



Illinois South Conference COVID-19 Response UPDATE #17, Nov 13, 2020

COVID-19 Is Increasing Exponentially Across Illinois

COVID-19 has dramatically increased throughout the Illinois South Conference. The shocking number of people infected with the virus has reached into our circle of family, friends and neighbors. Yesterday, the Illinois Department of Public Health and Governor Pritzker asked Illinoisans to stay at home as much as possible the next three weeks to lower the infection rate. The alternative is another statewide shelter-in-place order. The entire state is also under Tier 2 mitigation rules, which includes no gatherings of more than 10 people, inside or outside.

Just at the point where in any other year we would be thinking about holiday gatherings and comforting traditions, we must address the fact that it is not safe to gather with anyone outside our home, let alone at church.

These updates usually include words like suggest and encourage. This one includes a new word- implore. We implore you to recognize the importance of this turning point in the pandemic, and to take immediate measures to protect your congregation and your community.

- Suspend all in-person church activities if you have not already done so, and return to online worship for the foreseeable future.
- Encourage your congregants to stay home as much as possible, only leaving when absolutely necessary for essential activities.
- Remind everyone that wearing a mask, washing hands frequently, and social distancing are currently the best things we all can do to diminish the impact of this virus.

We have a long, hard winter ahead. The promise of a widely-available vaccine is months away. So many businesses depend on everyone working together to get this under control. And frankly, so do our churches. The virus does not discriminate between the healthy and the immune-compromised, between the young or the old. We want everyone who's with us now to still be here when spring returns again.

Helpful Information

- Our next Covid-19 Update will come out **Nov. 30**, with ideas and resources on ways to approach Advent and Christmas.

- If you want a sobering look at the reach of this pandemic, go to the [COVID-19 Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool](#) produced by Georgia Tech. You can select the potential event size, from 10 people to thousands, then look at your individual county to see the real-time risk of a gathering of that size. For example, today in Madison County, where our Highland office is located, a gathering of 10 people has a 39% risk of an infected person in the group. Bump that to 15 people, and the risk goes to 52%. Slide that up a little farther to 25 people gathered, and the risk goes to 71%. This data is updated daily.
- 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
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