

PRG reminds congregations to remain vigilant on COVID-19 front

September 16, 2021

To Local PRG teams,

The Post-Covid Re-entry Group (PRG) is here to assist and resource churches to navigate the many and fast-changing shifts as COVID-19 continues to affect all of our lives. We understand that we have yet to enter into the Post-COVID era, and we will continue to encourage our churches to make wise and safe decisions so that effective ministry will continue during this pandemic.

Governmental organizations have chosen not to set mask or vaccination mandates but instead have given the responsibility of making these decisions to leaders who are closest to their own context. The Virginia Conference has continued to be consistent in following recommended guidelines. The Conference has empowered the local PRG teams to set safety measures for their own churches, based on the best practices we have gathered from our Healthy Church Teams and guidelines provided by the Conference.

In reviewing the last 18 months and examining the positivity rates among our churches, we are able to identify only one incident of an outbreak in our churches during the period when the Conference laid out clear requirements for churches using the TAM.

Since launching the PRG teams in June, with local churches setting their guidelines, we have seen an increased number of exposures among our local churches. In the span of 45 days, we received reports from churches on a daily basis (45 reported cases with more than 75 individuals involved). Churches found positive cases among attendees of a worship or church events who tested positive after their attendance. These cases demonstrate just how widespread COVID is in our communities. On the bright side, we haven't had mass transmission occurring at any of our worship or church events. It proves, once more, how a high number of fully vaccinated individuals following proper safety measures including distancing and masks can make a difference.

Therefore, we ask each local PRG in the Virginia Conference to communicate the following expectations of following best practices with those worshipping in your church:

1. If you are eligible to be vaccinated, we encourage you to get vaccinated.
2. For everyone 2 years and older, we encourage you to wear a mask for the protection of others when gathered in an enclosed area.
3. If you attend church gatherings and subsequently test positive, we encourage you to share the news so we can control the spread.

We know that leading in these times is extremely difficult, and we are thankful for all that you are doing to make our churches a safe and healthy environment for all people. Thank you. If some members feel more comfortable attending remotely via streaming services, please continue to offer this option. We are all in this together, but most importantly, God goes before us and is leading us forward.

In Christ,
VAUMC PRG Team

(For more information visit the Virginia Conference website at <https://vaumc.org/prg/>)