

Presbytery of Scioto Valley (PSV) Mid-Week E-News April 23, 2020

www.psvonline.org

The Presbytery OF SCIOTO VALLEY

Mission and Vision Statement

**"Inspire, Strengthen, And Challenge Congregations
For Christ's Mission"**

Presbytery News...

Presbytery Office Remains Closed...

Although the Presbytery Office is closed, the Presbytery staff persons continue to work remotely, and can be contacted through email or phone messages.

All meetings of Presbytery Commissions and committees are being managed via conference calls, online conversations, Zoom meetings, or have been cancelled or postponed.

A Time to Pray...

by *bill leety*,
Honorably Retired Pastor

From chaos, Maker
you form creation
saying, "that's good."

224th General Assembly of the PCUSA On-Line

For the first time in the history of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the 2020 PC(USA) General Assembly will be held online only. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) voted unanimously Tuesday to approve a plan for a reduced assembly gathering that will require everyone involved - commissioners, advisory delegates, corresponding members and staff - to participate in a shortened and digital assembly. Read more...



<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2020/4/21/224th-general-assembly-be-conducted-online-only>

Scioto Valley's Committee on Local Arrangements Begins Plans for the 225th General Assembly in 2022



Justice Ofosuhenne, Rebecca Tollefson, Jeannie Harsh, Jim Wilson and J. Herbert Nelson, PCUSA Stated Clerk

Hosting a General Assembly of the PC(USA) is a project of the whole Presbytery and takes years to prepare for. Scioto Valley's COLA team of Co-Moderators, Justice Ofosuhenne, Rebecca Tollefson and Jim Wilson, has been at work studying the COLA Manual and beginning the process of the extensive preparations for

the hosting of the 225th General Assembly in Columbus the

Of tribes, you summon
a people as yours,
and keep faith
with your promises
to them and for them.

Do it again, Lord, or still:
from chaos to creation,
from no people to yours,
we pray.

Resources for PSV Congregations...

Timely information,
creative ideas and
resources are available
on the new website:

www.psvresources.org.

You can also visit this
website from our
Presbytery website.
Don't miss this
opportunity to find
helpful information and
resources for all areas
of your church life and
ministries. These varied
materials and resources
are regularly updated
by presbytery leaders.

week of July 2-9, 2022. All congregations, members and pastors are invited to participate in a wide variety of ways, such as serving on one of the COLA Committees. These Committees include worship, volunteers, hospitality and welcome, media and communications, transportation and special events including mission activities. If you are interested in being considered for leadership in one of the committee areas, please email Rebecca Tollefson, tolle325@hotmail.com.

PSV Commission for Congregational Life Reimbursement Grants for Covid-19 Crisis Ministry

The Commission for Congregational Life is allocating funding for up to a \$500 reimbursement grant to any church in the Presbytery for purchased materials that assist pastors in reaching out to members through technology during the COVID-19 Crisis.

Items can be purchased anywhere between March 8 and August 31, 2020. You can send receipts to Dagmar at dagmar@psvonline.org or mail your receipts to the Presbytery Office with a description of why you purchased the items you are requesting reimbursement for. If you have any questions, feel free to email Adam Anderson, chair of PSV Congregational Life at pastor@oldstone.org.

Thanks for Continuing to Do the *Right Things*...*Jeannie Harsh, Executive Presbyter*

Dear Friends, Thanks for the many ways you are making adjustments in your lives, work and congregations. I am sure that you are, like I am, getting tired of the limits in our activities and choices. We thought this would be temporary, but we are beginning to wonder if some form of this will be our new normal. Please know that we, your presbytery colleagues, will continue to support you and walk with you as together we adapt to doing the "right" things. To help in this journey forward, we have put together some guidelines for moving into the future challenges.

The Least of These: Guidelines for Churches in a Pandemic, written by our Stated Clerk, Jeff Schooley, and a team of our Presbytery leaders, will help you, and all of us, as we live into this "new normal". Because we know God loves us and calls us to care for each other, we know we must do the "right things". We must change how we live and serve together in our families, church families and communities. As we continue to journey into the unknown future, I offer my gratitude to all of you for your commitment to doing the safe and "right" things.

The Least of These: Guidelines for Churches in a Pandemic

Preamble

This guidance is meant to help provide some theological and ethical clarity in decision making for churches. While there was significant unity in decisions to limit the spread of COVID-19 and "flatten the curve," the process of reopening will be far more fraught. These guidelines are given as best practices for each Session to consider.

Guideline #1: Cultural Goals and Christian Goals Must Be Considered Wisely

Scripture: "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-what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2)

Recommendations: Since there will be an inevitable diversity in approaches to reopening, it is unreasonable to presume a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Many sectors are driven - rightly so - by economic ends. The church is driven - faithfully so - by different ends. Therefore, we recommend:

- Avoiding a rush back to large group, in-person activities;
- At the bare minimum, wait an additional three Sundays from the time that businesses re-open until your church considers re-opening. This additional time will allow you to see if there is a spike or increase in COVID cases as a result of increased social activity;
- Additionally, keep in mind that it will likely be members of your church who are participating in this increased social activity (e.g. eating out, shopping more freely, etc.) and they will, therefore, be potentially more at risk for contracting and spreading the virus.

