



## WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

8955 Columbia Ave, Munster, Indiana 46321

Rev. Quincy A. Worthington, Pastor

Rev. Austin Wicks, Associate Pastor

Dear Church Family,

After so much prayer and discernment, The Session and Pastoral leadership of Westminster is suspending in-person worship and gatherings again. We are heart-broken to do so but are convinced it is in the best interest for everyone's safety and in our commitment to truly embody the words of Christ when He tells us to love each other and to care for one another.

It has not been an easy decision to come to, but as we watch the numbers of cases dramatically climb, as Munster Schools prepare to go back to e-learning, as many of us in leadership find the virus hitting a little too close to home, as we are learning that many times symptoms go unnoticed or are non-existent, we've come to realize that right now the risks are out-weighting our longing to be in worship and community in person again. When we add all of that up and look at the CDC and State of Indiana guidelines, we realized that we really need to suspend in-person worship.

Presbytery under the leadership of Jennifer Burns Lewis as Visioning and Connecting Leader, Pastor Quincy as (the soon retired) Moderator of Coordinating Council, Rev. Lucia Oerter as Presbytery Moderator, and the Council itself has issued a letter to all congregations throughout the Presbytery of Wabash Valley urging online worship and not meeting in person. We are including that letter with this so you can read it. While Presbytery cannot make that decision for us, we have autonomy in deciding, we have decided to listen to their wise counsel. We have heard stories of churches in our Presbytery and in our region who heeded no warning and minimal safety requirements to devastating consequences. We would feel it a betrayal of you, of Christ, and of our ordination vows as elders and ministers if that should happen here...

We will be monitoring the cases daily and praying in hopeful expectation for a vaccine. As soon as we see steady and consistent decline and we feel that things are safe again, we will resume gathering in person as quickly and safely as possible.

Part of the Scripture reading for this Sunday which will be online reads,

**7** But we have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn't come from us. **8 We are experiencing all kinds of trouble, but we aren't crushed. We are confused, but we aren't depressed. 9 We are harassed, but we aren't abandoned. We are knocked down, but we aren't knocked out.**

**10** We always carry Jesus' death around in our bodies so that Jesus' life can also be seen in our bodies. **11** We who are alive are always being handed over to death for Jesus' sake so that Jesus' life can also be seen in our bodies that are dying. **12** So death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

2 Cor 4:7-12 CEB



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We can't think of greater words of encouragement to hope for better prospects among the frowns of fortune. We are the Church. We remain the Church. We will always be the Church. We are reminded that God created all things to have seasons and this rough season too shall pass. Please know that you are in our constant prayers and our deepest longing to reunite in person. If there is any way we can be of help or any information we can give or help clarify, please do not hesitate to contact any one of us.

Yours in Christ,

Tom Ogren - President of the corporation

James Severa - Clerk of Session

David Radovich

Debbe Blue

April Cafmeyer

Bill Cangiano

Dave Dawes

Sandy Kauffman

Audrey Luckey

Lyn McHie

Mike Moses

Ashley Nita

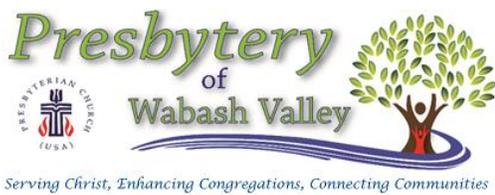
Mary Pawlicki

Wally Richardson

Sara Sweeney

Rev. Quincy A. Worthington - Sr. Pastor

Rev. Austin Wicks - Associate Pastor



November 10, 2020

Dear family in Christ,

We write to you today with hearts that are heavy. The numbers of positive cases of COVID-19 in the counties of our presbytery are rising at a rapid and alarming pace. The presbytery receives phone calls and emails daily of new cases in our congregations, and we have more than one congregation that has been dramatically affected by COVID-19 cases, causing church members to become seriously ill. We know of individuals who were in otherwise good health pre-COVID who have lasting health challenges post diagnosis. We don't want this happening anywhere else, if it can be avoided.

We know that people of good faith can disagree on many subjects, but we hope that we can all agree that making informed decisions with facts and prayer is vitally important. Recognizing that sessions have the ultimate authority and responsibility to oversee and approve all public worship in the life of the particular church, we want to offer deep encouragement for you to prayerfully consider suspending in-person worship and gatherings at the church until the positive counts in your community are under 5% for two weeks at least, which is the World Health Organization's guidance on gatherings in a season of pandemic. Please note that no county within our bounds is currently under 5%. Check the state website at <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/2393.htm> for daily updates or your local health department's website for more information to guide your decision making. Review your own church policies about gatherings and safety and the criteria for suspending worship and under what circumstances you would do so. We strongly suggest that, at the very least, you require masks and social distancing if you choose to keep meeting in person, and, of course, that you provide many sources of hand washing and hand sanitizer.

We wrote you in March, at the beginning of the pandemic, and we have seen the good work that you have done. It's time now to buckle down some more and take seriously that our local numbers are dangerously high. Let us assist you if you need guidance or financial resources to facilitate online worship or giving by contacting the presbytery office or [jennifer@ourpresbytery.org](mailto:jennifer@ourpresbytery.org) to put you in touch with the resources you seek. Whether you have made the decision to return already or plan to resume in-person gatherings soon, we implore you to keep a close eye on the COVID data in your community, and to do everything in your power to protect your members, their families and your communities from this serious virus. It is responsible to stay apart now, so that when it's safe to return, no one from your church community is missing.

Grateful for your witness in a very challenging time,

On behalf of the Presbytery of Wabash Valley's Coordinating Council

Quincy Worthington, Moderator

Lucia Oerter, Moderator Elect

Jennifer Burns Lewis, Visioning and Connecting Leader

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