

Agenda for the Stated Session Meeting

Bayside Presbyterian Church
21 April 2020 7:00 PM Via Zoom

Mission: Bayside is a covenant community of Christ's people seeking to know and do the will of God.

Vision: Changing lives by growing Christian disciples and living God's Word.

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS – OPENING PRAYER

DEVOTION

Elder Michele Parker

REQUESTS FOR SESSION APPROVAL / Motions and Votes Required

1. New Member Requests: None
2. Baptism Requests: None
3. Church Wedding Requests: None

SESSIONAL RECORDS

Clerk of Session

1. Minutes from the last Stated Session Meeting
2. Congregational Meeting
3. Tonight's Agenda

Motion: It is moved by the Clerk that the Session approve the minutes from last month's Session meeting and the agenda for today's Stated Meeting.

STATISTICS

1. Reception of New Members: None
2. Baptisms: None
3. Church Weddings: None
4. Member Transfers: None
5. Member Deaths: None

SESSION REQUEST

Request to become an inquirer – Patrick Long

Rev. Emma Ouellette

INVITATION CELEBRATION:

Sharing of invitations to Bayside services, events and programs.
Upcoming opportunities?

FINANCIAL REPORT AND ISSUES:

Balance Sheet (enclosed) & Treasurer's Report (enclosed)

Motion needed.

COMMUNICATIONS: (Members, PCUSA, PEVA, Other):

None

PEVA / CHURCH INFORMATION

Letter from General Presbyter Liza Hendricks (enclosed)

CONTINUING ISSUES

1. 2020 Vision Update

COVID-19 Updates

Red Cross Blood Drive – Pending for May 5th. Volunteers are needed.

There was an email motion sent to all elders via email on 3/19/20

Motion: American Red Cross is looking to see if we would hold a blood drive here sometime next week. With so many closings, blood drives have had to be cancelled which is in turn creating a shortage of blood. The ARC has been given permission to hold blood drives, while abiding by all new and old safety measures. **The Motion Passed** (21 Elders responded - 19-1)

Virtual Communion (Palm Sunday)

There was an email motion sent to all elders via email on 3/24/20

Motion: Palm Sunday is right around the corner and I have been following and watching how other Presbyterian Congregations celebrate communion when they are unable to share the same space physically. Word is sent out ahead of time and those in the community are encouraged to have in front of them some form of bread and juice...after the words of institution people partake of the elements as directed. If the way be clear I would like to offer communion on Palm Sunday. **The Motion Passed** (19 Elders responded - 19-0)

PEVA Stated Meeting Cancelled

Tuesday April 21, 2020 Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church

NEW BUSINESS

Potential Etheridge Speaker Maryann McKibben Dana – preaching on Consecration Sunday

More about her can be found at <https://www.maryannmckibbendana.net/about>

Motion Needed.

STAFF REPORTS

Director of Music Ministries

Chi-Yi Chen Wolbrink

Office hours during Covid-19 shutdown

- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: In office 9am-2pm.
- Wednesdays, work from home:
 - 9:45 am Zoom music class with Kindergarteners
 - 4:30 pm Zoom “Sing! “during happy hour with Sanctuary Choir & Praise Team
 - 7:00 pm Zoom Catching up with Handbell choir
- Saturday:
 - 9:00 am Music rehearsal

10:00 am Recording service
11:00am -12:00 Rehearsal for coming services

Extra/New Activities:

1. Participate in One License Webinar Offering - Creative Solutions to Growing Concerns: Covid-19 on March 19th.

The One License Offers Gratis Licenses to Help Cope with Covid -19, Valid Through April 15.

