



Image: Norwood Presbyterian Church enjoys their first drive in movie night, courtesy of Gary Pullen

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 30, 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. Please note that all presbytery committees and assemblies will be virtual for the rest of 2020. 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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[Presbytery of Great Rivers](#)



May we keep the good people of Sangamon Valley Presbyterian Church in our prayers as they recover from the mental and physical toll of experiencing a COVID-19 infection in their congregation.



May we keep in prayer the following churches on our rotating prayer list: [Click here](#) for the 2020 Church List



Peoria, United

United Presbyterian Church
2400 W Northmoor Rd, Peoria, IL 61614
Rev. Debra Avery
Christopher Roland, Validated Ministry
Patricia Deppermann, Admin Assistant
Laurie Hartshorn, Clerk of Session
Kenton Bowles, Treasurer
[Website](#)
[Facebook](#)



Peoria, Westminster

Westminster Presbyterian Church
1420 W Moss Ave, Peoria, IL 61606
Rev. Denise Clark-Jones
Mary Lee Caudle, Admin Assistant
Brian Hakes, Clerk of Session
Jeanie Olson, Treasurer
[Website](#)
[Facebook](#)

First Congregation in Great Rivers Presbytery Infected with Coronavirus

7/29/20: Two weeks ago, eight members of the Sangamon Valley Presbyterian Church confirmed positive for COVID-19, and at least two cases were spread through church activity. Fortunately, at this time, all but one of those infected will have been cleared of quarantine, and after Saturday all cases will have been contained. Each person who

contracted the disease experienced only mild cases, with not all exemplifying fever symptoms. The ages of those who were sick ranged from 38-83.

Sangamon Valley Presbyterian Church, whose pastor recently retired at the end of June, is a rural church that worships 20-24 per Sunday, approximately half of them from a single family; all but two of the confirmed coronavirus cases were spread through that one family. Cass County, while rural, is one of the worst coronavirus hotspots per capita in the State of Illinois. It is the home of two Presbyterian (USA) churches in our presbytery: Sangamon Valley and First Presbyterian Virginia.

Cindy Bobbitt, Clerk of Session at Sangamon Valley Presbyterian Church, is believed to have been the first in her community to have contracted the disease. She regularly wore a mask and socially distanced. When the Cass County Health Department asked if there were anyone within six feet of her for longer than fifteen minutes, the two non-family member instances who were reported both tested negative. While it is hard to know the exact source of the virus, COVID-19 would go on to spread through Cindy's family, and then it is believed two church members contracted it by attending the church's annual Family Fun Day on July 12th. It was an event that was difficult to justify cancelling: the event was held outdoors, where it was easy to distance. Travel arrangements had already been planned. But there was still the sharing of bug spray, food and drink distribution, and the easing of masking practices.

Even after making careful protocols to permit safe worship, after meeting weekly for about a month, members became accustomed to seeing each other, and mask-wearing became less and less common. "With our smaller church, we let our guard down," shares Cindy. She explained how the church was sanitized before every gathering, they were practicing social distancing in worship by placing bulletins ahead of time in pre-arranged seating, not passing the offering plate, had hand sanitizer at the back of the church and Clorox wipes in the restroom for people to clean surfaces, and they also had not had communion since early March. However, they could not resist singing, and after they had begun seeing each other, they began to lower their masks. "We are a very tightknit church," Cindy said. "We trust each other because we know each other." Part of that familiarity prevented some from feeling the urgency for nor the sustained need for wearing masks.

The good news is that it appears enough precautions were taken that the spread of the disease was mostly contained within a few family units, as it appears family interactions were a more significant spreader of the disease than the church space itself. We celebrate that the majority of those who shared in these spaces remain free of any symptoms, and there is a fortunate gift in that the confirmed cases in this particular instance were all mild and that it looks like, after being contained, the disease will hopefully have run its course without complications or unforeseen lingering impacts. Not all communities have been so lucky.

In accordance with guidance from the Cass County Health Department, the church building will have been locked down for roughly a month before it is deep cleaned and opened back up again for conditional re-gathering for those who are not presenting symptoms and who have been medically cleared.

When asked what they would do differently moving forward, Cindy stated that we are definitely mandating masks, and we are cutting singing from worship. She wants the larger presbytery to know that infection is very likely, and to not let your guard down. While it can be dangerous, do not be scared. We are invited to join their call to prayer to be vigilant, to follow the rules, and help keep our friends and family from getting the disease.

