

Blessings to all!

We are all in uncharted water and many of us feel like we are sinking instead of swimming. Believe me, you are not alone! I participated in a zoom conference with about 20 other clerks and pastors from the Lehigh Presbytery and no one really knows what to do.

As you know, Governor Wolf has closed all non-essential businesses at this point and we have all been told to stay in our houses unless we have to go out. Presbytery has strongly suggested that all churches discontinue in-person worship. Session has voted to heed this warning and we will not be meeting. Realize, though, that our church is not closing...we just will not be there physically.

Session feels that we should hold our church services electronically. This week Rev. Tom Bartha will record an inspirational message and we will distribute it on Sunday via email and will post it on Facebook and on the church's webpage. We are also going to try to download the audio onto our radio station. This will be sometime later in the day. Our first week I am sure will be a little rocky. You can help us by letting us know the results. How well did it transmit? Did you see all right? Could you hear everything? This is a learning curve for all of us! We may do it differently with different pulpit supply pastors. We will let you know each week.

There are also many live worship services being offered throughout the Presbytery. I have listed them below.

First Bethlehem (worship at 10:30am): <https://www.facebook.com/FirstPresBethlehem>

The Barn (worship at 10:10am): <https://www.facebook.com/theBarnLehighValley/>

First Allentown (worship at 10:00am): For those WITH a Facebook Account:

<https://www.facebook.com/firstpresbyterianchurchofallentown/> For those WITHOUT a Facebook Account: <https://www.facebook.com/firstpresbyterianchurchofallentown/posts/10158018050529561>

East Stroudsburg (worship at 10:00am): <https://www.facebook.com/espresbyterian>

First Hokendauqua (worship at 10:00am): <https://www.facebook.com/HokeyPres> Pennside, Reading (worship at 10:00am): <https://www.facebook.com/>

Pennside, Reading (worship at 10:00am): <https://www.facebook.com/PennsidePresbyterianChurch/>

With many businesses being forced to closed, some of you may find yourselves in rough financial situations. There are ways in which we might be of help. Please contact someone you feel comfortable talking with. We may be able to help, but won't know unless you ask.

Thanks to your generosity, we have a little surplus in our bank account, but giving will be slow since we will not be “in church”. Unfortunately, we still have bills to pay and would appreciate it if you could consider thinking of a different way to support our ministry. Online giving through your bank is one way, as is just sending mail through the post office. We plan on offering you the option to pay online via the church website. We will let you know when that is finalized. You can also wait until we meet in person again. Realize, though, that if you cannot fulfill your whole pledge, or you do not give as much as you normally would because of financial circumstances, we understand. We are all in this together and again, if you need help, please let us know.

Finally, here are some ways we can help each other or our neighbors:

- Grocery stores have online options where you order the groceries and they bag them for pick up (and delivery, if you want...a few more \$\$ involved with delivery). You can pick up groceries for someone, or help them do the ordering if they want to pick them up, or do both.
- Write some real letters...email is wonderful, but a real letter is much like a physical touch. We all have more time with everything shut down.
- Or call someone you know cannot get out, even to go to the grocery store. Hearing from a concerned friend can really lift their spirits.
- See the imposed time at home as a gift with family. Appreciate what we have. Look for ways to bring the holy into your routine.
- Learn the new technology and experiment with gathering in a different way.
- Pray for each other. Prayer can change the world!
- Live as if you have the virus and are preventing others from getting it.
- Know this is as significant as the sacrifices we have made in war and other disasters. We can pull together as Americans and take care of each other. Insist that our elected leaders do the same. BE the people of God and bless all those around you.

When this global pandemic is finally under control and we can meet in person, Session has decided that the first week back we will celebrate Easter. It will be like the resurrection of our community!

Finally, please know that our church and our congregation are in my prayers. We are strong and faithful and we will all weather this unique storm. We plan on providing a weekly update of church related news. We will keep in touch with everyone and together we will all pull through!

In God's name,

Barb Dickinson