

North Presbyterian Church
921 College Avenue
Elmira, NY 14901-2048

NORTH STAR

July 2020

Making Disciples
Making a Difference



www.northpres.church
Phone: 607-734-2977
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Worship: Sunday at 9:30 am

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Meet the Staff

Rev. Jim Hicks	Temporary Supply Pastor
Evan Hansen	Incoming Pastor
Paul Holland	Music Director music@northpres.church
Barbara Mosher	Church Organist organist@northpres.church
Deb Stamp	Director of Children & Youth Ministries youth@northpres.church
Kim Townson	Office Administrator office@northpres.church

NOTICE: All groups, meetings & committees at NPC are suspended until further notice. Stay tuned to our Fb page for updates & see our website for helpful resources.

July, 2020

A Letter from Pastor Hicks



Phoebe Cary, reflecting on the variety she observed in her garden, wrote:

*I know not which I love the most, nor which the comeliest shows,
The dark and brooding violet or the noble-hearted rose:
The pansy with a cheek of red, or the faint, fair heliotrope, who hangs,
Like a bashful maid her head.*

Variety, difference, uniqueness, precious individuality – that’s what I’ve been thinking about recently. I look at the flowers I see on my nine-acre “farm-et” in Groton, N.Y. and, with the poet, can’t possibly determine which flower I like the most. There are the four orange poppies welcoming the sun out in the open field. Majestic tradescantia, sometimes known by the unflattering name “spiderwort,” are hiding near the tall Colorado Spruce at the side of the yard. At the center of a small garden is just one perovskia, aka “Russian sage.” With gray-green foliage and violet-blue panicles, it stands stately and tall, adding a sense of nobility to the flowering plants around it. And of course, scattered throughout my little farm are geraniums, with telltale scent, providing dependable splashes of color throughout my delightful wonderland.

What a precious variety of flowers I encounter daily – so much like the wonderful “garden” I have experienced at North Presbyterian Church. Among our family of faith are people who are different, varying in talent, appearance, interests, sensitivity and needs. We include wealthy and poor, assertive and reserved, those in professions and those in non-technical fields. We have homemakers and home renovators; we have those retired and those inspired. We have musicians, artists, poets, and philosophers. In other words, we are an all-embracing church, grounded in the soil of God’s Word and flourishing under the grace of His fair and beautiful Son. We are drawn together by God’s calling and bound one to another in love. No single individual is more important or more precious than another, for it is by being together, in our contrasts and differences, that makes our garden so impressive.

My thanks to you, the people of North, for allowing me to live and serve among you for a time. And, Lord, thank you for this special place called North Presbyterian Church.

-- Jim Hicks, Temporary Supply Pastor (with TLC)



We're
Getting
a New
Pastor

On Sunday, June 28th, the congregation of North Presbyterian Church unanimously voted to affirm the recommendation of the Pastor Nominating Committee and the Session to call Pastoral Candidate, Evan David Hansen to serve as our full-time pastor. Evan, his wife Kate, and their children, Eliana and David will be moving into the Manse sometime during the last week of July. August 3rd will be Evan's first day in the office. As a recent graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, Evan has not yet been ordained. The Presbytery of Geneva will convene a special meeting to "examine" Evan and welcome him to the Presbytery. A Service of Ordination and Installation will be held at NPC on Saturday, August 8, 2020 (more details to follow) and Evan will begin preaching on Sunday, August 9th. We are overjoyed to welcome Evan and his family into the NPC family!

The Hansens, Evan, Kathryn, Eliana, David, and their cat, Pumpkin Bonhoeffer, currently live in the Princeton, New Jersey area where Evan just finished his Masters of Divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary in May 2020. This fall Eliana will be a junior in high school and David will enter into eighth grade.

Kate, an attorney, currently works for the State of New Jersey in its Department of Justice. Prior to moving to Princeton, the Hansens had called Pendleton, Oregon, a small city in Eastern Oregon, home for almost 14 years. Evan and Kate met in law school at Willamette University College of Law in Salem, Oregon. After Evan graduated and passed the bar, he moved to Pendleton to practice family law in a small firm. After Kate graduated from law school, she joined Evan in Pendleton. While in Pendleton, Kate primarily worked for the County of Umatilla as a Deputy District Attorney prosecuting criminal matters. Evan practiced primarily family law with the same firm that initially hired him and eventually become managing partner. In 2017, the Hansens left Pendleton and moved across the country to Princeton for Evan to pursue a call to ministry.

