

May 14, 2020

## To Open or Not to Open, that is the Question

When our youngest son was in kindergarten we traveled as a family from Buffalo to Arlington for Easter Break. The evening we arrived he was not feeling quite right, and I thought he had a stiff neck from the car ride. He got worse. They thought he had spinal meningitis, and so Howard and I held him in position on the table in the ER while they did a spinal tap as he cried, and I cried – that was not it. They then thought that the infection was in a pocket in his throat and so took him to surgery – they did not find what they were looking for. He was in the pediatric ICU for 5 days with an infection they couldn't pinpoint and in the end I think they put together a diagnosis that sort of made sense but fortunately was able to treat with two forms of broad spectrum antibiotics. The pain was such that he was on a morphine drip. He was visited by someone from the infectious disease group of the CDC. It was scary – but I was able to be with him to comfort him! If he, or any of my family were to be hospitalized now I would not be allowed to do that.

Our churches to this point have been truly fortunate in that there have been few cases that have affected our congregations. But all that could change drastically as more places open. We have provided to you all the recommendations that have come from Federal, State and Denominational resources to guide you in your decision making. You received an email yesterday with updates. We have done this because each of your sessions must make the decision when to gather again and how to gather again. As much as we crave being able to be with one another I urge you to do what will keep your congregation healthy. As a congregation we must sit six feet apart, there is no passing of the peace, no hugging, no singing because that spreads the virus further, we need to wear masks and wash our hands and those are just a few of the things we must adhere to. The rest are in the guidelines.

The church is still the church, we continue to worship, we are adapting to doing zoom Bible studies and PW gatherings, session meetings and the General Assembly of the PCUSA will gather digitally this June. We are in a new way of being and we will be alright for we are not on this journey alone – God is with us! Opportunities are presenting themselves in a way we have never done before – and it is okay.

I urge us all to be on the side of caution so that none of us gets sick, so that none of us must sit outside in the hospital parking lot unable to comfort our loved one.

The presbytery staff will continue to work from home for the foreseeable future and continue to be available to you in any way we can.

Together we are the church.

In God's Hands,

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