



Illinois South Conference COVID-19 Response UPDATE #15, Aug 18, 2020

New State Mitigation Guidelines for Region 4

The Restore Illinois plan divided the state into several regions when the shelter-in-place order was lifted, with criteria for reinstating stricter guidelines if any region had a rise in specific Covid-19 metrics. Region 4 has exceeded these metrics for an extended period of time, and the Illinois Department of Public Health has placed this region under new mitigation guidelines. The counties in IL Region 4 are: Bond, Clinton, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair and Washington counties. Many Illinois South Congregations are in this region. The mitigation guidelines will **stay in effect for 14 days**, starting August 18, and may be extended, or end, based on infection rates two weeks from now.

The principal part of the guidelines impacting churches is the newly-lowered limit of no more than 25 people gathered for a social event. There has already been considerable debate as to whether this applies to worship, if it only applies to worship inside, or if it applies to any gathering regardless of location. Some officials have said it includes all gatherings, including worship, both inside or outdoors. Other officials have said they will not enforce these new restrictions. We live in a peculiar time when some believe politics carry more weight than science and logic. It is doubtful that Covid-19 cares about who gets infected.

We strongly encourage each of our congregations to practice the safest worship they can. Clearly, these guidelines were instituted because the number of people infected in this specific area has ramped up and stayed up for an extended period. These rules are not intended to limit anyone's ability to worship; they are an attempt to save lives.

If your congregation was meeting virtually in the spring, we encourage you to return to that. If you have started gathering in person outside or in your sanctuary and don't plan on going virtual again, limit your gathering to 25 people or 25% of your capacity, whichever is less.

As has become the norm in this Covid time:

- Continue wearing masks
- Keep social distance in all settings from anyone you don't live with
- Wash your hands vigorously and frequently, and don't touch your face
- Keep multi-touch surfaces as clean and sanitized as possible

Helpful Information

- Conference Council decided on Aug. 17 to continue suspending all Conference and DuBois Center sponsored events at camp through the rest of 2020. Rules for family or small group gatherings at camp will be forthcoming.
- The Illinois Department of Public Health has excellent maps illustrating COVID-19 hotspots in the state. [One map](#) gives general information, and [another map](#) shows the specific COVID-19 metrics that are being monitored for each county.
- If you need a refresher on best practices, refer to: [Faithfully Phasing Forward](#), the ISC guidebook, on the [Conference website](#); the UCC's many [COVID-19 resources](#); and the [Restore Illinois](#) Plan.

Together in Christ's ministry with you,

Dr. Jill Baker, Conference Moderator
Rev. Christy Eckert, Conference Vice-Moderator
Mr. Dwight Asselmeier, Conference Treasurer
Rev. Ivan Horn, Conference Secretary
Rev. Shana Johnson, IL South Conference Minister

Rev. Rosemary Captain
Ms. Virginia Ilch
Rev. R.J. Morgan
Rev. Mike Southcombe
Ms. Barbara VanAusdall