Bayside Presbyterian Church owns One License number: A-724756, weekly service attendance 201-400, **Annual reprint with podcasting annual fee: \$380**

If we added broadcasting after May 31, annual fee: \$125.00

2. The other license from Christian Copyright Licensing International, Copyright License (includes song text on projector) **Annual Fee: \$420. On March 18th, we added Streaming License, annual fee: \$62.10. Total: \$482.10**
3. Attending Presbyterian Association of Musicians on “New Ideas for Worship in the Time of COVID-19” every Monday 2-3pm. It has been very helpful to hear the creative worship ideas from nationwide church musicians and Pastors.
4. For our recorded services, be creative with music planning. Plan to use fewer than 6 musicians for each recorded service.
5. Thank you Clint Damuth, Sarah Williams and choir section leaders Katie Wesley, Lee Smith and Mike Belote lead online worship, guest musician James Liverman played trumpet for our Easter service.
6. Because we do not know how long the shutdown will last, after Easter, I will start connecting with the parents of the children’s choir group using email, snail mail and/or calling.

Director of Youth and Family Outreach

Ms. Lacy Schimmel

Associate Pastor

Rev. Emma Ouellette

During this weird time of working from home, I’ve had to dig deep to explore what ministry looks like in this environment. I’ve spent my days working calling people and checking in on them. Because we were in the season of Lent, Lenten things didn’t stop. David and I finished up the Lenten study we were working on before COVID-19 interfered. I rethought Maundy Thursday service so it would work for camera instead of in person. And our usual Sunday Morning responsibilities. Presbytery work continues as well with my responsibilities for the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. With the help of Evangelism, we ordered a sign to invite the community to join us online for worship. Unfortunately during the storm and high winds the other week, our sign did not survive.

It’s looking like we will be in this for a little longer, and during this time I hope to do more with our media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, website). A blessing that has come with this forced separation time is the church moving forward with different forms of media we haven’t used before. I look forward to continuing to continue to use these medias when we are back to in person worship.

My love and prayers are with you all.

Joyfully,

Emma

Pastor / Head of Staff

Rev. Dr. David Rollins

SUPPLEMENTAL MINISTRY REPORTS

(Items/issues not included in Ministry Minutes)

CLOSING WITH PRAYER

Next Meeting – Tuesday, May 19, 2020 7pm Place TBD

Elder Morgan Rechkemmer - Devotion

Sunday, April 19, 2020

Balance Sheet as of March 31, 2020

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YTD Balance

Account #	Account Name	
1100.1000.0000	General Fund - Petty Cash	100.09
1100.1500.0000	Preschool Petty Cash	200.00
1100.2000.0000	Towne Bank Checking	57,330.98
1100.2100.0000	Towne Bank Money Market	263,771.57
1100.2300.0000	Langley Federal Credit Union Savings	25.00
1100.2400.0000	Langley Federal Credit Union Money Market	257,989.75
	Cash Assets	\$579,417.39
1100.2525.0000	Union Bank 5110762150(6/21/2020)2.4%	55,197.27
1100.2527.0000	Union Bank 5110681024 (11/12/2020) 2.5%	61,925.53
1100.2528.0000	Union Bank 5110754383 (12/15/2020)2.5%	31,872.99
1100.2529.0000	Union Bank 5110771861 11/30/2020)2.5%	50,783.39
1100.2622.0000	Union Bank 118320425(06/07/2020)2.20%	31,100.56
1100.2766.0000	Towne632084227(08/15/2021)1.34%	65,339.00
1100.2767.0000	Towne632077972(08/20/2021)1.34%	57,832.45
	Investment Assets	\$354,051.19
1100.4100.0000	Endowment MM TowneBank	14,647.41
1100.4600.0000	Charles Schwab	593,625.54
	Endowment Assets	\$608,272.95
		\$1,541,741.53
Fund Balance		
3100.0000.0000	General Fund	275,068.91
3100.5000.0000	Pastor's Cont Educ Fund	976.58
3100.7000.0000	Assoc Pastor Cont Educ Fund	1,533.49
3200.0000.0000	Non-Budget Fund	1,582.31
3200.0200.0000	Minister's Special Benevolence	1,469.72
3200.0400.0000	Louise Robinson Benevolence Fund Balance	5,000.00
3200.4430.0000	Wedding Fund	85.65
3200.5000.0000	Food Pantry Fund	13,004.96
3300.0000.0000	Preschool Fund	116,521.39
3400.0000.0000	Educational Fund	4,289.77
3400.1000.1000	Library Fund	657.15
3400.1100.0000	Youth Ministries Fund	3,667.04
3400.1110.0000	Youth Mission Trips	23,168.09
3400.1120.0000	Adult Mission Trip Fund	2,639.00
3500.0000.0000	Property Fund	73,897.06
3500.0210.0000	Transportation Fund Balance	24,447.50
3500.0300.0000	Operations Reserve Fund Balance	38,192.55
3500.0700.0000	Columbarium Fund	45,371.69
3600.0000.0000	Music Fund	66,710.21

