

**COVID-19 ADVISORY - Middle PA District Church of the Brethren**  
**David F. Banaszak - District Executive Minister**  
**Thursday, November 12, 2020**

Dear members and friends of the Middle PA District;

In the last two weeks, the number of reported positive COVID cases in our state has skyrocketed to over 4000 per day. (5488 reported today: 11-12-20). Along with those reports, locally in our district we have had several churches report a number of positive COVID cases that have forced those congregations to postpone meeting in person and return to virtual on-line worship. Pastors and congregational members alike within our district have tested positive and become ill.

Infectious disease experts are attributing this burgeoning number of cases to what they call “community spread”, meaning that individuals have become infected with the virus but are uncertain how or where they contracted the virus. When that is the case, isolation and contact tracing become all but impossible and the virus is given free reign in a community because it is uncertain who carries the virus and who does not. It is a recipe for widespread illness within an individual congregation when precautions are not followed.

**To that end, this advisory is being communicated to all pastors and church leadership to renew, recommit and refocus on all of the mitigation efforts which were recommended when the pandemic started months ago. These include taping off pews for social distancing, mask wearing, elimination of multiple touching in the offering, elimination of unnecessary social events and rigorous sanitation efforts, (both hand-washing and the church facility).**

The reality is that for some who become ill with COVID, the effects and symptoms are relatively mild. However for others, contracting COVID becomes life-threatening and deadly. There is no way to accurately predict how an individual will respond to a COVID infection. Therefore short of suspending in-person meeting, implementing the mitigation efforts described above is the best response for our churches.

**In the event that persons within a congregation who have been in contact with others at worship test positive, it is advised that in-person worship be temporarily suspended for the recommended two-week quarantine period.** Subsequent steps for that congregation would then be determined based on their particular situation.

As I have stated from the onset of this pandemic, our primary concern at this time as followers of Christ and as leaders of the church is the protection and safety of our members. No other agenda can take precedence. It is your responsibility as a leader of the church to protect your members. Aside from returning to virtual worship, I cannot underscore enough the importance of **renewing, recommitting and refocusing on all of the mitigation efforts recommended and implemented when the pandemic started months ago.** The life of someone who calls your church home may depend on it.

Sincerely;

David F. Banaszak - District Executive Minister  
Middle PA District  
Church of the Brethren