

## Greetings to the Saints of Mission Presbytery!

I was talking to one of our pastors this afternoon about the recent surge in Covid-19 cases and the number of congregations who are returning once again to virtual-only worship. Actually, the Covid surge has probably been the #1 topic of conversation of all my conversations this week. This pastor said:

*“I knew what to do when we stopped worshiping in person. I even knew what to do when we started back. But now I don’t know what to do.”*

This pastor’s sentiments are so universal right now, aren’t they? It was easy to stop meeting in person, it was somewhat easy to figure out how to come back, but now... so many of us are dealing with “Covid fatigue” and just plain ambivalence about how to continue our lives together as congregations.

You know from earlier this week, and last, that I’ve closed our in-person office again until at least next Monday. We ended up with three staffers ill; the best diagnosis we have is perhaps both RSV *and* Covid. Without closing the Broadway office, several more of us would have come down with it as well.

You also need to know that, just this week, two of our pastors in the Presbytery have been diagnosed with Covid. Y’all, we are not out of the woods yet. And with school starting back in the very near future, I fear the numbers are only going to increase. This Delta variant is much more virulent. Some experts are saying that this current wave may not peak until the end of September or October.

We are seriously reevaluating our plans for a hybrid Presbytery meeting in October, and other plans for in-person gatherings. I’ve asked YCC to think very carefully about whether their fall gathering should be in person or only virtual. And our staff is going to take it “one step at a time” regarding re-opening the office.

Beloveds, I can’t tell you how much I hate this situation. But my displeasure is surpassed only by my love for you and my concern for your congregations. We’ve all got to work together, no matter how tiresome or unpleasant it may feel, so that we can all get through this together. Please, care for me, and for yourself, and for each other, by taking these steps:

- Get your vaccinations, now
- Pull out those face masks and wear them in worship, at HEB, wherever you find yourself

- Don't take risks in your worship services - please limit singing, hugging, all those things that we love to do. Please be careful as to how you celebrate the Lord's Supper.
- Pray for your pastors and, as the apostle Paul says, "outdo one another" in showing them forbearance and love. Pray especially for our pastors who are trying to juggle worship and pastoral care as they care for their own young children and aging parents.
- Kick and scream and grieve as necessary - and then, repeat the above, as often as necessary.

I'm walking this with you. We're walking this together. And with a little more patience and vigilance, we'll get through this together.

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### **Presbyter "Sightings" (as it were)**

**August 5** - Attend memorial service for Sylvia Washer in Houston

**August 7** - Meet with Committee on Representation and Participation

**August 8** - Preach for Laredo Sinai congregation

**August 9** - Zoom with Hill Country Region and Mo-Ranch Board

**August 10** - Meet with Presbytery staff

**August 11** - Meet with Synod EP Forum

**August 12** - Zoom with Corpus Christi Region

**August 15** - Preach for New Braunfels Presbyterian Church congregation

**August 17** - Meet with Presbytery staff

**August 18** - Meet with Fiscal Oversight Committee and Synod EP Forum

**August 19** - Zoom calls with COGA and Stewardship