Although their children are proud to call themselves "native Oregonians," neither Evan nor Kate called Oregon home prior to law school. Before attending and graduating from American University in Washington, D.C., Kate grew up in eastern Nebraska in the city of Fremont. Kate has two brothers, one of whom lives with his family in Nebraska; and, the other lives with his family in Massachusetts. Kate's parents both live in Nebraska as well. Evan moved with his family to Montana on his fifth birthday from California and before that Evan lived in the seminary housing of Gordon-Conwell Seminary just north of Boston. Evan spent his senior year of high school as a foreign exchange student in northeastern Germany. Upon returning from Germany, Evan attended and graduated from Carroll College in Helena, Montana. Evan's parents and one of his sisters live in Cincinnati, Ohio; and, his other sister lives with her family in Singapore.

The Hansen family enjoys watching their cat's antics and spending time together as tested and proven by the COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions. Evan enjoys snowboarding and fishing with David and practicing yoga with Eliana. He and Kate enjoy taking time to go out for coffee together and walking. Eliana loves creating art and trying new foods.



We Are Family

We are saddened to report that Ann Gawenus, wife of Dick Gawenus, passed away in June. We send Dick and his entire family

Prayers of joy and thanksgiving for the kindness of two strangers who drove up to the food pantry and donated money to feed our community. They refused to give their names but their generosity is certainly known to God. Thank you!

July 5: Michaela Johnson
 July 12: Cindy & Kurt Kalweit
 July 19: Christian and Erik Kalweit
 July 26: Becky & Jim Kowulich

Jesus tells us to pray without ceasing for the good of God's people.

Send a Card Today!

July 5: Cynthia Klungle
 808 W. Grey Street
 Elmira, NY 14905

July 12: Audrey Lutz
 219 Crete Avenue
 Elmira, NY 14901

July 19: Eleanor Riley
 232 Stuart Street
 Horseheads, NY 14845

July 26: Adele Roberts
 1722 W. Church Street
 Elmira, NY 14905



CHILDREN & YOUTH

KIDS CORNER

Children and Youth Ministry July 2020

UNSEEN BUT *active*

This experiment illustrates that although God is invisible, we can see his work all around us.

What you need:

- Drinking glass
- Water
- Index card



What you do:

1. Practicing over a sink, fill the glass halfway with water. Then press the index card snugly atop the glass with one hand.
2. With the other hand, hold the base of the glass and carefully flip it over.
3. Remove your hand from the card. It should stay on the glass, without spilling the water! The invisible air in the glass creates a suction with the card, preventing the water from spilling out. Research air pressure to learn more.
4. After perfecting the trick, amaze others with it. Then talk about how God, like the air in the glass, is unseen but active.

It's hard to believe it's July already. This certainly has been a crazy mixed up year so far. It will be good to get back to a sense of normalcy again. It will be wonderful to worship together in the Lord's house once more.

I would like to take a moment and extend my deepest condolences to the Gawenus family. I have known Dick and Ann for a very long time and they have always been great supporters of the youth ministry program here at NPC. From Sunday school to VBS to the Harvest dinner they have helped out in some fashion. Anne volunteered in the pantry which was dear to her heart. She has held many roles in this church over the years and for myself and everyone at North Pres. it is a great loss of a wonderful friend and a faithful church member. The Lord has gained a wonderful person in his heavenly home, she is now an angel of God.

One thing that has been driven home during this time of quarantine is the importance of family and friends. Working together, loving one another and helping each other through good times and bad. My faith has been tested a time or two, wavered but never lost. I at some points felt my faith was all I had to hold on to but through it all it helped me become stronger, more willing to come out of my comfort zone and try new things. It also helps to know we are all in this together which gives us added strength and perseverance. God is good, he walks beside us and will guide us through this time of uncertainty.

Blessings in Christ,
Deb Stamp
Director of Children and
Youth Ministry





DID YOU KNOW?



