

On Being a Faithful Congregation in a Time of Coronavirus

Bob Schminkey – Co-Interim Connectional Presbyter and Stated Clerk

Two weeks ago I offered strongly worded guidance that each of our congregations consider suspending worship services until the end of this month due to the public health impact of coronavirus. I hope you found that guidance helpful. Thank you to all of you who made the very difficult decision to close your doors. Today I write to update that advice.

In the last few days we have all seen the new directives from the Governors of both Maryland and Delaware, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) closing non-essential businesses as we seek to “flatten the curve” and slow the spread of Covid-19. In Delaware, where I now live after spending 18 years on the Maryland Eastern Shore, we have been told this order will remain in effect until at least May 15.

Our New Castle Presbytery staff cannot tell you what to do. However, **we strongly urge you to suspend your in-house worship services and close your buildings** to all except the most essential mission programs until this public health threat is eliminated and our public officials ease their restrictions on group meetings.

Most of our churches have already taken worship “on-line” and it has been a joy to watch services from all over the presbytery on Sunday mornings. A list of on-line services may be found on the presbytery web site, along with other resources for worship and being community in a time of pandemic. See the tabs on our home page (<https://www.ncpresbytery.org/>) titled, “Coronavirus Resources” and “Being Church During This Time.” That is the primary locator for all pandemic resources we share.

If you have a question of practice or polity, or specific needs the presbytery staff can assist with, please do not hesitate to contact me (statedclerk@ncpresbytery.org) or one of our other staff. We are meeting regularly with pastors and our presbytery committees to help create a new vision of ministry during this time apart. What an opportunity we have before us!

May God be with you and your church family during this time of social isolation.