



Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
in Nebraska

Governor Ricketts Announce New Directed Health Measures (DHMs) in Face of Escalating COVID-19 Cases and Hospitalizations Being Overwhelmed

TO: Local Churches
FROM: Rev. Chris Morton, Regional Minister
RE: COVID-19 and the Governor's Escalating Directed Health Measures

On November 9th, Governor Ricketts held a news conference to talk about the need to increase our efforts to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 by moving from *recommending* to *requiring* the wearing of a face mask when at indoor public spaces (e.g., bars, restaurants) for more than 15 minutes.

The next day, the Governor announced that he and his wife, Susanne Shore, would be quarantining for 14 days because someone with whom they have had contact has tested positively for COVID-19.

As of November 10th, the COVID-19 hospitalizations in Nebraska has reached 820 according to *The COVID Tracking Project* at The Atlantic (<https://covidtracking.com/data/state/nebraska>). To provide some context for that data point, the web site 1011 NOW reported on November 5th that hospitalizations have increased by 207% since October 1st. That is, on November 5th, there were 698 hospitalizations. 1011NOW reports that across the state only 26% of hospital beds are available, and only 28% of ICU beds are available as of November 5th. ***With such a high use of hospital beds, medical staff are increasingly exhausted.***

[Addendum: this article was first drafted on November 11th, and then on Nov 13th Governor Ricketts issued more restrictions and expressed even greater concerns as the number of COVID-19 hospitalizations reached up to more than 900. Governor Ricketts stated that should the percentage of hospital beds reach 25% or more, he will be forced to issue even greater restrictions. Governor Ricketts encouraged all of us to do our part to stem the spread of COVID-19, including maintaining a 6-foot social distance, wearing masks at all times when leaving home, and washing our hands frequently. If we reach the 25% mark, and/or the state reaches what the Governor has defined as the "red" phase of the Coronavirus plan, gatherings will be restricted to no more than 10 people.

Governor's Web Page for Nov 13th: <https://governor.nebraska.gov/press/gov-ricketts-announces-phased-public-health-restrictions-tied-coronavirus-hospitalization-rate>]

For the past two months, I have tracked the COVID-19 cases in Nebraska, and captured a point-in-time study of COVID-19 cases in Nebraska on a spreadsheet. That spreadsheet seeks to track the Average Daily Cases During the Last 7 Days (NY Times – Sept 14 and 30, Oct 14, Nov 14) and Total Cases In Last 14 Days (NEB – DHHS COVID-19 Data Page) in Counties where there are Disciple Churches. The spreadsheet has been posted to the Region's Web Site:

The Governor told people to "Avoid the 3 C's, wear your mask, and watch your distance." What are the 3 C's? – Avoid Crowded Spaces, Close Contact, and Confined Spaces. Which will be increasingly important as we consider how to celebrate the coming Holidays, both in our homes with family and friends, and in and through the Local Church.

The Governor's new **Directed Health Measures (DHMs)** are being imposed because of the growing number of people who have been hospitalized due to COVID-19, placing at-risk the health care that can be available for people who may become infected with the virus. To ensure that people have access to the medical care, and hospital beds that they may need, **Governor Ricketts released the following DHMs through at least November 30th:**

2-Page pdf Outline of Changes to New DHMs: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Documents/Outline-of-Changes-to-Upcoming-DHMs-November9.pdf>

To demonstrate the urgency with which the Governor is experiencing our current situation, on Nov 10th each Health Department that covered a single, or multiple Counties, had their own DHMs. On Friday, November 13th, **all Counties** are under what is now **statewide DHMs:** <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/COVID-19-Directed-Health-Measures.aspx>

For Local Churches, the only requirement that is imposed by the Governor is to maintain **6 feet of separation** between parties --- which is **required** for all indoor spaces including churches/places of worship, weddings, and funerals. May Local Churches see our responsibility as being greater than the general public, particularly bars, restaurants, gentleman's clubs, and massage parlors.