

# Bishop's Letter Regarding Latest COVID Spike



Nov 17, 2020

Greetings, Beloved,

*“Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.”*

*Romans 12:12*

Right now, new cases of COVID-19, positive test rates, and hospitalizations are spiking across Southeastern Pennsylvania. Public health officials are issuing new mitigation orders in our area. In order to protect our most vulnerable members, our pastors and church workers, and our communities, **I strongly recommend that congregations move to online worship and/or socially distanced outdoor worship through January 1, 2021.** I also recommend that pastors and church employees work from home as much as possible.

I encourage you to take this current wave of the virus seriously. Our region is now seeing larger increases than during the spring when mitigation efforts started. This will not be forever. We continue to hear positive news about the development of vaccines. Until a vaccine is approved and widely available, our highest priority must be to do no harm. I am sure that you do not want your church to be the source of a “superspreader” event.

In the meantime, we are blessed that we can gather in sacred cyberspace. Consider using this pause to take your online worship to a higher level and find ways to nurture online connection and community in your church.

Congregation councils have responsibility for the worship life of the congregation. I support our pastors, musicians, and worship leaders who may themselves be vulnerable or be concerned about members of their households. When making decisions, councils should take these circumstances into account.

I will continue to monitor conditions and re-evaluate this recommendation at year end, or sooner if conditions warrant.

Blessings to you for a safe, happy Thanksgiving and a Spirit-filled Advent and Christmas season!

The Rev. Patricia A. Davenport  
Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA