



# The Hamilton Beacon

May 17, 2020

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## AN INTERESTING TURN

In our last issue, as we reflected on gathering for worship, we said “our guide will be our Governor.”

We’re in a different place, because our Governor has now said, “The cities will be the guide.” That’s realistic since different parts of the state experience higher or lower degrees of virus saturation.

The City of Baltimore and surrounding counties have decided to keep the stay-at-home order in place. Baltimore Presbytery has been quite clear; they are extremely cautious about any reopening. Quoting our General Presbyter, Jackie Taylor:

“All church buildings should remain closed on Sunday, May 17, 2020 and optimally, remain closed at least through Sunday, May 24, 2020 if not longer (through the month).”

Other denominations are following this advice, actually stretching through the month of May.

Speaking for myself, I hold all of you in such high esteem, and want so much for Hamilton to be a place of health and safety, that I am most willing to be more cautious than not.

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Continuing on, our Executive Presbyter offers some directions in preparing for the regathering of our congregation:

“Congregations are to form a team or teams to address and accomplish the following:

- Review and abide by local orders concerning reopening;
- Develop plan to maintain six feet distance between worshipers in worship space – indoor and outdoor;
- Develop plan for sanitation, abiding by guidelines for “no touching” people or objects;
- Develop plan for cleaning and monitoring of entrances and exits;
- Develop plan for children and vulnerable populations following CDC guidelines;
- Continue on-line services for members, guests and vulnerable populations;
- Provide masks for members and visitors.

Finally, she writes:

“Friends, be smart, creative, faithful and diligent. We will get through this if we covenant to keep one another healthy and safe.”

So Friends, we all so fervently wait for this time when we can be together, greeting each other, praying, singing, rejoicing with each other in God’s presence.

It will come, do not despair. Perhaps not geographically, but in love and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are most certainly bound together.

“Blest be the ties that bind Our hearts in Christian Love.  
The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above.”

We share our mutual woes, Our mutual burdens bear,  
And often for each other flows The sympathizing tear.”

# NEWS OF THE 224<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of our church was to meet in Baltimore this June. We would have been able to travel to the Convention Center and sit in on every aspect of the Assembly. Because of the virus, The Assembly will now be virtual, viewed by Zoom. Plans are to make it as effective as it can be.

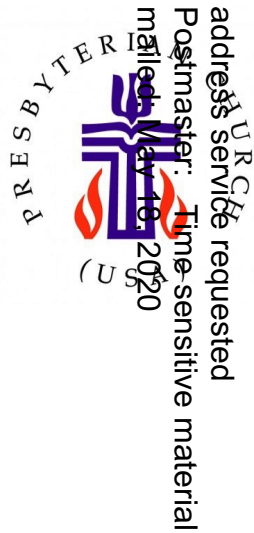
That number 224, is not a mistake. The First General Assembly met in Philadelphia in 1789. The location was second Presbyterian Church (now gone), next to the home of Betsy Ross. At that time, the church had four synods, 16 presbyteries, 177 ministers, 419 congregations and an estimated membership of 18,000.

It's interesting that part of their corporate decisions as a church was to send a letter on May 26, 1789, to President George Washington. Dr. John Witherspoon, president of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), and a signer of the Declaration of Independence was the author. The Assembly united in praising Washington for his integrity and the leadership he was providing to the emerging nation.

The theme for this year's General Assembly is "Lamentations to Hope", Lamentations 5: 20-21 NRSV. Baltimore will have special page on the website to highlight the Presbytery.

Highlights of the new Schedule:

- June 19 – GA opens in the evening with Worship and election of Moderator or Co-Moderators;
- June 21 -- Various worship services in Baltimore Presbytery churches available virtually;
- June 23 – The Baltimore Youth Rising Initiative - 3:00 pm;
- June 24 -- Bible Study in the evening;
- June 26 – Worship and general session at 11:00 am;
- June 27 -- Closing Worship after 4:30 Plenary.



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