



March 18, 2020

Dear Siblings in Christ,

These are truly trying times for all of us as we face a rapidly spreading virus, panic buying that has left grocery shelves nearly empty and supplies in great demand. We have seen the worst in people and the best. Yet, through it all, we take hope in Christ and the promise to never leave us.

We are holding each of you in prayer. Like the rest of the country, our Presbyterian communities are physically separated, but we are still deeply connected through our common humanity, spirituality and strong faith in God.

We are not only with you in prayer and solidarity, we are also here to serve you. In response to increased anxieties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is committed to supporting mid council leaders and pastors who are on the frontline of preaching words of hope in these times. To assist you in that effort, the church has compiled [special resources](#) for pastors, congregational leaders and members. These resources include information about virtual worship services.

We are all in this together as we learn to cope with our new normal. Because the Presbyterian connectional system encourages us to learn from one another, we are encouraging “crowdsourcing” as a way of sharing ideas. What are your needs? What’s working well in your church communities? We want to hear from you! Tell us what you need, offer suggestions or suggest resources. Please reach out to us at connected@pcusa.org.

We are hearing the concerns many of you have regarding stewardship. The Presbyterian Foundation offers access to an [online giving system](#) that allows congregations to accept secure online donations. We know that many people and congregations are experiencing economic hardship because of the coronavirus. However, for those who are able, we encourage continued support of your local church, and sharing God’s love with our neighbors in need worldwide. We are grateful for those presbyteries who are providing financial assistance to congregations. We recognize that not all presbyteries are able to do so. We plan to meet with some mid councils to assess needs, and discern ways in which we might be of assistance.

We are compelled by our faithfulness to Christ’s charge to love our neighbors. During this crisis, we are mindful of our denomination’s commitment to Matthew 25, and urge compassion for others by not purchasing more supplies than we need, and by speaking out against the racism being directed at some of our Asian siblings. Jesus makes it clear that how we respond to our neighbor is of paramount importance to him. These tough times call for the best of Christian character and actions.

Please note that we will hold an online Easter service from the chapel of 100 Witherspoon in Louisville for those of you who would like to be part of a national experience. Easter is a new way of life — in which we are “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11) and called to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). There is much *new* happening in the world around us. We pray for God’s comfort and grace as we walk forward together during these uncertain times.

Finally, the past week has been full of high anxiety and mounting fears. We have heard from government leaders and health experts, now let us turn to the Scriptures to find out where biblical people found faith, hope and courage in the face of pestilence. Over 100 times the Bible tells us, “Don’t be afraid.” In Psalm 27:1, David tells us why:

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Herbert Nelson, II". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a prominent "N".

Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Moffett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a prominent "M".

Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett
President, Executive Director
Presbyterian Mission Agency