



The Presbytery of
DONEGAL

May 18, 2021 Message from the Presbytery of Donegal Leader Team and Connecting Our Ministry Commission

*But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf,
for in its welfare you will find your welfare. - Jeremiah 29:7*

*I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land.
I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. - Genesis 28:15*

Dear Friends and Colleagues in Ministry,

First, a message from the Presbytery Leader Team and Connecting Our Ministry Commission (COM) – we want you to know that we are so proud of you. The pastors and ruling elders of the Presbytery of Donegal – spread through fifty congregations, fellowships, and new worshipping communities – have worked long and hard. It has been over twelve months since we entered into this completely unexpected journey of a global pandemic. You have fulfilled your ordination promises and led your congregations with energy, imagination, intelligence, and love. We know that it has not been easy. We know that you are tired. And we believe that Jesus has walked with us through this journey and will continue to walk with us into the future. It likely feels like you are in exile – far from where you expected and often doing things that are unfamiliar. With you, we long for a “new normal.” And with you, we seek the good of the communities in which we now find ourselves.

We acknowledge "God 's redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces the whole of human life: social and cultural, economic, and political, scientific and technological, individual and corporate." (*Book of Confessions 9.53*) We acknowledge the science on COVID19 continues to evolve and that sometimes new questions are raised when we want more answers. We acknowledge that "people of good character may differ" (F-3.0105 *Mutual Forbearance*) and that the church cannot put critical ministries indefinitely on "pause."

On May 13, 2021 – after multiple drafts of and many hours of research, COM and the Leader Team approved an updated Pandemic Advisory, with the best information available. About ten minutes from pushing the “send” button, the CDC issued new advice, eliminating the need to wear face coverings or to socially distance for those who are fully vaccinated. A little while later, Pennsylvania followed suit. As you would expect, this up-ended our advisory.

Since then, we have been contacted by many of our pastors and worship leaders as we all try to come to terms with new conditions. Some are elated. Some are alarmed. Many are confused about what is prudent for the immediate future. Due to the press of time and the urgency of questions, Executive Presbyter Erin Cox-Holmes and Stated Clerk Michael Wilson have prepared an FAQ, which follows this message.

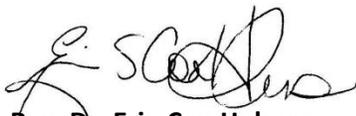
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As we reach each new milestone on this journey through the COVID pandemic and into a brighter tomorrow, we continue to hold you in prayer. We encourage you to be safe, to continue to find creative and meaningful ways to minister in these days, and to offer the hope of Jesus Christ to all.

On behalf of the Presbytery of Donegal Leader Team and Connecting Our Ministry Commission,



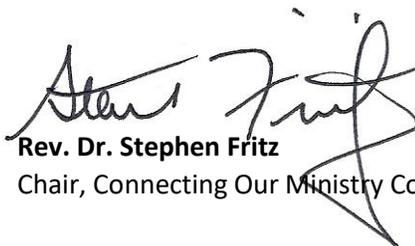
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Executive Presbyter



Rev. Dr. Michael Wilson
Stated Clerk



Rev. Sarah Kneier
Moderator of the Leader Team



Rev. Dr. Stephen Fritz
Chair, Connecting Our Ministry Commission