



Distancing

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I'm learning lots of new phrases these days, like "respiratory etiquette." I imagine that's what my husband breaches when he rolls toward me in bed and snores. "Hey," I poke him and use my new catch phrase, "mind your respiratory etiquette!"

Another phrase that has become commonplace is "social distancing." Because of the rapid spread of the coronavirus, we are urged to distance ourselves from others, whether we feel sick or not. We shelter in place or hunker down. The Presbytery, like many organizations, has begun operating remotely, with staff relying on regular video call check-in's, phone, and email to stay in touch with each other and with you. If you leave a voice mail message for any of us at the office, it will forward to us.

Social distancing also requires that we keep a perimeter of distance from others if we need to go out. Because we can be infected and not experience any symptoms, we have a natural tendency to think it's okay for us to interact with others. Just the opposite is true. We can be unwitting carriers. So, we don't shake hands or hug, and we've come to dread doorknobs and keypads. Care facilities and senior living centers are closed to visitors, cutting off our social connection to church members, family, and friends.

Social distancing during a pandemic is a very Presbyterian thing to do. This health strategy assumes that many of us might get the coronavirus eventually, but we're going to do it "decently and in order" rather than all at once. By slowing the pace of infection, we increase the ability of the healthcare system to keep up.

While social distancing is needed in this time, **spiritual distancing** is not. Our faith grounds us and offers the assurance that this storm shall pass. Our faith, however, is public. It wants community, and it wants to be a visible witness to God's love, grace, and redemption. Our faith doesn't take kindly to hunkering down in isolation.

So, we've gotten creative in our worship, our meetings, and our care for each other. Several congregations are experimenting with online worship. You can find a growing list (and many other resources, including a Daily Prayer from people in the Presbytery) on the Presbytery's new [COVID-19 resource page](#) on our website. Sessions, committees, and teams are meeting electronically when allowed – your Presbytery Stated Clerk urges you to read [the Online Meetings guidance](#) for how this should be done. All Presbytery-level meetings will be done this way for the foreseeable future.

We use technology to keep ourselves physically distant, but spiritually connected. It's different. It might not be everyone's cup of tea, and it might feel like it's being thrust on you. These innovative uses of technology help us, however, to express our public faith and avoid isolation at a time when we really long to draw together.

Watch our Facebook page for other opportunities to stay spiritually connected with each other. Keep washing your hands and know that you are in our prayers.