3600.0100.0000	Organ Fund	64,235.62
3600.1000.1000	Handbell	1,686.87
3700.0500.0000	Session Operating Fund	(956.70)
3700.1000.0000	Sanctuary Renovation Fund 2020 Balance	98,120.00
3800.0000.0000	Scholarship Fund	8,744.70
3800.1005.0000	William & Rhonda Bertholf Education Fund Balance	9,906.17
3800.2000.0000	Minister Loan Fund	30,027.39
3800.4000.0000	Missions Fund	13,365.62
3800.5000.0000	Earnings Fund	10,151.92
	General & Special Funds	\$933,564.66

Bayside Presbyterian Church - Virginia Beach VA
Balance Sheet as of March 31, 2020

Sunday, April 19, 2020

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YTD Balance

Account #	Account Name	
3900.0000.0000	Endowment Fund	463,017.47
3900.3100.0000	Edna E Etheridge Fund Fund	133,801.12
3900.9000.0000	Quily Endow Earnings Fund	11,358.28
	Endowment Funds	\$608,176.87
	Total Fund Balance	\$1,541,741.53
	Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	\$1,541,741.53

Bayside Presbyterian Church - Virginia Beach VA
Treasurer's Report as of March 2020 for General Fund

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Account #	Account Name	Period Activity	YTD Balance	% of Budget YTD	Annual Budget
Income					
4100.0000.0000	Pledge Offering	44,750.00	121,131.00	86	564,822.00
4100.0100.0000	Non-plighted Offering	3,148.00	18,556.00	93	80,000.00
4100.0200.0000	Visitor Offering	40.00	696.00*	139	2,000.00
4100.0300.0000	Loose Cash Offering	398.00	1,748.84	82	8,500.00
4100.0400.0000	Church School Offering	0.00	0.00		
4100.0500.0000	Envelope Offering	25.00	320.00*	427	300.00
	Regular Offerings	\$48,361.00	\$142,451.84	87	\$655,622.00
4100.1000.0000	Interest/Investment Inc.	0.00	0.00	0	10,000.00
	Net Investment Income	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	\$10,000.00
4100.1100.0000	Overhead Donation	1,120.00	3,360.00	97	13,800.00
4100.2100.0000	Soft Drinks/Coffee Inc.	0.00	64.75	86	300.00
4100.2200.0000	Tenant Donations	785.00	2,230.00	99	9,000.00
	Other Income	\$1,905.00	\$5,654.75	98	\$23,100.00
4100.1101.0000	Preschool DoMM Donation	299.70	882.45	98	3,596.00
4100.8888.8888	Restricted Fund Budget Supplement	0.00	0.00		
4100.9999.9999	G/F ROLLOVER	0.00	0.00	0	47,652.00
	Total Income	\$50,565.70	\$148,989.04	81	\$739,970.00
Expense					
5100.1000.0000	Salary - Minister	8,773.34	26,320.02*	100	105,280.00
5100.1005.0000	Salary - Associate Pastor	4,974.42	14,923.26*	100	59,693.00
5100.1010.0000	Salary - Director of Music	4,448.42	13,345.26*	100	53,381.00
5100.1011.0000	Salary - Praise Team Music	938.25	2,787.42	99	11,259.00
5100.1015.0000	Salary - Dir Educ Min	3,433.34	10,300.02*	100	41,200.00
5100.1020.0000	Salary - Church Secretary	2,649.62	9,401.62*	109	34,445.00
5100.1022.0000	Salary - PT Bookkeeper	0.00	200.00	69	1,150.00
5100.1023.0000	Salary -Part Time Receptionist	0.00	0.00		
5100.1030.0000	Salary - Nursery	668.50	2,063.00	87	9,500.00
5100.1031.0000	Salary - Bldg/Grnde Super	3,140.62	9,421.85	100	37,687.00
5100.1032.0000	Custodian A	704.94	2,711.75	81	13,436.00
5100.1035.0000	Employer Social Security	1,088.94	3,416.11	96	14,227.00
	Salary Expense	\$30,820.39	\$94,890.31	100	\$381,258.00
5100.0100.0000	Office Supplies	195.06	1,079.45*	139	3,100.00
5100.0105.0000	Postage Exp. 2	200.00	400.00	80	2,000.00
5100.0110.0000	Postage Meter Lease	0.00	108.00	86	500.00

