

UPDATE CONCERNING JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERY AND COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS

This is an update for all the Pastoral leaders and Sessions Clerks in John Knox Presbytery.

First, as recommended by the Personnel Committee and approved by the Leader Team, the John Knox Presbytery Office in Richland Center will remain closed for the time being. The staff has been able to conduct all business of the presbytery while working remotely. Scheduled days in the office to check mail and tend to the facility needs by Chaz and Karen has proven sufficient to keep up with demands. Finally, Zoom technology has allowed committees to do their work in a satisfactory manner. Committee meetings in the Presbytery office will resume when health statistics and or an effective vaccine deem it safe.

Second, because infection rates continue to fluctuate up and down, and many of our members and commissioners are considered to be “at risk” persons, the August Stated meeting of John Knox Presbytery will be conducted by Zoom in the same manner as our May meeting.

Third, approximately a dozen congregations in JKP have resumed in-person worship. The vast majority of these churches are small rural congregations. This seems an appropriate time to emphasize some important safeguards in such circumstances.

- Continue to monitor the infection rates for your county. A sharp increase should be an indication for a Session to reconsider a decision that could be unsafe for many of your members.

- Follow the WCC guidelines for safety, wear masks, social distance, outside gatherings are best, (almost all our congregations are worshipping outdoors) no singing, no passing of objects such as offering plates, and no physical contact.

- Keep accurate attendance records. If an infection is traced to your congregation, you will need to report who has and who has not been exposed.

This is not an endorsement for resuming in-person worship. However, in certain areas of stable, declining infections and with good hygiene habits it can be done safely. Finally, be kind to one another. This is not a political debate, it is a matter of health and safety. Those who are urging caution do so because they are already losing sleep that a decision they make, if it is incorrect, could cost a friend their life. That is a heavy burden. In the midst of this challenging time, let us continue to pray for one another.

Blessings,
Rev. Chaz Ruark
Executive Presbyter