We share hopes this experience and the lessons learned within will be a helpful warning for the other churches of our presbytery. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Cindy Bobbitt, Clerk of Session at Sangamon Valley Presbyterian Church (cmarr56@hotmail.com), Rev. Ryan Landino, Lead Presbyter of Great Rivers Presbytery (rlandino@greatriverspby.org), or Dr. Frank Lasala, emergency room doctor treating COVID-19 patients and resource person to our presbytery on pandemic safety protocols for congregations (ftlmdfaafp@gmail.com)

Shared in partnership and hope,

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



Leadership Team Guidance on COVID-19 (REPOSTED)

On a Special Called meeting on July 21st, the Leadership Team of Great Rivers Presbytery (the team comprising all the chairs of our committees, plus the Treasurer, Lead Presbyter, and Stated Clerk) decided that, out of an abundance of caution to limit the spread of the coronavirus in our community, **all presbytery assemblies and committee meetings hosted by the presbytery will be virtual for the remainder of 2020**. The churches who have been invited to host us for presbytery assemblies will have the opportunity to host us at a later, safer date.

Second, we commend to you the letter written by Dr. Frank Lasala in last week's newsletter [CLICK HERE](#), Emergency Room physician treating Covid-19 patients and former Medical Director of two County Health Departments, as well as member of Faith United Presbyterian Church of Monmouth, with recommendations for safe gathering for churches. He has agreed to be a volunteer resource person for your congregation if you have questions about safety protocols for your community.

Third, we approved that we stand by our recommendations made in our May 19th "Statement on COVID-19 from the Leadership Team of Presbytery of Great Rivers" ([CLICK HERE](#)), with the **additional recommendation for contact tracing in your congregation**, taking detailed attendance of those in your gathering-space so in the event of a confirmed or suspected case of the coronavirus, you may notify those who shared that space at the same time as the virus.

RECALL & REPAIR

Join the PC(USA) Special Committee on Racism, Truth and Reconciliation for a series of conversations examining the church's racialized past and present and discerning a vision for the future.

Wednesday, August 5: Unfinished Business - Reparations and the PC(USA)



Dr. Mark Lomax

Pastor, First Afrikan Church, Lithonia, GA
Associate Professor of Homiletics and Worship
Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, GA
PC(USA) Task Force to Study Reparations (2001)

3pm EDT

Thursday, August 6: What Then Is the Church? Presbyterians and Race in the U.S.



Dr. William Yoo

Associate Professor of American Religious and Cultural History,
Director of MDiv Program
Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA
Editor and writer on the history of race and racism in Presbyterianism across colonial North America and the United States.

3pm EDT

Live stream will be broadcast via SCRTR's Facebook page at:
<https://www.facebook.com/PCUSASpecialCommitteeRaceTruthReconciliation>

Facebook Live Broadcast Event with the PC(USA) Special Committee on Racism, Truth and Reconciliation

Join the Special Committee on Racism, Truth and Reconciliation next as we speak with Rev. Dr. Mark Lomax of Interdenominational Theological Center and Rev. Dr. William Yoo of Columbia Theological Seminary. These conversations promise to be informative and powerful. Don't miss it!

Broadcast here on our Facebook page **August 5th and 6th at 2pm Central Time** both days.

Event page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/597200820940255/>

From image:

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Meet your Commissioners to the 224th General Assembly and New Bills and Overtures Committee!

The Commissioners of the 224th PC(USA) General Assembly have been working hard to plan how to best invite Great Rivers into the work of this recent General Assembly, and how they can be faithful to their role as commissioners until the next General Assembly. Those commissioners are Rev. Maura McGrath Nagle (chair), Diane Ludington, Rev. Chuck Goodman, and Penny Frame (our Youth Adult Advisory Delegate was unable to attend this year). They will serve in this capacity until the 225th General Assembly convenes in 2022. Ahead of the discussion they will be sharing at our next presbytery assembly, **they would like to know any questions you have about this recent general assembly**. If you have questions you would like to see them address, please contact Maura at mauramcgn@att.net.

July 2020 Committee On Ministry Highlights

The regular meeting of the Committee on Ministry met virtually by Zoom on July 28th. 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 July meeting include:

- Received word of the first COVID-19 infection within one of our congregations, Sangamon Valley Presbyterian Church in Cass County, and how they are managing (see above article in this newsletter).
- Extended grace and compassion to churches during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly as churches overcome unique and unforeseen challenges affected by the inability to gather safely.
- Discussed what it means to recommend a 2% cost of living increase to minimum terms of call for the presbytery in 2021, with concerns around raising the minimum terms during a pandemic at the same time recognizing that the cost of living has increased and we did not raise the minimum terms of call last year.
- Lifted up all of our churches in prayer, listing each congregation and their particular needs by name.
- Acted to intentionally work in partnership alongside congregations who are struggling with their future.
- Celebrated the new call of Rev. Edwin Brinklow as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Canton, who is starting this weekend!
- Launched ministry companion program for new pastors to our presbytery, so they have an assigned prayer and resource partner as they begin ministry in their new context

Updates On Continuing Education Opportunities:

Big Tent

The disruption and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to the decision not to hold the Big Tent event in the summer of 2021

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 22, 29, and October 6**. 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.

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, 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, returned to the Sanctuary for our normal Sunday morning Worship Service at 10:15am. We are continuing through at least the end of the year with our radio broadcast on Sundays from 9-9:30am. This is broadcast on Sportsradio1450 (1450 AM or 92.3 FM).
- 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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