As we start to create this “new norm” many aspects of life are in various stages of transition; the way we worship together is one of them. Did you know that, if all goes well and there are no illnesses that have occurred since our sanctuary worship on June 28, we will be worshipping both in the parking lot and in the sanctuary during the month of July? It’s true! To date, the plan is to be in the parking lot for the 5th and 12th and to return to the sanctuary on July 19th. That being said, did you know that if you are not comfortable leaving home for parking lot worship, or if you are not comfortable being indoors for sanctuary worship, you can still participate in worship service via Zoom conference call? That’s true too! Each week, indefinitely, we will continue to provide an email to the congregation that includes a Zoom link for anyone that wishes, for any reason, to stay at home but still wishes to participate in worship with NPC.



This being the case we wanted to provide everyone with a handy guide to safe social distancing practices for Sunday worship services on the NPC premises. Please review the information below and if you have any questions please feel free to reach out to the church office or any member of Session. Remember, we are all in this together!

Parking Lot Worship:

- **Cars will park at least six feet apart.**
Please use only the North Entrance (towards Roe Ave.) We will have someone guiding your parking.
- **All congregants will remain in their cars for the entirety of the service.**
- **Windows will remain no more than half open and doors will remain closed.**
Please tune your FM radio to the frequency we will post on the pillars.
- **Parishioners will not sit in the beds of pickup trucks.**
- **A box or basket will be provided for parishioners to deposit their tithes and offerings without engaging in social contact or leaving their vehicle.**

Someone will have a basket it available to you as you exit. Please have your mask on if you roll down your window.

- **At the conclusion of the services, parishioners will exit as they came.**

You will be guided when to pull out. To move efficiently, we will try to have people going North (towards Roe) use that driveway. People going South (towards town) use the other driveway.

Due to car spacing requirements, we will need to limit the number of cars in the parking lot. Please understand if you are turned away.

Sanctuary Worship:

- **Masks are required per Executive Order for all people entering and within the building during worship service.**
- Congregants will abstain from gathering socially in the narthex or sanctuary. Hand sanitizer and masks are available. Trash receptacles are at all exits.
- Entering through the front door, congregants will remain 6 feet apart as they wait in line to register at the Welcome Center for purposes of possible contact tracing later, if needed.
- All congregants will then move to the podium to their left and wait to be seated. Congregants will be seated with social distancing between family groups.
- There will be no sharing of the peace to minimize physical contact.
- There will be no singing. A mental reflective contemplation of the words is encouraged.
- Recognition of worshipper pads and hymnals have been removed from pews to minimize contact transmission. Congregants are welcome to bring their blue hymnal, handed out at parking lot service, and return it to their car after service if they wish to do so.
- There will be no worship bulletin. The service will appear on the large screen at the front of the church.
- Congregants are welcome to leave service and continue participating in their car at any time if they feel the need to do so.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE!

Staff and committee chairs have church email addresses!

If one of these addresses belongs to your position and you are in need of assistance setting it up, please contact the church office.

PLEASE NOTE THAT EFFECTIVE 9.1.19 THE OLD CHURCH OFFICE EMAIL ADDRESS HAS BEEN DISABLED.



July Food Pantry

Shopping List:

- At this time no food or item donations are being accepted. Monetary donation checks can be sent to the church, made out to NPC, with "Food Pantry" written in the memo line. Thank you for your generosity!



Committee/Coordinator	Email Address
Audit	audit@northpres.church
Buildings & Grounds	campus@northpres.church
Building Use	building_use@northpres.church
Clerk of Session	session@northpres.church
Deacons	deacons@northpres.church
Education	education@northpres.church
Fellowship	fellowship@northpres.church
Finance	finance@northpres.church
Mission & Outreach	mission_outreach@northpres.church
Nominating	nominating@northpres.church
Staff Relations	staff_relations@northpres.church
Tech & Communications	tech_com@northpres.church
Treasurer	Financial_sec@northpres.church
Worship & Music	worship@northpres.church

Staff	Email Address
Church Administrator	office@northpres.church
Director of Youth Ministries	youth@northpres.church
Music Director	music@northpres.church
Organist	organist@northpres.church
Pastor	pastor@northpres.church



Available at www.northpres.church



Multiple informative banners are always scrolling on the home page of our website with the latest information needed to stay connected to NPC.

Check it out!

Happenings...

