



Illinois South Conference COVID-19 Response UPDATE #21, June 14, 2021

Illinois Enters Phase 5 of Covid-19

On June 11, 2021, Illinois entered Phase 5 of the Covid-19 recovery plan. What a long, hard road it's been to reach this point. Here's what Phase 5 means:

Fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask except where required by law or local regulations. This includes business and workplace rules, and presumably, churches can require masks if they choose.

All sectors of the economy can resume at regular capacity, including churches, and you can discontinue *required* social distancing and health screenings of staff.

But, Illinois will continue to *recommend* face coverings for unvaccinated people, as well as people on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation; in transportation hubs, such as airports and train and bus stations; in congregate facilities such as correctional facilities, veterans' homes, and long-term care facilities, group homes, and residential facilities; and in healthcare settings.

Businesses and venues are *recommended* to continue to allow for social distancing to the extent possible, especially indoors. Businesses and venues *may also* continue to put in place additional public health mitigations as they deem appropriate, including requiring face coverings.

Churches have always been in a gray area throughout the pandemic. Each church needs to assess what works in their context. If you think you might need to continue wearing masks because of particularly vulnerable members who aren't able to be vaccinated, discuss with your governing body the best course to move forward.

What this means for us is – it's time to take a breath. Pause for a moment and have sympathy for the nearly 600,000 people in this country who died from Covid-19, and the 33 million+ who got sick, with some still struggling to recover. Pause and give thanks for the health of you and your loved ones. Pause and recall what you've learned these past 15 months, should you need that knowledge in the future. Pause sitting in the joy of this moment, when we can all see faces without masks, we can hug with abandon, and we can be in community together again. And take enough time to pause to fully remember and appreciate the love, grace, and peace of God you have experienced.

Together in Christ's ministry with you,

Dr. Jill Baker, Conference Moderator

Rev. Christy Eckert, Conference Vice-Moderator

Rev. Ivan Horn, Conference Secretary

Mr. Dwight Asselmeier, Conference Treasurer

Rev. Shana Johnson, IL South Conference Minister