

August 27, 2020

To the many Saints of John Knox Presbytery:

As Labor Day fast approaches, we realize Summer is almost past. The Summer which just a few months ago held such promise for offering a return to our traditional way of life of gathering for worship, singing songs, and sharing handshakes and hugs. But that is not to be. This present reality is not what any of us imagined or wanted. But yet we have endured. We have discovered that the Church is not the building where we gather. It is the people with whom we worship either by video screen or across a parking lot and through face coverings. This has been a test for all of us, and God has sustained us!

To those Teaching and Ruling Elders who are responsible for making decisions concerning when to resume in person worship or various ministries that normally require groupings; you have provided important leadership in this very difficult time. On behalf of the Presbytery, I want to **THANK YOU** for you; for your patience and wisdom in making those hard decisions for your congregation. It hasn't been easy, but I firmly believe that your efforts to keep all your members safe is what Christ would have us do. Your efforts to stay connected through electronics, phone calls, and even letters have been an inspiration. Many of you have found ways to worship in close but safe proximity. Keep up your good work.

To those members of our churches who have so missed the worship experience we know and love so well, I **THANK YOU** for your endurance and hope. We are all anxious for the day when such measures are no longer needed for our safety and we can enjoy the full expression of community Christian worship. Please continue to support your leaders in this time and know that these tough choices are made with the commitment to ensure the safety and health of the neighbors and friends we love.

I trust that you will all continue to be comforted by the words of Romans * which says in part "... neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord."

May God continue to bless you one and all as we seek to live as Christ would have us.

Rev. Chaz Ruark
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