

## NEW SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE REGARDING PHASED REOPENING OF CHURCHES

Presbytery of Lake Huron

June 5, 2020

*"Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up." - Galatians 6:9*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Since we first wrote to you on March 13, we have observed the wisdom, patience, and creativity of our congregations as we all have weathered this first wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Many of our churches have thrived during this challenge, while the Presbytery has sought to help those that have struggled. In all, it has moved us into new ways of being the Body of Christ that we might never have discovered otherwise.

Now, as our state moves into a new phase of pandemic recovery, we face new challenges. On June 1, Governor Whitmer lifted the stay-at-home order and began permitting indoor public gatherings in limited numbers. The new order states:

- Indoor social gatherings may not exceed 10 people.
- Outdoor social gatherings and events among persons may not exceed 100 people, maintaining six feet of distance from one another.
- Large indoor venue gatherings remain closed.<sup>1</sup>

As we have previously advised, while churches are exempt from gathering restrictions, they should adhere to them nevertheless for the protection of their members and communities. In addition, many insurers will not approve claims if churches are not adhering to public health standards.

The timing and means of reconvening for in-person worship will vary from church to church. As your session decides we encourage you to do the following:

- Practice and enforce social distancing and sanitation practices as stated in our advice on [May 13](#) and in the benchmarks and protocols documents for [Phase One](#) (Michigan Phase 4).
- Provide opportunities for persons to join electronically who for health or safety choose not to attend in-person services.
- Refrain from congregational singing, sharing common objects (e.g., offering plates), and physical contact during the service.
- Conduct services outdoors to reduce transmission, if possible.

Additional resources can be found on our COVID-19 resource page [www.presbylh.org/covid-19](http://www.presbylh.org/covid-19).

Churches that choose not to adhere to the guidelines are urged to contact their insurers for their guidance and coverage requirements regarding your particular plan to reconvene.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/0,9309,7-387-90499\\_90705-530620--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/0,9309,7-387-90499_90705-530620--,00.html)

Please remember that although our response capacity has improved, the virus is still circulating, is easily spread, and can cause serious illness or death. It will require us to take ongoing protective measures until a vaccine is proven safe and effective and is broadly available.

We would also like to remind you that emergency assistance grants and loans are still available through the Presbytery until June 30.

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." – Acts 1:8*

As we have been reminded time and again these past three months, churches are essential: meeting in buildings is not. God, who has called us to leave our temples and take the good news into the world, has provided us with both the reason and the resources to do so. May we continue to live in the power of that Pentecost promise as we share the good news whether we are gathered or dispersed.

In Christ's Fellowship,

The Presbytery Council