



## THE PRESBYTERY OF NORTHERN NEW YORK

### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A)

311 Franklin St Room B

Ogdensburg, NY 13669

Email: [office@presbyteryofnny.org](mailto:office@presbyteryofnny.org)

[www.presbyteryofnny.org](http://www.presbyteryofnny.org)

*The mission of the Presbytery of Northern New York is to witness, with love, to Jesus Christ in word and deed. The Presbytery is called to inspire and support the growth of leaders and congregations in their ministry and mission for Christ.*

March 15, 2020

Dear PNNY Friends,

As the situation in our nation and world continues to call for added layers of precaution to prevent the spread of COVID-19 [aka Coronavirus], we wanted to reach out to offer our support as each church session and its membership make decisions about gathering for worship and other ministry activities.

The practice of “social distancing” is being encouraged until the spread of the virus is under control [click [HERE](#) to read an excellent summary of this practice]. As such, navigating the days, weeks and possibly months ahead will be tricky for all of us. Some of your churches held church services today, encouraging any who are sick or immunocompromised to not attend in person. Others have decided to “hit the pause button,” and cancel all church activities for an unknown amount of time. Currently, three of the four counties in our presbytery have canceled school until April 20th [the end of the scheduled Spring break] and we expect others to fall in line.

In such a time as this, the call of God’s church remains steadfast, but we will have to be more intentional about reaching out to each other and caring for needs that arise. Innovation and creativity often thrive in times like these and we pray that churches will find joy via means other than regular public gatherings. As you consider how to be the Body of Christ in this time, please be aware that social isolation is very detrimental for some folks. So, regular phone calls, emails and messages mean a lot to those who require more face time with others.

If your leadership would like assistance in deciding the best course of action, please do not hesitate to reach out to your regional COM chairperson or your Resource Presbyter. We can also host and facilitate Zoom meetings for your session if it is helpful for you [both Piet and David have Zoom subscriptions]. Rachel Roberts, MINC Outreach Coordinator, is also available to offer support and resources to assist vulnerable people in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties. An excellent summary of helpful information has been assembled on the PC(USA) website [www.pcusa.org/covid19/](http://www.pcusa.org/covid19/), of note being information about online gatherings.

---

Rev. David Bennett  
Resource Presbyter

William Young  
Treasurer

Pieter Visscher  
Stated Clerk

Mary McGreevy  
Bookkeeper

We also wanted to make you aware of several ways to connect for worship that churches are already doing. [Watertown First](#), [Ogdensburg First](#) and [Potsdam First](#) livestream their worship services through FaceBook. [Plattsburgh First](#) posts a sermon video online within a few hours of worship, Canton First posts audio recordings of sermons on [their website](#), and Scotch Church sends out the sermon text via email to members of the church. Please let us know what practices you already have or plan to implement so we can spread the word. Rev. Casey Carbone, former associate pastor of Watertown First is hosting an excellent [livestream worship experience](#) which can be accessed via Facebook as well.

As for the Presbytery meeting originally scheduled for March 24th, the Coordinating Council has acted to postpone the meeting until March 31st and make preparations for presbyters to attend the meeting online as regional small groups and/or individually using the Zoom Conferencing platform. If a majority of people will be attending via Zoom, the dockett will be adjusted so that the meeting is significantly shorter in length. There are some time sensitive actions coming before the presbytery so canceling entirely will only be a last resort. Please stay tuned as decisions are made.

One final note, for churches with contract or pulpit pastors/preachers and musicians, it is important to maintain payments of honorariums, especially for those who do far more than show up on a Sunday and/or who depend on this income. We also encourage you to find different ways of connecting with members using your pastor/preacher in new ways. For example, with a smartphone, a pastor can easily record a message using "Voice Memos" and share it via email. Your Resource Presbytery is available to assist anyone interested in experimenting with this or any type of technology. If paying honorariums or contracted financial commitments present a financial hardship, please let your COM liaison or regional chairperson know so they can consider ways to support your church's ministry.

The pace of this situation is rather unsettling, but we worship and serve a God who is with us in the midst of everything that comes our way. May God's peace surround you and your congregations in the days ahead.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

The Coordinating Council and COM Leadership Team

**Contact Information:**

Piet Visscher, Stated Clerk: [pietaviss@mac.com](mailto:pietaviss@mac.com) 315-713-4343 ext. 1

Rev. David Bennett, Resource Presbyter: [presbydavid@gmail.com](mailto:presbydavid@gmail.com) 315-713-4343 ext. 2

Rev. Rachel Roberts, MINC Outreach Coordinator & Lower St. Lawrence COM Leadership Team: [bluecowenterprises@gmail.com](mailto:bluecowenterprises@gmail.com) 315-713-4343 ext. 3

Don Haight, Adk/Champlain COM Leadership Team: [dhaight@charter.net](mailto:dhaight@charter.net) 518-643-9338

Rev. Rich Hinkle, Upper/Central St. Lawrence COM Leadership Team:  
[preacherman1121@gmail.com](mailto:preacherman1121@gmail.com) 315-742-7561