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March 27, 2020

Dear Friends,

This is an extraordinary time that we are living through. All aspects of our lives have been disrupted and, in some cases, upended. Students are not in school, streets in many towns look empty, businesses have closed and you cannot sit down for a good meal at your favorite restaurant.

Just three weeks ago we were all worshipping in our churches, seeing our friends, singing hymns and praise songs and hearing the Word preached. Now we are watching our pastors preach 'on-line' via Facebook, Zoom or Go-to-Meeting. Our church buildings are closed for the most part; all is quiet. Or so it may seem.

In the midst of this pandemic, our church – and your local congregation – is very much alive! In these challenging days your pastor is working harder and in new ways to help connect with you – and connect you with each other. There may be 'business closings' around us, but the church is essential. And so is your pastor.

During this time, we want to ask several things of you to help your pastor and your church family during these difficult days:

- Pray for your pastor – that she or he be kept in good health. For those pastors that have children, please be aware of the additional strain he/she faces as the children are all at home. This means not every phone call will be returned immediately (and the same for an email or text). Be aware that your pastor is having to learn new ways of ministering and communicating with the congregation – and that is very stressful. Your pastor may well feel very tired and discouraged.
- Reach out and make contact with your fellow worshippers. Give them a phone call, send them a note, or write them an email. Keep in touch. And as you have personal needs please contact your elders or your deacons or your pastor and let them know your needs. This is indeed a stressful time for you, too. Some of you have lost jobs; others of you are fearful because of your age or health condition. Please reach out if you need support.
- Continue to financially support your church. Mail in your check or give electronically (if the church supports that). The obligations of the church – to pay for utilities, missions, loans, insurance (both property and medical) and salaries – continue in spite of the pandemic. Your church depends on your faithful stewardship.

We want you to know that the officers of Albany Presbytery are working to assist our churches. We do this by providing support for your pastor and connecting them to available resources they might need. And we are praying for you all during this time.

Michael Burkley
Moderator

Judy Hartley
Vice-Moderator

Bill Henderson
Temporary Presbyter

H. Daniel Rogers
Stated Clerk

Rebecca Lawson Putman
Stated Clerk Elect

Beth Illingworth
Temporary Chaplain

Lisa Allendorph
Part-time Bookkeeper

Jennifer Schoenfisch
Office Administrator



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Palm Sunday and Easter worship will likely be very different this year. But we will still celebrate these 'holy days' even if we do so in front of our computers, iPads or phones. But nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus – not even the Covid-19 virus! God is alive and well.

May the Lord Jesus be with you and bless each of you as together we all walk through these challenging times and uncharted territory.

In Christ's service and love,

Bill Henderson
Temporary Presbytery

H. Daniel Rogers
Stated Clerk

Rev. Rebecca Lawson Putman
Stated Clerk Elect