



The following statement is an advisory statement from the Presbytery Council.

Your local session and church leadership will be announcing plans pertaining to your congregation.

### ***A Statement of the Presbytery Council to the Presbytery of Lake Huron***

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the mountains tremble in the heart of the sea” – Psalm 46:1-2*

Dear Friends in Christ,

The rapidly evolving coronavirus public health crisis is a concern not only for the health of our members and our communities, but also for the churches we belong to and serve. We write this letter to offer the guidance of the larger church to promote faithful, prudent, and compassionate responses in our congregations and communities. We do so trusting in God and honoring our commitment to love and care for our neighbors in need.

The nature of this crisis suggests that the best thing we can do for the health and well-being of our neighbors is to act responsibly and proactively to reduce the spread of the contagion and to assist those who have special needs. The governor of Michigan has already declared a state of emergency and has already taken actions to restrict large gatherings (250+ persons). *This order includes churches.* While that only directly affects a few of our congregations, the Council believes it is in order to take the following actions at this time:

- We strongly encourage all congregations to suspend public gatherings including worship through April 5 (Palm Sunday), which is the time frame of the governor’s order. The decision to alter your pattern of worship or to cancel it is the right of each church session to make. However, we urge you to take early action so as to minimize the spread of the virus as the virus may have an incubation period of up to two weeks before symptoms

appear. Since most of our churches have an abundance of persons in high-risk categories, it is vital that we do our best not to infect them. Several churches (including Midland Memorial and Mt. Pleasant First, among others) live stream services and will do so with reduced attendance during the crisis. The Presbytery is preparing a list of resources for congregations to live stream their own services or to avail themselves of others' streams.

- The Presbytery will cancel all face-to-face activities through Easter (April 12). This includes the previously announced Hunger Summit at Trinity United Presbyterian Church on April 6. Committees and other groups (COM, Council, PW) may choose to avail themselves of the Presbytery's zoom meeting service to convene electronically.
- The Presbytery office will remain open on an essential staff only basis for the near future. We will remain available by phone, email, and text as at present, but we will ask most staff to work from home during this time.

*“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” – Jeremiah 29:7*

As we respond to this crisis we should keep in mind that as God's people we have a special mission to the world, beginning with those in our immediate circles of care. We therefore urge that:

- Congregations take special effort to care for the elderly and home-bound who might have special needs and are likely to feel more isolated during this crisis
- Sessions consult with local emergency management leaders as to how the church might be of assistance as the crisis develops. There are children who need food; parents who need help; homeless people whose normal resources may be suspended.
- Sessions adopt compassionate policies towards their pastors and other employees who may need to self-quarantine either due to infection or out of precaution. Many may have family members who need special attention such as children whose schools have been closed.

We realize that suspending worship and other activities may make it difficult for churches that are already financially strapped to meet ongoing bills. The Presbytery has resources for emergency assistance of congregations both from its own reserves and from partner congregations. If this is a concern, please contact Executive Presbyter [Dan Saperstein](#).

*“I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and he shall comfort your heart;*

*wait patiently for the Lord.” – Psalm 27:16-17*

These are unusual and challenging times. The Presbytery will do its best to facilitate clear, reliable, and helpful communication. Please check our Facebook page and website frequently. We will also have periodic Town Hall zoom meetings to answer questions and field concerns.

God is our refuge and strength. We are God’s people, and God will lead us through this crisis together. Stay safe, care for one another, and remember those who are in need.

In Christ’s Fellowship,

The Presbytery Council