coming to mind at this moment:

- distinguishing between individual prejudice and systemic racism.
- recognizing that benefiting from whiteness is not an accusation of instituting white supremacy, but a call to change it.
- hearing pain more loudly than threat in the justified anger of the Black community.

Still Thinking,
Diane Ludington, CLP

June 2020 Committee On Ministry Highlights

The regular meeting of the Committee on Ministry met virtually by Zoom on June 30th. 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 June meeting include:

- Issuing this Statement to the Pastors and Ruling Elders of the Presbytery of Great Rivers:

“The Committee on Ministry recognizes that many pastors are continuing to work overtime, and are functioning in additional ways than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Even as churches set (and reset) timelines, it is possible even in re-gathering that some of the alternative means of worshiping you have provided will likely need to continue for the safety of those who simply cannot risk being exposed to illness. In those efforts, we share a concern for clergy fatigue and burnout, even as we enter into the often slower summer program months. We invite our community of churches to be mindful of the new normal that you are seeing created in your congregation. As the new normal becomes our present normal, we encourage sessions, pastors and elders, to resist over- and under-functioning by maintaining a faithful balance between what is meant to be the shared ministry between pastors and elders. As we enter into the fifth month of being in “emergency mode,” coupled with additional logistics of regathering conversations, compounded by the indefinite timeline of uncertainty around the impact of the pandemic, we urge all sessions to measure whether the ways you have adapted to the pandemic is spiritually and emotionally sustainable for your worship leadership. May we challenge each other to prioritize self-care, clergy renewal leave (vacation), good boundaries, and faithful living into the fullness of the offices of both elders and pastors.”

- Commending these two documents on the General Assembly to be read by members of Great Rivers Presbytery: [“Watching White Supremacy: On the 224th General Assembly, from a member](#)

[of the Special Committee on Racism Truth and Reconciliation"](#) and also "[A common statement on racism, advocacy for Black women and girls, and the 224th General Assembly \(2020\) — From past moderators, co-moderators, and vice moderators of the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\) and predecessor Church"](#)

- Receiving report from Lead Presbyter for Transformation that video monthly sermon video links are being shared from our next door Synod of Mid-America for guest preaching, and also that a flash-drive with Rev. Ryan Landino's sermon from the June 2nd presbytery assembly, and Rev. Cindy Kohlmann's remarks as Co-Moderator of the 223rd General Assembly are available upon request for guest preaching use.
- Worship and devotions led by Rev. Andy Sonneborn, from First Presbyterian Church of Farmington.
- Launching new Clergy Colleague Companion program, so new pastors to our presbytery can have a six month prayer partner and resource link to the presbytery as they get settled into their new calls.
- Approved a number of contracts, terms of call, mission studies, and requests to move forward with search processes for new pastoral leadership.

UPDATES ON CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Stewardship Kaleidoscope 2020:

Due to the ongoing impacts on health and limitations affecting travel the Stewardship Kaleidoscope planning committee has made the difficult decision to postpone this year's conference. While we are very disappointed that we will not be able to be together in person in September, we are planning to share important stewardship resources, fellowship, and support virtually. Details about our online offering will be coming soon, but in the meantime mark your calendar for three Tuesdays in the fall, September 22nd, 29th, and October 6th. We will be virtually together from 11:30 - 1:30 eastern on each of those days, and can't wait to share more soon. If you have already paid for registration please contact Robert Hay at info@stewardshipkaleidoscope.org and indicate if you would like a refund, to transfer your registration to 2021, or apply a portion to this year's virtual gathering. We pray that you are in good health and strong spirit, and look forward to being together again soon.

Lombard Mennonite Peace Center Offerings

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center's offering for *Mediation Skills Training Institute*, *Clergy Clinic for Church Leaders*, and single-day events (*Conflict Transformation Skills*, *Healthy Congregations*, and *Leadership and Anxiety in the Church*) will be offered ONLINE on your preferred electronic device in the comfort of your home or office. We will offer four sessions of *Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders* this year between August and November on the following weeks: August 3-7, August 31-September 4, October 5-9, and November 16-20, 2020. Early-birds registrants can receive a **\$200 discount**. To learn more, please consult this [MSTI brochure](#). To register online for any of our events, go to: <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/producer/720852>. With questions or concerns, please contact our office at 630-627-0507 or Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org.

Covenant Gathering 2020

Covenant Gathering will be online this year, in the form of "A Taste of Covenant Gathering". Click on the webpage for details and registration by [CLICKING HERE](#). Rev. Jimmie Hawkins from the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness will be a special keynote speaker, and Rev. Ryan Landino will leading a class on Spiritual Practices.

Looking for Alternative Online Worship? (PLEASE LET US KNOW IF ANYTHING HAS CHANGED!)

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](#).
- 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](#).
- Carlinville-Federated Church, [Carlinville Federated](#) offers video worship available at [www.federatedchurch.com](#). The service is posted late Saturday afternoon and available throughout the following week.
- Chatham-Chatham Presbyterian Church, Rev. Jim Reitz, by newsletter and email, to access, email 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
- Delavan-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Jean Sparks, found on their webpage [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](#)
- 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>

- Macomb-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Erin Marth, 10 am, Zooming online worship services (upcoming services posted weekly at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/firstpresmacomb/>).
- 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
- Rock Island-South Park Presbyterian Church, Rev. Blake Severson, worship shared by YouTube, https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCWRIYrkt6ZkaejzWVAj_yDQ
- Springfield-First Presbyterian Church, Rev. Susan Phillips, 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
- Woodhull-United Church, Rev. Cheyanna Losey, is still posting services on YouTube and will continue them for sure into August. 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!

Get 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?



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