JULY SERMONS with Pastor Hicks

July 5:
(5th Sunday after Pentecost)
"My Beloved Son"

July 12:
(6th Sunday after Pentecost)
"The high Priest"

July 19:
(7th Sunday after Pentecost)
"Gentle Jesus"

July 26:
(8th Sunday after Pentecost)
TBD



ATTENTION: If you attended worship service in the sanctuary on Sunday, June 28, it is important that you let the church office know if become sick or start experiencing any symptoms. We have information that may assist contact tracing if it is needed. Remember, we are all in this together!

REMINDER:

Parking Lot Worship Service: We are back in the parking lot (plus Zoom) July 5 & 12. We are doing low power broadcasting on 1700 AM, so be sure to tune your car radio! There will be guided parking as before, and we will continue to maintain social distancing practices for the safety of all. Our goal, should all go well, is to be back in the sanctuary around July 19.

Stay tuned on Fb and the website for updates

Meyer Scholarship Fund



PLEASE TAKE NOTE: DEADLINE HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO JULY 31.

The Meyer Scholarship Fund, administered by North Presbyterian Church, was established to help needy and worthy students further their education. The scholarship may be used at any nationally-accredited post-high school or post-graduate institution. The Scholarship Committee believes that the Meyer Fund allows North Church an opportunity to be unique in the world of academic scholarships. While the typical academic scholarship focuses primarily on scholastic achievement measured by grades, the Meyer Scholarship Fund is designed with the understanding that applicants have spiritual experiences as well. In short, the Meyer Scholarship will recognize the applicant's Christian experience, their journey of faith. Look for the application on our website under the Sunday School and Youth tab.



Camp Reimagined

July 13 -August 7

The program is a combination of online “virtual” programs and a “camp in a box” program that features hands-on activities for campers and their families. Most activities are pre-recorded and can be watched at any point during the summer and beyond. Self-guided offline activities (some activities will also be geared toward the whole family) will be available in the “camp in a box,” as well as for download too. Every camper will also receive a camp t-shirt included in their box.

**To learn more and register visit
www.campwhitman/camp-reimagined**

Suggested Donation of \$100



In the Spotlight



A huge shout out THANK YOU
to Willie Vincent of Vincent Sign Crafters in Elmira Heights
for the speedy fast, and super generous FREE donation
of the 6 inch yellow floor stickers we needed to open safely
for sanctuary worship June 28th!
If anyone is looking to make signs, stickers or post notices
in your building for covid protocol, or for any reason really,
Willie is reliable, professional and easy to work with.

THANK YOU VINCENT SIGN CRAFTERS!



In the Spotlight



The Pantry Patch is having a great start to the growing season!



Cucumber plants are climbing up a new trellis built just for them from repurposed parts of an indoor plant stand. We have been harvesting and distributing green onions for almost a month now. The bell pepper and yellow squash plants are starting to grow vegetables. Our garlic bulb harvest is just around the corner after cutting and distributing more than 12 dozen garlic scapes cut from the tops of the plants.



We have flowers on most of the tomato plants, which we are growing in the greenhouse so we don't have to share them with the squirrels. Two beds of string beans are flowering. We will be planting more beds of string beans after the sugar Ann snap pea plants and garlic bulbs have been taken out.



A park bench has been refurbished with new, sturdy wooden slats attached to a cast iron frame. You are invited to sit in the shade under the pine tree and take a few moments to relax.



