

Letter posted to Facebook on March 13, 2020 at 11:26 AM

Dear Presbytery Leaders, Friends, and Colleagues,

Please know that your presbytery Council and staff are holding you in prayer as you make hundreds of difficult decisions about the safety and health of your congregations and for your neighbors. We have seen you struggle over the right thing to do, indeed, the Christian thing to do. You are making the best decisions you can—with information changing hourly—for the health of your members and for your communities.

We want you to know how proud we are of each of you as you stand true to your faith and calling as leaders. Many of you have decided to cancel worship services for the first time in your church's history. Others of you have determined that protocols for social distancing at your gatherings will keep everyone safe and healthy. All of you are being led by the Spirit as you make these difficult decisions.

What people need now is assurance that God loves and cares about them. As congregations, you are the ones to embody that love, even as you sacrifice your own needs and practices for the sake of others. Thank you for the myriad of adjustments you are making even while you are facing your own personal setbacks and challenges.

Social distancing is not something with which we Christians have much experience. We are the people who hug and dance and pass the peace and hold hands as we sing and pray. Now we are being called to stop all that, but only for a time.

The day will come when we can hold hands again and show the affection that God has shown us in our deepest pain and anguish, and even in our sin. For now, let us rely on our faith and our imaginations to find ways to support each other even when we cannot be physically close to each other.

Whenever I went through a difficult time as a child, my mother would say, "This too shall pass." What I have found in you, through your phone calls and the many helpful posts you've made on this Facebook page, is that you are doing far more than *waiting* for this time "to pass." You are courageously and imaginatively *redeeming* this time by finding new ways to show the affection of Christ to each other and to the communities around you.

By doing so, you are keeping the unity of our faith and you are giving bold and generous witness to Christ's love that extends to the ends of the earth.

Keep up the great work—and know that we are praying for you!

In Christ, who is our Hope,

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