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Account #	Account Name	Period Activity	YTD Balance	% of Budget YTD	Annual Budget
5100.0115.0000	Copier Lease/Maintenance	\$94.16	1,805.90	75	9,600.00
5100.0120.0000	Internet Expense	392.50	1,362.04*	182	3,000.00
5100.0125.0000	Other Office Equipment	0.00	0.00		
5100.0126.0000	Office Equipment Repair	0.00	0.00	0	1,000.00
5100.0130.0000	Telephone Service	255.05	645.04	89	2,900.00
5100.0155.0000	Phone Message System	90.00	270.00	100	1,080.00
5100.0157.0000	Staff Appreciation	0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.0158.0000	Staff Travel	0.00	0.00		
5100.0160.0000	Worker's Comp Insurance	0.00	3,033.00*	404	3,000.00
5100.0165.0000	Property & Liability Ins	0.00	0.00	0	9,750.00
5100.0175.0000	Computer Equip/Software	(715.99)	340.76	34	4,000.00
5100.0180.0000	Beneflex	0.00	0.00		
	Office Administration	\$1,310.78	\$9,044.19	89	\$40,430.00
5100.1040.0000	Benefits - Minister	3,208.88	9,096.72*	100	36,387.00
5100.1041.0000	Benefits - Minister's Supplemental	0.00	0.00		
5100.1045.0000	Benefits - Assoc Pastor	1,809.34	5,129.22	100	20,517.00
5100.1050.0000	Benefits - Director of Music	392.29	1,176.87*	100	4,707.00
5100.1051.0000	Director of MM Insurance Opt Out	166.66	499.98	100	2,000.00
5100.1055.0000	Benefits - Dir of Educ Min	912.30	2,736.90*	100	10,948.00
5100.1061.1000	Benefits - Church Secretary	864.46	2,593.38	100	10,374.00
5100.1064.0000	Benefits - Bldg/Grnds Supe	887.43	2,662.29*	100	10,649.00
	Benefits Expense	\$8,241.36	\$23,895.36*	100	\$95,582.00
5100.1065.0000	Prof. Exp. - Minister	107.65	747.61	75	4,000.00
5100.1066.0000	Cont Ed - Minister	0.00	1,304.37*	209	2,500.00
5100.1070.0000	Prof. Exp. - Assoc Pastor	51.04	412.24	55	3,000.00
5100.1071.0000	Cont Ed - Assoc Pastor	0.00	64.82	17	1,500.00
5100.1075.0000	Prof. Exp. - Dir. Music	262.51	574.55	98	2,350.00
5100.1080.0000	Prof Exp - Dir of Educ Min	0.00	0.00	0	2,350.00
5100.1085.0000	Prof Exp - Administrator	0.00	73.03	64	450.00
	Professional Expense	\$421.20	\$3,176.62	79	\$16,150.00
	Total Administrative Expense	\$40,793.73	\$131,006.48	98	\$533,420.00
5100.2001.0000	Beach Health Clinic	100.00	100.00*	101	400.00
5100.2005.0000	Dwelling Place	0.00	0.00		
5100.2009.0000	Samaritan House	600.00	600.00	100	2,400.00
5100.2010.0000	Good News Jail & Prison Minist	125.00	125.00	99	500.00