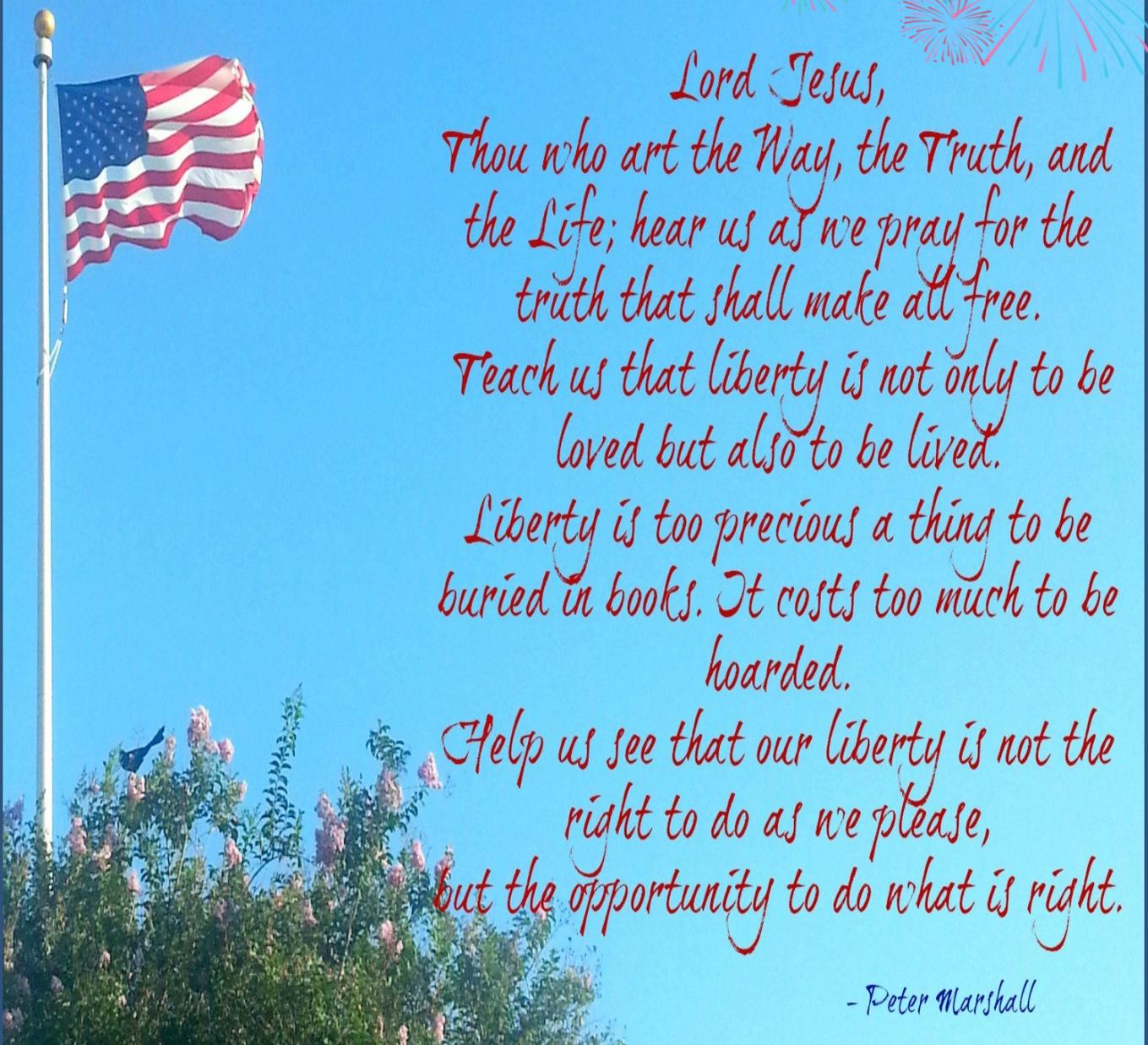
Thank you to everyone who continues to support the North Presbyterian Food Pantry with your donations of money and volunteer time.



-Food Pantry staff



*A Special Invitation to
pray for our country*



*Lord Jesus,
Thou who art the Way, the Truth, and
the Life; hear us as we pray for the
truth that shall make all free.
Teach us that liberty is not only to be
loved but also to be lived.
Liberty is too precious a thing to be
buried in books. It costs too much to be
hoarded.
Help us see that our liberty is not the
right to do as we please,
but the opportunity to do what is right.*

-Peter Marshall

Peter Marshall was a Scots-American preacher, pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC and was appointed as Chaplain of the United States Senate in 1946.

Faithful financial practices to start, or revisit, today

By Joseph Moore | *Presbyterians Today*

Over the years, I have had the privilege of serving three very different churches. One was a historic urban congregation with a sizable administrative staff. One was a rural, mountain church where I was the only staff person. The third was a multi-staff, big-steeple congregation in a midsize city. While worship styles and other ways of doing things differed in these churches, the handling of money was a responsibility that either the staff or volunteers had to deal with in all three ministry contexts. And with people having an endless number of charities and nonprofits to give their limited resources, churches need to be the very best, most faithful and most responsible places toward which we ask people to give. Churches have a moral obligation to handle people's gifts in the most responsible way they can. That wisdom is just as true in small churches as it is in large ones. I want to suggest a few simple practices that can help your congregation be a place in which people have confidence in giving their funds to support the work of the church.

