



Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest

PO Box 1689, Fort Worth TX 76101-1689 / 817-926-4687 / ccsw.org

Friends,

The recent spike in COVID 19 cases has created another wave of frustration and sadness. The entire Christian Church in the Southwest Staff is praying for you and praying with you during this difficult time. Please continue your prayers your prayers for medical professionals, service providers, and others who do difficult and risky work on our behalf.

Our congregations diligently discerned how to navigate the initial outbreak. It was emotionally, intellectually, and logistically difficult. Chaplains adjusted to new protocols and braved personal risks. Service ministries made difficult adjustments to the way service is rendered. We have all had to learn new ways of caring for one another and we have had to grieve in new ways. The reduction in COVID infections brought about by the availability of vaccinations gave many of us a sense of hope. We started to adjust to what we thought would be a new post-COVID chapter. Once again, we made difficult choices and communicated new sets of behaviors. However, the spike in infection rates brought about by the Delta variant has placed us again in a liminal space filled with grief and anxiety. As we adjust once again, I want to offer a few pastoral words.

First, it is acceptable, even necessary, for us to acknowledge our frustration with this time. This surge in infections comes just as school is starting back, leaving many people wondering how our young people's education will be impacted. It has caused educators to make difficult choices and continued to increase their significant workload. Scripture teaches us that in addition to praise and thanksgiving, the people of God have prayed heartfelt prayers of lament knowing that God hears and receives.

Second, I encourage us all to make decisions about our conduct that are rooted in Christ's clear command to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Sadly, like many other things in our culture, this pandemic has been used to further divide us politically. I encourage us all to listen to trusted medical professionals who have guided us in the past rather than pundits who have a commercial interest in keeping us angry and suspicious.

The church in all its manifestations has a role to play in sharing safe, accurate and true information. I personally believe increasing vaccine rates are the best way for us to reduce the spread of infection. However, much of the rhetoric surrounding this spike has dissolved into blaming and shaming and hyperbole. People have several reasons for why they are unvaccinated. For some, the feelings of the anti-vaccination crowd have sown enough doubt that they are reluctant to receive the vaccine. Accessibility, transportation, time constraints, health concerns, and age restrictions are powerful obstacles for many of the unvaccinated. As the church, we can help by hosting conversations with trusted medical professionals, assisting with transportation, and scheduling. Most of all, we can replace vitriol with hospitality.

We have been through much over the past two years. We will continue to persevere. Please know that I and the entire CCSW regional staff are here to walk these difficult tenuous steps together.

Sincerely,

Andy Mangum
CCSW Regional Minister

Rev. Dr. Andy Mangum
Regional Minister & President
andy@ccsw.org

Rev. Christy Drechsel
Regional Executive & Vice President
christy@ccsw.org

Rev. Peggy Edge
Community Regional Minister
for Adult Ministries and
Leadership Development
pedge@ccsw.org

Rev. Hector Morales
Community Regional Minister
for Hispanic Ministries
hector@ccsw.org

Rev. Heather Reed
Community Regional Minister
for Children and Youth Ministries
hreed@ccsw.org

Rev. Alfred Walker
Community Regional Minister
for Reconciliation and Anti-Racism
alwalker@ccsw.org

Rev. David Hargrave
Interim Regional Connection Minister
dhargrave@ccsw.org

Rev. Kim Fields-Haley
Interim Regional Connection Minister
kimfields-haley@ccsw.org

Bonnie Schuler
Regional Registrar
ccsw@ccsw.org

Nathaniel Cook
Communications Director
ncook@ccsw.org

Anna Facundo
Bi lingual Assistant Regional Registrar
anna@ccsw.org