**CORONAVIRUS UPDATE – APRIL 14, 2020**

**Pastors Check-In**

Last Tuesday, April 7, the Presbytery held a Zoom conversation for pastors. Thirty-two pastors participated and shared how things were going in their congregations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Another conversation is scheduled for this Thursday at 1:00 pm. Check in with us at that time and share your experiences, questions, etc.

**Presbytery Council**

Presbytery Council held a special meeting today by Zoom teleconference. One item discussed was ways the Presbytery can support its congregations during the ongoing period of social distancing that has caused all of our congregations to cease holding in-person worship. Council anticipates that Presbytery needs to be prepared to support its congregations financially beyond the opportunities that have been shared about government and church programs. A special committee is being created to explore making loans available to congregations from Presbytery’s Revolving Loan Fund, currently restricted to new church development projects. The special committee will draft the process for applying for loans and related matters for review and approval by Council at its May 12 meeting. Watch for future announcements about this.

**Support for Congregations**

Several congregations in CFP have applied for and received relief for Benefits Plan Dues from the Board of Pensions. The Board announced this [program](https://www.pensions.org/news-and-events/articles/board-of-pensions-offers-covid-19-relief-to-churches-and-employers?utm_source=web&utm_medium=homepage_news&utm_campaign=coronavirus) to congregations in an email earlier this month. Congregations that qualify are ones that are no larger than 300 active members with a single pastor enrolled in Pastor’s Participation that self-identify as having extreme need. Up to three months of Pastor’s Participation dues will be waived, with no change to benefits. Forty-one of Presbytery’s 62 congregations may qualify for dues relief.

Larger congregations that do not meet the relief requirements may be able to receive deferments of up to two months on payments for minister and employee coverage. Deferment decisions will be made by the Board on a case-by-case basis. There will be no change in benefits and no interest charged with a deferment. At the end of the deferment period, the outstanding balance will be paid off in monthly installments, along with the normal payment.

Check the above link for additional information on this program. The Presbytery will be notified if a waiver or deferment is given, but requests do not need to go though CFP. Contact the Board at 800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN) Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET to apply.

**PC(USA) COVID-19 Resources**

We have pointed pastors and congregations to a number of resources that have been made available on the General Assembly’s [COVID-19 web page](https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/). Resources include information on livestreaming or other options for worship during this period of church closures, stewardship issues, information on the CARES Act (including the Payroll Protection Program).

One resource that was updated last week was this one:  Pastoral Opportunities to Stay Connected With Members and Colleagues, including these resources from the PC(USA) Christian Formation office:

* + [Remote Faith Formation for the Long Haul](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/remote-faith-formation-for-the-long-haul/)
  + [Supporting Older Adults During COVID-19](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/supporting-older-adults-during-covid-19/)
  + Youth: [Sheltering at Home is a Time for Advocacy](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/sheltering-at-home-is-a-time-for-advocacy/)
  + [Keeping Youth Engaged in Mission during COVID-19](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/keeping-youth-engaged-in-mission-during-covid-19/)

**Season of Easter**

Sunday, we celebrated Easter, and now move through the seven weeks of Eastertide leading up to Pentecost Sunday on May 31. We all are wondering what our lives will look like by then. Will we have been successful in flattening the curve of this virus? Will we be planning for whatever the new normal of our lives might be?

As we continue during these times, fresh from bearing witness to the resurrection of Easter, these words of Hebrews 12:1 came to my mind: “Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.”

Persevere!

Dan Williams

Executive Presbyter / Stated Clerk