

## Coronavirus Updates (Feb. 10. 2021)

- I. Facts on the Coronavirus
- II. Session Responsibilities
- III. Presbytery of the Peaks Recommendations

### Sources

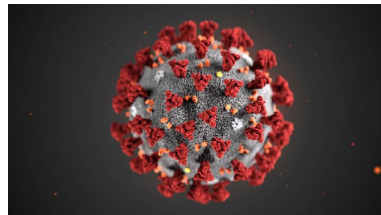
“The Facts on Coronavirus” have been organized and summarized by Ruling Elder Lisa Allgood, who is the Executive Presbyter of Cincinnati Presbytery. She is a career immunocytochemist. Her expertise is cell chemistry and how an invading virus or malignant proteins attach to healthy cells, contaminate and replicate. Ms. Allgood’s original summary has been edited for the sake of greater brevity.

“Session Responsibilities” was also written by Ms. Allgood, but will be recognized by any church officer as standard presbyterian practice.

“Presbytery of the Peaks Recommendations” is by General Presbyter Carl Utley, who was authorized by Presbytery’s Cabinet to speak on behalf of the presbytery in matters related to Covid-19, with his knowledge of what other presbyteries are recommending, the orders and recommendations of Governor Northam and the CDC, and the conditions of our region.

### The Virus

- COVID-19 (SARS-CoV) is one of several coronaviruses: 4 are known to cause the common cold, one was SARS (2004) and the other MERS (2012).
- COVID-19 has been shown to last about 4 days on impermeable surfaces and about 2 days on permeable surfaces.



### Infectivity

- COVID-19 is 3 times more infectious than other respiratory viruses.

- All ages can be infected and are infectious.
  - **40% of those who are infected are asymptomatic**, but they are still infectious (they just don’t know it and neither do you).
  - For those who are infected and will go on to develop symptoms, **they are infectious (more highly infectious) for up to 8 days before symptoms emerge** (so again they don’t yet know they are infectious and neither do you- and that could be 2 Sundays).

### Fatality, Co-Morbidity and Long-Term Impacts

- COVID-19 is **10 times more fatal than the flu** (COVID-19 has an overall 1% fatality rate; the flu is about 0.1%)
- Currently in the US 1 person dies about every 70 seconds from COVID
- Currently more people have died in the US from coronavirus in one year than all soldiers died in WWII in 4 years combined

### Vaccines

- Moderna and Pfizer are the vaccines currently being used
  - both vaccines have been shown to be highly effective (95%)
  - takes 2-4 weeks for immunity to develop – can still be infected during that time and can still pass the virus after immunization
  - boosters 3-4 weeks apart to get to full immunity potential
  - If you have had COVID wait 90 days before getting the vaccine to avoid competing with natural antibodies
- Vaccine rollout is slower than anticipated in the US
  - The majority of the population will not likely be vaccinated until summer 2021

**GET YOUR FLU SHOT THIS YEAR!**

## Session Responsibilities

### Spiritual

- Elders are spiritual leaders of the church, so if people are feeling disconnected, part of your role is to keep in touch and make sure they know they are still beloved and in prayers. This is not just the responsibility of the pastor!
- Consider creating an Elder-in-Touch list by dividing up congregational members amongst Elders so there's always a primary contact for each person. Cards, calls, emails, are all great and easy ways to stay in touch.

### Administrative and Worship

- Session is responsible for the use and conditions of use for the building, and for decisions around that.
  - Because of that, Session is also then responsible to monitor and enforce any conditions of use of the building you establish. This is NOT the responsibility of the pastor.
  - Whatever conditions of use you establish must be enforced both for the congregation, committees, and outside groups.

### Presbytery Recommendations. Acknowledging that we offer guidance to sessions who have the responsibility for making decisions:

- Congregations are urged to remain vigilant while the vaccinations in Virginia are rolled out and we reach the hoped for "herd immunity" sometime in late summer. Adjust expectations; knowledgeable people estimate that safe gatherings indoors that last longer than 15 minutes are 6 months away.
- Congregations are strongly urged to worship virtually where possible, making use of recording or live-streaming technology, outdoor worship, emailed sermons and liturgies, or other means to bring the congregation together in prayer and praise. Contact David Baker, our communications director, if you need coaching.
- Congregations that elect to go back to in-person worship are strongly urged to do the following:
  - Masks are mandatory and to be worn at all times.
  - Session members should plan to either provide masks for people who have signed up in advance (see below) and don't have one, or turn them away

- Singing only if masked. Better to not sing at all; there are ways to have hymns played on the piano (maybe words on a screen if you have one).
- **Nothing that blows air around during worship – if your heater blows air over the congregation, pre-heat the room, turn the blower off during the service (encourage coats and sweaters if you must)**
- More than 6 feet physical distancing between family groups – estimate in advance how many people your sanctuary can realistically hold with at least 6 feet distance
- Limit anything that is passed around or touched by multiple people.
  - Leave collection plates in the back for people to put offerings in
  - Leave communion elements in the back for them to pick up in advance or have them bring their own
  - Surfaces, such as pew cushions, should be kept clean, but sanitization isn't necessary if the sanctuary is unoccupied between Sundays. The coronavirus does not persist beyond a few days.
- Have a sign-up process before the service so you can estimate how many people want to come (and cut off the sign up when you've reached your calculated maximum).
  - If people try to come in who have not signed up in advance, Session members need to be at the door to tell them no, unless there is adequate seating
  - **Have a sign-up sheet as people enter in case you need to do contact tracing should there be an exposure**
- Exclude use of bathrooms or any other part of the building (or limit bathrooms to one person at a time and provide alcohol wipes for them to clean surfaces they've touched)
- Understand your personal and church liability if someone is exposed during a church service (contact your insurance company)