You need more than a church treasurer for good financial management. As faithful Presbyterians, we all know that God alone is God. And yet, in many churches, the treasurer rules over finances in a way that goes against our polity. Remember, it is the session that is ultimately responsible for financial decisions in the life of the church. The treasurer is but one member of a team of people who should be involved in the financial management of the church.

Remember the rule of twos. You should always have two people open the mail, as checks and other important financial information might be within the envelopes. Even when times of social distancing might be in place, mail can be opened together via Zoom or FaceTime. It's not perfect, but it's better than one person doing it alone. Churches should also have a rotating group of two unrelated people to count the offering. Yes, no family members should be part of a team, which sometimes happens in very small churches. You should always have two people process the deposit. One fills out the deposit slip, and another reconciles the deposit with the bank statement. Finally, you should have two people involved in writing and reconciling checks. One processes the checks, and another reconciles them with the bank statement. The smallest congregation can — and should — follow the rule of twos.

Use electronic software for financial records. There are dozens of relatively inexpensive online accounting software programs for churches to use. You don't need anything fancy. But you do need something that can be easily backed up and that more than one person can access. Remember the rule of twos above. Churches must balance confidentiality with accountability. We need one another to be accountable. And the days of having one person carry home the only paper account ledger for the church should be long gone. The same goes for taking home money to be counted.

Even the smallest of churches need more than one way for people to give. If this era of social distancing has taught us anything, it's that we need various ways to be the church. Churches have responded by having Zoom meetings and livestreaming worship, and many have created opportunities for online giving. If you haven't, you should. (The Presbyterian Foundation has an easy-to-use and cost-effective online giving platform.)

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Finally, no matter the size of your church, there are denominational resources available to help you navigate financial management and stewardship in 2020. The Presbyterian Foundation, as well as your presbytery, have resources available at no cost to your congregation. Just ask.

This certainly isn't an exhaustive list, and it might seem basic. But often it is the most basic practices we let fall by the wayside. Following these practices will put you on a path toward faithful financial management that will honor God and those who support the church. It might also inspire more generous support of the work God is doing in your midst.

Joseph Moore, an ordained PC(USA) pastor, serves as a ministry resource officer for the Presbyterian Foundation. He serves Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas & Arkansas.



June 17, 2020



Dear Congregations and Leaders,

I hope this letter finds all of you doing well. Summer has arrived in our corner of the world, and a beautiful summer it is setting up to be. This summer does seem to be different from any other summer in our memory with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as well as with the recent protests to support true equality and oppose police brutality. Many of us are longing for days when we were able to easily gather in person as worshipping communities, to meet with friends and families, and to enjoy our normal lives. In our regions of New York State, Governor Cuomo has authorized religious communities to have small gatherings, and has authorized gatherings of 25 people or less. We're anticipating reaching phase IV of reopening soon, which may include worship communities at less than 50% capacity, along with other arts institutions and civic gatherings. Restaurants and stores are opening. We see and hear the aching of others, and feel our own aching, for community. We are a communal species, and for us, the one Body of Christ. In this context, we truly feel a sense of loss as we are physically missing each other.

Here in our region, we have still seen few cases. New York is continuing to see a decline in cases, but many states are seeing an increase. Many health experts are expressing concern that we are reopening too soon. Credible experts are predicting over 200,000 total U.S. deaths, and that's only through the next 2 months (currently there have been 2.18 million cases in the United States, and nearly 120,000 deaths). People of advanced age, with obesity, and with diabetes or cardiovascular disease are clearly at increased risks. Research is showing some progress with treatments both old (dexamethasone in the severely ill) and new (monoclonal antibodies) being developed, along with early stage vaccines. I'm hopeful these will be effective, but they will still take time; and we all remain at risk until they're readily available and until the virus has more difficulty spreading (which will take time).

While it does seem that many are hoping that the pandemic is winding down, medical experts are suggesting this isn't going to resolve in the next few weeks. Pandemic fatigue does seem to be real, but viruses don't tire. Please be diligent. Please continue to socially distance if you are in public or choose to gather. None of us wish to be accidentally responsible for the illness or demise of anyone else. Let us always be mindful of our relationship to one another. We are called to be the Body of Christ; and as a body, we are called to show God's love in all we do. We are to protect our more sensitive members from harm and to show them greater deference. We are to serve one another with grace and patience. Current guidance for when houses of worship reopen indicate that singing, even at a distance, is relatively unsafe. Physical contact, other than by members of the same household, is quite unsafe and not recommended. Physical and social distancing is still recommended, and all congregants should be masked, with the possible exception of the preacher at the pulpit and a liturgist at a physically distant lectern. Sessions may want to consider how in-person worship will be different right now, and how that compares to worship that has been conducted in our times of quarantine.