Guideline #2: Make Plans with your *Most Vulnerable* Congregants and Community Members in Mind

Scripture: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

Recommendations: The greatest contrast between the church and the rest of society is the church's explicit goal of seeking and serving "the least of these." The church defines itself in part by its emphasis as the beloved community, which at times stands apart from a largely individualist Western culture. We will hear guidance - and have already begun to hear it - that sounds something like, "If someone doesn't feel safe going out, they should choose not to." The result of such guidance is that the world will belong to the young and healthy, while the older and immunocompromised will be excluded. This clearly goes against our deepest held values as the church. As a result, decisions we make must be predicated with "the least of these" in mind, first and foremost. Session will need to think through the nuances of how they are able to thoughtfully care for their whole community, using the filter of "the least of these" as a primary guide. These issues may include, but aren't limited to:

- Avoiding groups of more than 50, even if this means having to offer additional worship services and/or find creative ways to spread throughout the entirety of the church building (e.g. simulcasting worship from the sanctuary into a fellowship hall) so that 6-foot social distancing can be enforced at all times.
- Emphasizing the safety of all members of the congregation, including using facemasks, having ample hand sanitizers and hand washing options, and considering taking the temperature of congregants and sending home anyone with even a low-grade fever (99.5 degrees or above).
- Communion protocols, which can range from individual options, or online, at home communion;
- The flow of individuals in and out of the worship space, including entrance and exit points, and eliminating bottlenecks when possible;
- Seriously considering what church spaces can be utilized while still socially distancing, including discouraging communal gathering outside of worship, including food-and-drink centered church activities;
- Disinfecting protocols that ensure all church spaces are appropriately cleaned and sanitized.
- Asserting and reasserting your church's commitment to the most vulnerable through every form of messaging - newsletters, emails, sermons, etc.

Guideline #3: Don't Forget About Evangelism and Community Outreach

Scripture: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)

Recommendations: It is easy to think about the congregation you have, and forget about the people God might be calling to your church. Times of existential crisis are often, also, times of spiritual renewal. Do not forget about the community that surrounds your church/congregation.

- Maintain enough space in any activity for guests or visitors to participate without skewing numbers of social distancing into an unhealthy place.
- Prepare to articulate, gently and kindly, why you are utilizing certain practices (e.g. taking temperatures, wearing facemasks); this will be the first way you introduce guests to the character of our God, who looks out for and even identifies with "the least of these."
- Seek contact information for any visitors, especially email addresses, so they can be included in your congregation's online programs (see: Guideline #5 below); encourage them to seek out whatever social media your church is using in the same way they sought out the physical church.
- Follow up with visitors through electronic/online means.

Guideline #4: Start Small and Build Bigger

Scripture: "You have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." (Matthew 25:21)

Recommendations: It's easy to become myopically focused on just returning to large group, in-person worship. However, we recommend building to this event rather than starting with it. The following recommendations should be undertaken sequentially, allowing for a few weeks between each increase in activity. In each recommendation there is an assumption that good hygiene and social distancing is still taking place.

- Resume in-person Session/committee meetings.
- Resume in-person youth group/small groups/Bible study meetings.
- Finally, hold worship services, but be prepared to enact the recommendations in Guidelines #2 when you do so.

Guideline #5: Extend, and Even Enhance, Your Current Digital Practices Even After You Return to In-Person Activities

Scripture: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19)

Recommendations: The suddenness of the spread of COVID-19 resulted in most churches rapidly developing their best online practices. It was a couple weeks of flurried and frenzied activity as new skills were cultivated. At the time, we might have assumed these practices were mere stop gap measures, but if the above guidance is followed, it is clear that they will now be part of the fabric of congregational life. So...

- Continue to stream/record worship services so congregants who want or must stay home are able to remain engaged and growing in their discipleship.
- Start/Continue to offer online Bible study/prayer groups/etc.
- Keep online giving portals open and active; additionally, encourage people to utilize them, if they are unable to attend in-person activities.
- Create original, online-only content/forms of engagement so that your congregation knows that real relationships - and not just recordings of actual relationships - happen in these places too.

Guideline #6: Follow legal guidelines

Scripture: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God." (Romans 13:1)

Recommendations: For guidance regarding staffing issues and other legal considerations please see our supplemental document - "Legal Guidance for Churches in a Pandemic," which will be forthcoming.

Postlude

You have been called to be here, at this time, for this purpose. Resist fear. Have faith that your church will rise to new challenges, grow new capacities to do this, and will experience new faith and life in Christ as a result. And know that you are not alone, but are walking together in this complex journey with every one of the 92 churches in this Presbytery, pastors, Sessions, and all of the leaders of the Presbytery. Most of all, God is walking with you, beside you, behind you, around you, and guiding your steps.

