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**Subject:** Returning to Our Church Buildings  
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# the Presbytery of Chicago

May 22, 2020

Dear Presbytery of Chicago Churches, Congregations, Pastors, Ruling Elders, Minister Members, church leaders, all:

This afternoon (Friday, May 22), in a news conference, President Donald Trump identified houses of worship as *“essential places that provide essential services,”* calling on governors to allow churches and other houses of worship *“to open right now.”* The President also noted that if governors did not allow churches to open *“right now, this weekend,”* he would, *“override the governors.”* He ended his comments with the words, *“In America, we need more prayer, not less; thank you very much.”* No questions were taken by the President.

Video links to the news conference can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

We would like to remind everyone that under our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Constitution (Part 2, Book of Order) the Session alone has the authority to open and close our church buildings and locations for worship. Under their responsibility *“to provide that the word of God is rightly preached,”* the Session is responsible to *“provide a place where the congregation may regularly gather for worship, education, and spiritual nurture.”* The Session also has the responsibility to *“nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ,”* which includes *“managing the physical property of the congregation in furtherance of this mission”* (See Book of Order. G-3.02a and c. page 48).

We encourage our Session Moderators and Ruling Elders to continue to meet these responsibilities and to communicate these responsibilities to the members of their congregations. At this point, to our knowledge, all Sessions have acted, directly or indirectly, to follow the stay-at-home orders of Illinois Governor JB Pritzker and other local officials, and to abide by the [Restore Illinois plan](#).

We encourage continued adherence to these plans and guidelines. We are also providing a link to a document produced by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which offers excellent guidance for reopening our church buildings. This link will take you to the document titled [“Returning to Public Worship – Theological and Practical Considerations”](#).

Let us continue to hold one another in prayer as we make our way through this time of the pandemic, fully aware of God’s presence and guidance, knowing we have come *“thus far, with the help of God”* (1 Samuel 7:12).



Susan Krummel – Executive Presbyter



Kenneth Hockenberry – Stated Clerk



Sandra Zeles - Moderator



Michael Welf - Moderator-Elect

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