



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE

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*“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good....  
Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”  
(Romans 12:9 & 12)*

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the Susquehanna Conference,

Grace to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, Healer of our Brokenness, and Hope of the World!

I thank God every day for you. You have risen to this very great challenge to offer ministry to church members and neighbors from a distance. You have learned and applied communications technology to worship and spiritual formation activities. Your churches are finding appropriate ways to extend ministries of compassion to their communities. Through it all, your commitment and care have not waned. What Paul expressed to God's people of the Church in Corinth deeply resonates with me: “I have great confidence in you; I take pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bound.” (2 Corinthians 7:4)

Gov. Tom Wolf has begun a gradual and deliberate process of reopening businesses and gathering places in Pennsylvania. This county-by-county plan moves through three phases: red, yellow, and green. The strategy begins Friday, May 8, and its progress depends on how the virus spreads or abates. (You can learn the specific requirements of the phases [here](#).)

In those counties in the yellow phase (some of which are in our conference), a few types of businesses and organizations can reopen with limitations. Social-distancing practices remain in place. Group gatherings are limited to 25 people. (Again, please review the governor's web site linked above for specifics.) The remainder of the state remains in the red phase.

**The Cabinet has developed the attached guidelines, “Return to Gathering” for the gradual resumption of church activities.** Please review them closely whether you are in a yellow or red zone. The guidelines can help clergy and leadership teams think through the safest practices for reopening the church buildings and gatherings. Many of you have begun making some carefully considered plans. The guidelines may inform those continuing conversations.

We are all eager to return to our familiar lives, especially to worship, minister, and fellowship with our Christian sisters and brothers. While the government carefully determines its rules for reopening, we, as the church, must uphold even higher standards. Jesus taught us that loving God and loving neighbor are the two greatest commandments. By maintaining high standards of safety and protection for all, we express our love of God and neighbor. We also will be following John Wesley's rule, "First, do no harm." Please keep in mind that some groups remain particularly vulnerable, such as people aged 65 and older and those with certain underlying medical conditions and that many of our people are seniors. (Find specific information from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).)

You and your congregations remain in my daily prayers, for your continued health, safety, wisdom, and courage as you so diligently give witness to faith, hope, and love in Christ Jesus for such a time as this.

In Ministry with You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremiah Park", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

Jeremiah Park