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HEALTH DEPARTMENT
Caring today for a healthy tomorrow

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BITS

KENT COUNTY
WWW.ACCESSKENT.COM/HEALTH/CORONAVIRUS
WEEK OF NOVEMBER 29, 2020

SOLIDARITY TO PAUSE

The Kent County COVID-19 Church Task Force has met weekly with leaders from the health department since the first documented case of COVID-19 in March, 2020. Last week, the Task Force announced that more than 60 faith leaders committed to limit in-person gatherings at area houses of worship to help reduce the spread of the virus and the numbers that are growing.

Faith leaders from across Kent County signed a pledge to help fight the spread of COVID-19 by pausing in-person worship services for at least the next three weeks. More than 60 churches and other places of worship ended in-person worship months ago, but this pledge is aimed at making a public statement that the faith community supports frontline health care workers during this difficult time. "It's not a retreat from faith, but it's an advancement of faith by taking these precautions," said Rev. Khary Bridgewater, the co-chair for the Kent County COVID-19 Church Task Force.

Participating churches will discontinue large gatherings such as worship services, weddings, and meetings of more than five individuals until Dec. 8. "Pastors have been moved by the pleas of front-line healthcare workers, as well as the ongoing suffering and loss of life of Kent County residents as a result of this virus," said Rev. Khary Bridgewater on behalf of the Kent County COVID-19 Church Task Force. "Our physicians and nurses are risking their lives, working double shifts, suffering through physical, mental, and emotional hardship to care for patients. We want to give them a fighting chance."

The Kent County Health Department is supporting the decision, saying it "recognizes that houses of worship and faith communities are essential to the well-being of our community. However, in-person religious gatherings, not unlike other large gatherings, have been associated with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Kent County."

According to Dr. Darryl Elmouchi, the president of Spectrum Health West Michigan, the region is at a critical point. Elmouchi said. "I was recently asked if we were standing on top of a second peak but I am worried we are standing at the base of a mountain."



Click the image for a link to a local news story.

PUBLIC HEALTH WARNING ISSUED NOVEMBER 20, 2020



Kent County currently has a community-wide positivity rate of more than 15%, and our average number of new daily cases (689) has increased more than ten-fold over the past eight weeks.

Local hospitals are also reporting COVID-19 inpatient admission numbers that are severely threatening their ability to provide services essential for the public's health. Kent County's pace of daily deaths from COVID-19 (6.43) is at its highest point to date. In consideration of these factors, and the reality that the approaching holidays and colder weather will complicate matters, the COVID-19 risk level for Kent County is now considered Highest Risk.

The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) is issuing this Public Health Warning to provide residents with heightened guidance to best protect themselves and others. This Public Health Warning will remain in effect until the 14-day total incidence of new cases per 100,000 of population is less than 350 (or approximately 165 new cases per day) and the seven-day average positivity rate of new tests is trending downward. People should expect that this Public Health Warning will likely continue through January 15, 2021 at the earliest.