Bayside Presbyterian Church - Virginia Beach VA
Treasurer's Report as of March 2020 for General Fund

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Account #	Account Name	Period Activity	YTD Balance	% of Budget YTD	Annual Budget
5100.2013.0000	St. Columba Ministries	2,600.00	2,600.00	100	10,400.00
5100.2021.0000	Judeo-Christian Outreach Cente	700.00	700.00*	100	2,800.00
5100.2027.0000	Seton Youth Shelter	125.00	125.00	99	500.00
5100.2029.0000	Volunteers of America	0.00	0.00		
5100.2030.0000	Human Kind	0.00	0.00		
5100.2033.0000	Winter Shelter Program	0.00	0.00	0	400.00
5100.2038.0000	Faith Works Coalition	600.00	600.00	100	2,400.00
5100.2039.0000	Virginia Supportive Housing-Crescent Square	700.00	700.00*	100	2,800.00
5100.2041.0000	Project Activity	0.00	0.00	0	400.00
	Community Service Expense	\$5,550.00	\$5,550.00	97	\$23,000.00
5100.2055.0000	Fellowship	0.00	0.00	0	1,900.00
5100.2060.0000	Card Ministry	0.00	0.00	0	100.00
5100.2063.0000	Bereavement Team	0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.2070.0000	Stephen Ministry	0.00	244.75*	215	450.00
5100.2072.0000	Directory	0.00	0.00	0	300.00
	Congregational Care Expense	\$0.00	\$244.75	30	\$3,250.00
5100.3000.0000	Equipment/	0.00	0.00		
5100.3001.0000	Supplies	0.00	0.00		
5100.3003.0000	DCE Conferences	0.00	591.05*	189	1,250.00
5100.3005.0000	Curriculum	(944.70)	547.86	68	3,200.00
5100.3006.0000	Background_ Checks	0.00	20.00	83	100.00
5100.3010.0000	Library	0.00	0.00	0	200.00
5100.3013.0000	First Fridays	(194.00)	298.00	79	1,500.00
5100.3014.0000	MOPS	(2.83)	779.53*	173	1,800.00
5100.3015.0000	Vacation Bible School Exp.	1,943.34	1,943.34*	204	3,800.00
5100.3022.0000	Nursery	39.26	39.26	52	300.00
5100.3040.0000	MS Ministry	0.00	20.24	12	700.00
5100.3041.0000	HS Ministry	0.00	264.81*	210	500.00
5100.3042.0000	Confirmation	0.00	83.94*	112	300.00
5100.3043.0000	Children's Ministry	21.24	164.45	55	1,200.00
5100.3045.0000	Publicity/Promotion	0.00	180.00		
	Education Expense	\$862.31	\$4,932.48*	128	\$14,850.00
5100.3505.0000	New Visitor Materials	0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.3525.0000	Evangelism Materials	0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.3531.0000	Evangelistic Events	0.00	0.00	0	3,000.00
5100.3540.0000	Living Nativity	0.00	0.00		

Bayside Presbyterian Church - Virginia Beach VA
Treasurer's Report as of March 2020 for General Fund

