**WEEKLY UPDATE – June 22, 2020**

**POSITIVE TESTS INCREASE, MEDIAN AGE DROPS**

COVID-19 infections in Central Florida continue to spike upwards as the summer season officially begins. Since June 8, Orange County/Orlando, Seminole County, and Lake County have more than doubled the number of positive cases since the pandemic began. an increase of 2,120 confirmed cases, almost double the results since the pandemic began. All of the other counties of the presbytery have seen similar rates of increase, except perhaps for Sumter and Highlands Counties.

One significant data point that has appeared is the decrease in the median age of infected persons in some of these counties. Orange and Seminole Counties shows a median age of 34 and 33, meaning half of the people testing positive are younger than that age. All of the other counties except Okeechobee (33) and Sumter (65) have median ages in the 40’s. As the median age was much higher initially across the board, this suggests that younger persons have accounted for the majority of the recent increases. Last week alone, the median age for new positives in Orange and Seminole Counties was in the upper 20’s. Of particular concern has been the number of positive tests in and around the UCF campus.

As always, sharing this data is with the intent of providing information so our sessions can make good decisions moving forward, and not to cause alarm. Please check the Presbytery’s COVID-19 resources page, as well as the resources on the General Assembly web site, for additional information.

As congregations continue to offer or plan for in-person worship, diligence in cleaning and sanitizing spaces being used must continue. Also, some of the counties in our Presbytery have made mandatory wearing a face mask when in public, including Orange and Osceola. This includes when attending worship in these counties. Both the CDC and the state of Florida strongly recommend wearing face masks.

**CONTACT TRACING**

An important consideration has arisen as more congregations resume in-person worship. Should someone become positive for COVID-19 that has attended worship in one of our churches, the local health authorities will want to do contact tracing with anyone who may have been exposed to the person testing positive. This underscores the need to know who is present in your sanctuary for worship or present in your facilities for other events. This need arose recently in one of the congregations of Tampa Bay Presbytery.

In our Zoom conversation with pastors last week, some shared how they are recording who is present for worship. Church of the Lakes in Orlando takes a picture of everyone present so the photos can be reviewed, if necessary. Other congregations make written notes of everyone present. Obviously, it is not a good idea to use the fellowship registers many of our congregations used prior to the pandemic, but sessions should consider some way to do this and not rely on trying to recall who was present.

Sessions should refer to the CDC document [Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fphp%2Ffaith-based.html), particularly the section, “Plan for when a staff member or congregant becomes sick.” Steps to be taken include:

* Notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the [Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)](https://www.eeoc.gov/facts/pandemic_flu.html) or other applicable laws and in accordance with religious practices.
* Advise those with [exposure](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html) to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to [stay home and self-monitor](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine-isolation.html) for symptoms, and follow [CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html) if symptoms develop.
* Close off areas used by the [sick](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfection. Ensure [safe and correct application](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html) of disinfectants and keep disinfectant products away from children.
* Advise staff and congregants with [symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to the facility until they have met CDC’s [criteria to discontinue home isolation](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html).

**PRESBYTERY OFFICE**

Because of the recent increase in positive tests within Orlando and Orange County, a decision has been made to extend the closure of the Presbytery Office through the end of June. All of the Presbytery staff have at least one underlying condition themselves and/or within their household for which stricter social distancing is recommended.

Staff continue to work from home and are best reached via email. Messages left on the office phone system are forwarded to staff emails as sound files, although sometimes this doesn’t work as designed. Members of the staff are occasionally in the office and have had one-on-one meetings with people upon request. Please contact the staff person to arrange a meeting.

**224TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The 224th General Assembly began meeting on June 19, and held an additional session on June 20 to elect the co-moderators for the meeting and next two years. Teaching Elder Gregory J. Bentley and Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart were elected on the first ballot. Gregory Bentley is pastor of Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Elona Street-Stewart is synod executive for the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. You can learn more about the co-moderators and the other candidates who stood for the position in the [Moderator’s Candidates Booklet](https://pcbiz.s3.amazonaws.com/Uploads/62f23c65-0d6c-463e-8371-d072fd5d3079/moderatorial-candidates-booklet2020.pdf) on PC-Biz.

The General Assembly is in recess until June 26-27, when it is scheduled to meet from 11:00 am – 6:30 pm both days. It will be considering a reduced number of actions, with many reports and overtures referred to the 225th General Assembly in 2022 (Columbus, Ohio, is the scheduled location). You can follow the livestream of the meeting on the [224th General Assembly](https://ga-pcusa.org/) web page and via [PC-Biz](https://www.pc-biz.org/#/).

Dan Williams

Executive Presbyter / Stated Clerk