



The United Methodist Church

CHICAGO AREA EPISCOPAL OFFICE

77 West Washington Street • Suite 1820 • Chicago, Illinois 60602
Office: (312) 334-0702

John Hopkins
Bishop

E-mail: bishop.hopkins@umcnic.org

Rev. Arlene W. Christopherson

Assistant to the Bishop/Director of Connectional Ministries

E-mail: achristo@umcnic.org

Date: January 22, 2021
To: All churches and clergy
From Bishop John Hopkins
Re: Restore Illinois Progress

As we reach a sobering milestone of 400,000 lives lost in the U.S. as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the State of Illinois moves forward in steps toward restoration from the devastation of this infection with the hope that vaccinations will move us further along throughout 2021.

Over the course of the past year, the bishop's office has offered periodic guidance for the life of the church and the practice of in-person worship in our congregations. As we move to new levels of mitigation and back into the Restore Illinois Plan at different points across the state, it is important for each congregation to understand their context in relation to local, county and state guidelines. To find the state's regional metrics, [visit this link](#) for the State of Illinois Department of Public Health.

I would urge you to utilize the Northern Illinois Conference ReTurn Team Plan found on the conference website [at this link](#) to help guide you through a process of discerning the right steps for your context as you think about gathering people in your church building for worship, meetings, events and activities. Even as some restrictions are lifted, we are a long way from recovery.

I echo the mantra of Bishop Sally Dyck as we are called to "do no harm" for the good of our families, our community, our state and our world. I am grateful for the ways our congregations, laity and clergy have addressed this restrictive season. Even as we become weary of the efforts, we know that our caution and care are saving lives.

May God continue to bless each and every one of you as we journey together.

In Christ,

Bishop John L. Hopkins

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