There is also abundant information available from the PC(USA) that can effectively guide us as we deal with the Pandemic...<https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/>.

Please feel free to contact any of our presbytery leaders with your questions and concerns. The Presbytery Commission leaders are:
Commission for Congregational Life; The Reverend Adam Anderson, Chairperson, email: pastor@oldstone.org;
Commission for Church Professionals, Reverend Annie Melick, Chairperson, email: Annie@Melick.net;
Commission for Nurture and Outreach, Reverend Mary Gause, Chairperson, email: mgause@overbrookchurch.org;
Commission for Presbytery Operations, Jim Hines, Chairperson, email: jhines1116@gmail.com;
Coordinating Team, Elder Carla Mavis, Chairperson, email; carla.mavis@gmail.com.

In addition, please feel free to contact the Reverend Dr. Jeannie Charles Harsh, Executive Presbyter by email: Jeannie@psvonline.org, or cell: 614-562-1775.

PASTORS OF PSV WEEKLY CHAT MEETING ON ZOOM

Reverend Ann Melick, Presbytery Commission for Church Professionals

Join our online chats on Thursdays to give and receive encouragement and practical advice during this unusual time of ministry. Beginning on April 16, we will meet at 1 pm each Thursday.

<https://zoom.us/j/588789104?pwd=cDBEUm8yYnNIS0RUK3dwZG5KVFMvZz09>

Meeting ID: 588 789 104, Password: 463317, One tap mobile+13126266799,,588789104#

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) Grants Assistance...

[Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#) (PDA) has recently granted 208 requests for assistance in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic for a total of \$1,119,688 in grants. Read more:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/presbyterian-disaster-assistance-approves-more-than-1-1-million-in-covid-19-grants>

UPDATE FROM THE LUDWIG FAMILY, PCUSA Mission Co-Workers in Niger...

Our big news is that we decided to take the last repatriation flight out of Niger. After all this travel we're safely in Western PA at a B&B for our two-week quarantine. We ended up leaving Niger in a hurry because the PCUSA has called all mission co-workers back to the US, and we wanted to make sure we could make it to the US for Isaac's hip dysplasia surgery in June. It was a tough decision and doesn't feel very nice because of all the people we've left behind, even now as we hear the cases there are growing everyday. But we're trusting God to guide us and be with the people of Niger, working out the grace and glory of Jesus beyond what we can imagine. Amid everyone's uncertainty and disruption, we thank you for your support and prayers. It is so much easier to deal with things knowing we are so loved and cared for!



The Ludwig Family

Pray with the Ludwig Family...

- + Praise God for safe travel, healthy family, and such a supportive church!
- + Pray for the CHE evangelists to be able to reach out to their communities with hand-

washing teaching and encouragement in this Corona Virus time!

- + For the doctors and nurses in Niger who have to deal with being under-equipped.
- + For wisdom for the EERN leaders in how to lead the church in this time. Most of the national leaders were recently re-elected, with the addition of a new General Secretary, Pastor Omar Idi.
- + For our re-entry adjustments into the US, including finding a reliable minivan.
- + For Isaac's surgery to be able to happen on time in mid-June, and for a way to be found to continue Zach's citizenship process through channels here in the States.

A Call From the Presbytery Nominating Committee...

Every year, the PSV Nominating Committee looks across the presbytery to find volunteers to serve on the commissions of the presbytery. These dedicated volunteers bring their particular gifts to Nurture and Outreach (CNO), Operations (CPO), Congregational Life (CCL) and Church Professionals (CCP). While throughout the year other special committees, task teams or commissions may gather other volunteers, the members of these four commissions make up the basic structure for collaboration with the Presbytery Coordinating Team and Presbytery Staff to comprise the leadership for our presbytery. It is the Nominating Committee who performs the tremendous task of seeking out individuals both skilled and generous enough to render their gifts and time to serve all of us. The time is now and the Nominating Committee has already begun its work, and is asking for your help. Have you noticed someone in your congregation who could and would offer their contributions to the leadership team? If so, please email the Nominating Committee chairperson, Don Hilkerbaumer, dhilkerbaumer@icloud.com, so that their names can be considered. These volunteers serve from every part of the presbytery and are ruling elders or ministers. Your nominations are another way that you can assist your presbytery in its work to assist and support all of our congregations and pastors.

Stated Meetings of the Presbytery of Scioto Valley (PSV) in 2020

May 19, 2020 Presbytery Meeting Cancelled!

September 15, 2020, 3:30 p.m. -7:30 p.m. - Columbus, Overbrook Presbyterian Church
November 17, 2020, 3:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. - Jackson, First Presbyterian Church

The 225th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

To be held in Columbus, Ohio, July 2-9, 2022

The Presbytery of Scioto Valley has the honor of hosting the 225th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), July 2-9, 2022. Watch for more information!!!

For the latest news and information from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley and its churches, visit www.psvonline.org. Telephone: 614-847-0565 or 800-244-7207; Fax: 614-847-4359
