

## COVID-19: Preface to Notice #9

October 23, 2020

*Next week I hope to issue COVID-19 Notice #9. Today I'll set the stage, and invite you to pray and study with me about the wilderness we find ourselves in.*



### THE PANDEMIC

Headline: yesterday reported the highest number of new COVID-19 cases in the United States since the beginning of the pandemic. By the end of February, COVID-19 deaths are projected to double to 500,000 [i] – about equal to the US death toll from World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars combined. Cases have been on the rise in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington states since early September.

### THE SEASON

Snow fell overnight and has turned to rain at our house in the Cascade mountains. By the winter solstice, Nome, Alaska, will see fewer than 4 hours of sunlight; Boise, Idaho, about 9 hours; most of Washington and Oregon about 8.5 hours. Temperatures are falling, and many days are overcast and rainy or snowy. Winter is coming to the Northwest, driving many people indoors and inward with depression.

**WE, THE PEOPLE** are living with a deadly virus, churches closed to most gatherings, virtual school and work from home, financial insecurity and job loss, rising domestic violence, addiction, suicide and national political unrest. People are crying out to meet in person for worship. We, the people live at the intersection of conflicting values: protection from the virus vs. emotional/spiritual/mental health and personal freedom.

### **GOD'S VIEW**

God sees the headlines and aches for each and every life that is taken by the virus, for all the exhausted workers, stretching to meet every need.

God sees the darkening moods, and the shortened tempers that come with the changing seasons.

God feels the fatigue as days become weeks and months and nearly a whole year.

God knows the hunger in our hearts to be together, share a long-delayed hug and sing aloud and together the songs of faith:

- *I'll praise my maker while I've breath...*
- *Cantemos al Señor...*
- *O, for a thousand tongues to sing...*
- *I'm gonna sing when the Spirit says sing...*
- *How can I keep from singing?...*

I'm asking how God would have me lead in this moment and I invite you to join me in study and prayer so that you know what informs me as I prepare COVID-Notice #9.

1. This week I find the latest COVID-19 statistics for your county at [covidactnow.org](https://covidactnow.org) by clicking on the map of your state and then selecting your county. See for yourself how the virus is affecting your county:

- a. What is the risk of COVID outbreak in your State? How does the risk level compare to a neighboring state?
  - b. Now, select your county from the list on the state page. What is the risk of COVID outbreak in your county? How does it compare to the whole state?
  - c. How many cases of COVID are reported per 100,000 people in the county?
  - d. Are the number of cases in the county rising or falling?
  - e. How do the number of cases today compare to the number in April or July?
  - f. What is the infection rate in your county? How does it compare to the infection rate for the whole state? Is it about 1% or less, indicating slow spread?
2. Pray that God will show us what it means to love God with our whole hearts, minds, souls and strength and our neighbors as ourselves during these unpredictable days.
  3. By November 1, watch for new guidance about how United Methodists will continue to adapt to the challenges we face.

In prayerful reflection,



**Bishop Elaine JW Stanovsky**  
**Greater NW Episcopal Area**

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*[i] IHME, an independent global health research center at the University of Washington | [covid.healthdata.org](https://www.covid.healthdata.org)*

*Find preface to COVID-19 notice #9 [on the Greater NW Area website](#).*