Greetings in Christ: March 16, 2020

We, the Executive Committee of the Classis of Schenectady, want to encourage each of our congregations to be faithful, caring, and supportive as we enter an unprecedented time. Our whole lives we have talked about following Jesus and now we have a unique challenge before us. How do we live as Christ Followers during a time when being a "community" means doing what we can to allow physical distance between ourselves?

But this virus is fast moving and daily changes add to the urgency that we do our part. With the CDC issuing guidelines on March 15 that there should be no gathering of 50 or more people until at least the end of April, and following the directives of the Book of Church Order which state that “The classis shall exercise a general superintendence over the interests and concerns of the congregations within its bounds” (BCO: 1, II, 2. 2.):

**THE CLASSIS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IMPLORES ITS CONGREGATIONS TO SUSPEND IN-PERSON WORSHIP SERVICES AND PUBLIC GATHERINGS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.**

There are congregations within our Classis that have the ability to stream worship services and we encourage people to take advantage of these opportunities. Last Sunday saw First Reformed Schenectady, First Reformed Scotia, Lynnwood, and West Glennville all streaming their services via platforms such as Facebook Live, Youtube, and their church websites. These are ones that we are aware of and there may be others. Perhaps even here our churches can individually coordinate their services. Distancing does not have to mean disconnecting. There are various ways we can continue to share in life together.

This means that we will not be able to gather for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, or Easter. This would have been inconceivable only a couple weeks ago. We mourn this reality together. Yet, it is our current reality. How we react and care for our communities now will determine how we will be the Church that goes forward at the end of this crisis.

There is a lot of guidance being given now through the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html) and [local governments](https://health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/).

The Regional Synod has issued [guidelines](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VP3UEax54bABtyDRBnqCouvdXOJOOrN_6J0u7qWAWMo/edit?usp=sharing) on how to be together in worship. Additionally, the Regional will be hosting a couple of open zoom meetings tomorrow--Tuesday (March 17)--at 4 PM and 7 PM, for church leaders (such as pastors, preaching elders and VPs of consistory) to come together and talk about how they're doing, changes they're making, and provide opportunity to share good ideas. The clerk will send out any information received regarding these meetings to members of classis.

*"Let each of you look not only to their own interest, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2: 4-5*

In love and fellowship,

the Schenectady Classis Executive Committee

The Rev. Kent Busman The Rev. Megan Hodgin

Moderator of the Executive Committee, Vice-Moderator of the Executive Committee

Past President of the Classis Vice President of the Classis

The Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck, LMSW The Rev. Lindsey DeKruif

President of the Classis Stated Clerk and Classis Administrator

Ms. Victoria Hayner The Rev. Jason Fulkerson

Treasurer of the Classis Chairperson, Ministry Oversight Committee

The Rev. Matthew van Maastricht

Chairperson, Overtures and Judicial Business Committee