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Account # Account Name

Period Activity

YTD Balance

% of
Budget
YTD

Annual Budget

			0.00	0.00	0	1,000.00
5100.3542.0000	Visitor Center Improvements		180.00	358.56*	178	800.00
5100.3545.0000	Marketing/Community Outreach		\$180.00	\$358.56	23	\$6,300.00
	Evangelism Expense		950.67	2,337.38	94	10,000.00
5100.4000.0000	Building Maintenance		2,656.00	3,489.35*	349	4,000.00
5100.4001.0000	HVAC Maintenance		0.00	0.00		
5100.4005.0000	Van Ops/Maint		1,368.00	1,368.00*	249	2,200.00
5100.4010.0000	Exterminating Service		495.97	1,073.27*	239	1,800.00
5100.4015.0000	Fire & Safety System Maint.		0.00	70.00	3	11,000.00
5100.4020.0000	Grounds Maintenance		504.67	859.79*	107	3,200.00
5100.4025.0000	Supplies & Cleaning Materials		170.26	503.70*	101	2,000.00
5100.4030.0000	Kitchen Maintenance		0.00	0.00		
5100.4035.0000	Vending Machines		3,364.07	5,033.01	88	23,000.00
5100.4050.0000	Electricity		1,404.59	4,127.96*	165	10,000.00
5100.4055.0000	Gas		772.67	2,471.63*	104	9,500.00
5100.4060.0000	Water & Sewer		282.04	846.12*	103	3,300.00
5100.4065.0000	Refuse Collection		\$11,968.94	\$22,180.21*	111	\$80,000.00
	Property Expense		73.93	329.71*	110	1,200.00
5100.4080.0000	Payroll Preparation		185.20	491.82*	178	1,100.00
5100.4082.0000	Bank Fees		0.00	0.00	0	1,200.00
5100.4086.0000	Audit Fees		\$259.13	\$821.53	94	\$3,500.00
	Stewardship Expense		0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.4101.0000	Church Develop - Limete		0.00	0.00	0	32,000.00
5100.4110.0000	Mission Giving		0.00	0.00		
5100.4120.0000	Theological Education Fund		0.00	0.00		
5100.4121.0000	Field Missionary Support		0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.4122.0000	Congo Maternity Hospital		0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.4123.0000	Congo-Mark Shreiber School		0.00	0.00		
5100.4125.1000	Ticul Scholarship & Staff		0.00	0.00		
5100.4125.2000	Ticul - Material		0.00	0.00		
5100.4125.5000	Youth - Mission Trips- 1/3		0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.4128.0000	Disaster Response		0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.4130.0000	Massanetta support		0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.4132.0000	Miscellaneous expenses		0.00	400.00	19	8,500.00
5100.4134.0000	Clean Water Project		0.00	0.00	0	500.00
5100.4135.0000	Mogodeshu Hospital Project		0.00	0.00		
5100.4136.0000	American Indian Children School Support		0.00	0.00		

Bayside Presbyterian Church - Virginia Beach VA
Treasurer's Report as of March 2020 for General Fund

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Account # Account Name

Period Activity

YTD Balance

% of
Budget
YTD

Annual Budget

			\$0.00	\$400.00	4	\$44,000.00
	Witness/Global Mission		67.92	443.51	51	3,500.00
5100.4200.0000	Special Music Programs		53.11	272.85	61	1,800.00
5100.4205.0000	Music Literature(all sevices		0.00	0.00		
5100.4215.0000	Robe Maintenance/Cleaning		0.00	0.00	0	1,600.00
5100.4220.0000	Workshops/Memberships/licensing		0.00	0.00	0	1,200.00
5100.4225.0000	Substitute Organist		0.00	0.00	0	1,000.00
5100.4230.0000	Music/Pulpit Honoraria		0.00	0.00		
5100.4232.0000	Section Leaders		992.00	3,530.00*	101	14,000.00
5100.4236.0000	Seasonal Decor		0.00	0.00	0	400.00
5100.4240.0000	Usher Supplies/Cleaning		0.00	0.00	0	400.00
5100.4245.0000	Communion Supplies		0.00	0.00	0	300.00
5100.4250.0000	Supplies/Equipment		0.00	133.29	89	600.00
5100.4251.0000	Children's Choir Supplies		11.66	42.55	17	1,000.00
5100.4255.0000	Keyboard Instr. Maintenance		0.00	0.00	0	900.00
5100.4260.0000	Audio/Visual		0.00	0.00	0	250.00
5100.4265.0000	Handbell Maintenance		0.00	0.00		
5100.4270.0000	Praise Team Drummer		224.00	510.00	64	3,200.00
5100.4275.0000	DoMM Continuing Education		175.00	175.00	47	1,500.00
	Worship Expense		\$1,523.69	\$5,107.20	65	\$31,650.00
	Total Expenses:		\$61,137.80	\$170,601.21	92	\$739,970.00
	Difference		(\$10,572.10)	(\$21,612.17)		\$0.00

