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May 19, 2020

Dear Presbytery Delegates,

A lot of things have changed in the past two months. Our last Presbytery meeting was scheduled to be on March 17th and it was cancelled, practically at the last minute, when gatherings of more than ten people were prohibited by the governor. Those prohibitions are still current, though things are changing even as I write. What have you done differently in this Corona-time?

**Michael Burkley
Moderator**

**Judy Hartley
Vice-Moderator**

**Bill Henderson
Temporary Presbyter**

**Rebecca Lawson Putman
Stated Clerk**

**Beth Illingworth
Chaplain**

**Jennifer Schoenfisch
Office Administrator**

The Presbytery is doing many things differently. We are certainly giving our Zoom video conferencing accounts a lot of work! Practically all of our work has been moved into the virtual world. Some people love it, and some people don't, but for all of us, presbytery and churches alike, we are doing what is necessary to continue participating in the work of Christ in the world. Many things have changed, but some things are still the same. *"Gratitude Leading to Generosity" is still the overall theme of our meetings this year.* That hasn't changed, but this meeting we'll be looking at that theme from the direction of "Generosity in Light of God's Grace." What are some interesting things you might think of in relation to that?

Our next presbytery meeting is scheduled for May 30th. We will be meeting by computer or by phone, something that we've never done before. In fact, we'll have to vote to suspend our standing rules in our Manual of Operations in order to meet. It's OK, though. The GA has suggested it, and our Manual of Operations does allow it in extenuating circumstances.

How are we going to get together? It's going to take some work and a lot of grace on all of our parts. The meeting will be held via Zoom; the directions to reach the meeting will be sent out in the official call to meeting email. A "**How-to Zoom Cheat Sheet**" has been posted on the **Presbytery Website**. Please note that the meeting starts at 10 a.m. but the Zoom meeting room will open at 9 a.m. so that you can register early to avoid the rush, which will be important as we will have to register our attendance one by one. Plan on coming early then go do something else until the meeting starts at 10 a.m. We can create breakout rooms or something similar for those of us who want to chat and connect while we wait for the meeting to get started.



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There are some things we're asking you to do during the meeting that will make everything run more smoothly. If you're calling in by your computer (or smartphone/tablet) we ask that you turn off your video camera and mute your microphone unless you wish to say something. By doing that you will silence all the telephone rings, barking dogs, etc. that go on around you. Having your camera off makes it easier for us to see the people who are speaking as they will have a larger part of the screen on which to be displayed. It's easy to get our attention by sending a chat request, and you will be recognized in turn. You can also raise your hand in the participants tab on a computer. If you're calling in by phone, you can mute your audio by pressing the *6 keys (and unmute the same way). To "raise your hand" and get the moderator's attention, you would simply press the *9 keys.

As in any presbytery meeting, we will begin with prayer and a welcome. We will be very glad to "see" you as we step out into our first virtual presbytery meeting. There will be many actions in the Consent Agenda (see the Docket and papers for more information about that). As always, any item of business that you would wish to be removed from the Consent Agenda will be removed for later action. After that, we're off on a whirlwind of business. There will be celebrations, commissionings, welcomes and partings, many of the ways that we usually live out our life as Albany Presbytery, each of them important.

At our last presbytery meeting we had six green candles that were lit during our worship and meeting. We called them our "Covenant Candles" and by their light we would be reminded of the covenant of grace we have with God and each other. After the meeting they were sent home to six of our churches where they were lit each Sunday for a month. After that month they were passed on to another congregation. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, that's where they've stayed. Some of you have lit them during your daily or weekly prayers and others have stored them away for the next church in line. If you have one of those candles it would be great if you would "bring" it with you to the meeting so we might have another reminder of the covenant we have with God and each other.

After our initial business we will move on to the worship of our welcoming God. This meeting we will have the privilege of hearing from one of the co-moderators of our 223rd General Assembly (2018), RE Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri. While it's always a blessing to hear one of our own preach at a presbytery meeting, it will be a special joy (and challenge) to hear from our co-moderator. We will also be inviting our commissioners to send in an offering. This meeting's offering will be going to our partners in the Mam Presbytery in Guatemala to help them lead a training to prevent



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domestic violence. The Rev. Kathy Gorman-Coombs will be giving us a presentation about our partners in Guatemala and her trip there earlier this year.

Following our worship, we will again have the opportunity of hearing Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri lead us in a virtual conversation about the PC(USA). She will share with us her insights and then we will have a brief opportunity to ask her any questions.

After that opportunity we'll be back to the business of the meeting. By then it will be about noon, and the docket has us finishing by 1 p.m. While we have a lot to decide on and opportunities to celebrate our life together, we should be able to finish by 1 p.m. If so, we will have zoomed through our Zoom meeting!

We hope you'll come and participate in this meeting which shows, in a small way, our common determination to let nothing stop us from serving God and through that blessing our churches and communities. "See" you there!

Your Servant in Christ,

Michael R. Burkley,
Moderator, Albany Presbytery