

- c. Even after churches return to in-person worship, remote opportunities for worship, study, and fellowship should continue for those who cannot yet safely or comfortably attend in-person gatherings.
1. Related to number 3, any decision-making bodies, board, committees, etc., that meet in-person must also offer the option to join meetings remotely.
2. Each session needs to adopt their own “Plan for Resuming In-Person Worship and Activities”, addressing such areas as worship, fellowship, congregational care, Christian education, etc.
3. A reminder that churches are not required to resume in-person activities. Sessions have the authority to proceed as slowly as they believe prudent, and the Presbytery will support them in a decision to wait to resume gathering in-person. Let me add to this: I have been made aware of pastors who have been pressured to return to in-person worship. It is not the responsibility, nor the decision of the pastor. The session, in tandem with the Pastor, makes this decision and should only do so after a strategic plan is in place(Ted).

Let me also suggest some guiding documents that can be utilized as plans are made for returning to worship.

1. The CDC Guidelines for Re-opening Facilities and Resuming Activities. This is a document that provides detailed guidance for Faith Communities, Schools, Child Care Centers and other entities.
CDC Reopening Guidelines
2. Returning to Public Worship: Theological and Practical Considerations (Presbyterian Mission Agency).
https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/covid-19/returning_to_public_worship_may_2020.pdf
3. The Wisconsin Council of Churches Returning to Church.
<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/04/23/returning-to-church/>
4. Resource for Use in Leading a Session Meeting
https://01fac7b6250d493d1127-d8590c8a28c33460e15368faedce8b94.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/uploaded/c/0e10399471_1589384328_covid-template-session-discussion-of-re-opening-chruch.pdf

Friends, I know this is a new frontier for all of us. Even when we strive to be upbeat, there are days when we get down or feel deflated. Never in our lifetime have we experienced this sort of disruption and dislocation. We want so much for life to get back to the way it used to be. But the truth is, life will be different. Hopefully, we will learn a lot about ourselves while learning new ways of coping and managing our day to day responsibilities. And through this time, we must find ways to take care of ourselves, to rest, to take vacations, to read and to pray, while embodying the conviction that this is God’s world, and that the mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the church, through you and me.

Faithfully,

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