* = Income/Expense exceeds amount budgeted to date



Wednesday, April 15, 2020

For a time such as this

**Empty,
As I wake up...
No time or anything to do
We will not dress up or wear fancy hats
No elaborate restaurants
No family and friends
No gathering
No sunrise service
No meeting at the church
No contact
No...
I do have time to think
The tomb is
Empty
Do you think he got our attention? Jesus has Risen!**

**--Rob Courtois, Elder at Second Presbyterian Church, Norfolk
April 12, 2020**

Dear Sessions, Pastors and other spiritual leaders of PEVA,

Christ is Risen! Happy Easter to all. To state the obvious this was perhaps the most unusual Easter any of us have experienced but I hope it will be remembered as one that was very meaningful. As the poem suggests, I hope Jesus got our attention.

I still find myself saying that I am "going to church" when what I mean is that I will be worshipping or participating in a meeting virtually. Old habits die hard. Perhaps in this season of Covid-19 that is a good thing, that we hold in our hearts the images of preparing to be with our community and keep the expectation alive, of being together "in the flesh", or as Desmond Tutu once said, "in the meat."

Normally there is a bit of a letdown after Easter. Clergy call the Sunday after Easter, "Low Sunday," when the Easter crowds have disappeared. Will we have Low Sunday this year? Or will virtual worship and our desire to stay connected reflect a new normal?

In the old normal, a majority of pastors in the presbytery would take the week after Easter as vacation. This year going away is not an option. However, I am conscious that over the last month our pastors and elders have “shifted into light-speed” to respond to the pandemic and all the anxiety it has prompted. Pastors have had to do things in ways they were never trained to do. They have discovered that planning for virtual worship takes more time --not to mention that they are learning how to preach to a congregation they cannot see. They have been told not to do the things they love, “being there” for people in person, seeing them in the hospital, holding hands with someone who is dying, having coffee with someone who wants their counsel. We have all been learning how to use technology to do things we had not imagined were possible or at least did not think our congregation was ready to do. Not to mention, people keep discovering how to improve and invent more opportunities for staying connected. I am inspired by the dedication, generosity, and in some instances, the courage, that you all are showing in your efforts to see Christ “in the least of these.” Thank you for all your endeavors to be the Church, for your flexibility, creativity, and the evidence of your faith, hope, and love.

From what we know at present, we can expect the sheltering at home to continue for a number of weeks. We also know that financial uncertainties and other challenges will continue beyond the time when we are able to embrace one another again. Some people tell me they are bored staying home and others tell me they are exhausted from working remotely, juggling multiple responsibilities, and carrying the anxiety of this time on their hearts and minds. The days ahead will no doubt continue to require our patience, adaptability, kindness, a willingness to give everyone the benefit of the doubt, and the grace to recognize that we cannot be or do it all—especially not perfectly. I periodically remember an episode from the TV show MASH when Colonel Potter says, “I am not as perfect as I want to be.” We need to offer that humility and grace to one another and ourselves.

Sessions, I hope you will encourage your pastors to take a stay-cation for at least a few days, to stand down from trying to keep all the balls in the air.

Pastors, I hope you will encourage Elders and all in your congregation to breathe deep, to pause as needed, to take time for beauty, for exercise, for calling friends and family, for taking advantage of the many resources for developing resilience and spiritual well-being. (Some are listed on the PEVA website.)

The Easter accounts in the Gospels tell us that the disciples kept being surprised by Jesus. When they were behind locked doors, confused and afraid; when they were heading to Emmaus trying to make sense of what had happened; when they went back to Galilee to fish their way back to normal and the fish were not cooperating—Jesus showed up. He got their attention. He brought reassurance, breakfast on the beach and instructions, “to feed his sheep.”

And what now? Do you think he has gotten our attention?

May the peace of our risen Lord be with you all,

Liza Hendricks,
General Presbyter

"We build bridges across divides to deepen connection to Christ and one another to serve the world."