The Leadership Team of the Presbytery has been receiving communications inquiring about how and when congregations may consider reopening buildings. Ultimately, the sessions will decide at what time, and with what measures, congregations will meet in person again. Elders and Ministers will need to work together to discern what is the best course of action for their congregation. And it is vital that pastoral leaders are comfortable with any reopening plans that are made. These are not easy decisions, to be sure. There is much to consider. We recognize these desires to be united in a common space, physically — even as we celebrate all the ways that congregations have been and continue to be spiritually unified throughout this time, recognizing that nothing can separate us from Christ, as we are the Bride of Christ. We continue to urge caution. To echo the recent statement of the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), please don't feel pressured to "rush to re-open your church sanctuary for face-to-face gatherings". Take time to discern the best practices for your staff, leadership, and the entire congregation. Please observe local recommendations for in-person gatherings. And please also observe guidance from the CDC, which has pretty clear recommendations, along with the other good guidelines posted on our website.

Some may be ready to gather in person, but others are not. That's okay. In all that we do, let us show our love for each other and the world around us — whether we do that carefully in person or from a distance. Let us bear with each other with grace. We are united in Spirit, serving Christ together.

Grant Us Wisdom, Grant Us Courage,
Rob Anderson, MD (Chair of General Council)

Members of the Presbytery Leadership Team:
Rev. Glenn Kennedy, Moderator
Elder Virginia Champlain, Vice Moderator
Elder Rob Anderson, Chair of General Council
Rev. Amy Loving Austin, Stated Clerk
Elder Tom Bailey, Treasurer
Elder Susan Orr, Presbytery Leader



Thank you!

*"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you
in my prayers."*

Ephesians 1:16

*"As a result of your ministry, men will give glory to God.
For your generosity to them and to all believers will
prove that you are obedient to the Good News of
Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection be-
cause of the overflowing grace God has given to you. "*

2 Corinthians 9:13-14

Our deepest thanks and gratitude to Pastor Jim Hicks and his wife Mary for "shepherding" the NPC flock for the last 13 months. Their gentle and generous spirits were just what we needed to lift us up and help NPC move forward following a time of uncertainty. We cannot thank them enough for their willingness to sacrifice their time together so that Jim could be with us in Elmira. Jim's calm and steady demeanor and his gift of preaching and teaching have been a blessing to the NPC family. As prepare to say "goodbye", we pray for God's continued blessing upon Jim and Mary and their ministry.

*"The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you,
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace."*

Numbers 6:24-26

*With much love and affection,
Your NPC Family*

A Prayer in the Midst of the Coronavirus

God of labyrinthian journeys, thank you for walking with us through paths that lead to places that center us, not confusing and blocking our progress like mazes.

Thank you for being present with us, even when we forget you are with us. Thank you for the witnesses we have to your faithfulness and love for generation after generation.

Thank you, God, for being with Sarai and Abraham as they traveled to places they did not choose, lands foreign to them and challenges they did not design.

Thank you, God, for Shiprah and Puah, the midwives to the Hebrews, who risked their lives to make sure new life thrived, letting their commitment to you and to the community take priority.

Thank you, God, for being with Naomi and Ruth as they return to Bethlehem after the death of loved ones, for their courage to stay steadfast to one another and to you, and the abundant harvest they found where there once was famine.

Thank you, God, for the gift of Mary, who anointed Jesus with costly perfume, reminding us that caring for the body of Christ is primary for us all.

Finally, we give thanks for leaders in our midst throughout time who have showed us the way forward as prophets, preachers, pastors and shepherds.

Journey with us, O God, in the tumult, twists and turns of this coronavirus crisis, and lead us to a place centered on your love, trust, promise and new life that conquers all.

In the name of the one who created us, redeems us, and sustains us, our One God.
Amen.

-The Rev. Dr. Lee Hinson-Hasty,
Senior Director of Theological Education Funds Development, Presbyterian Foundation