

Email from ID Conference President

December 23, 2020

Dear Idaho Conference Family and Friends:

One year ago, as the sun was setting on the year of 2019, no human being could have imagined or predicted what the new year of 2020 would bring. This year has been unprecedented in multitudinous ways. Not the least of which has been the coronavirus pandemic. Here we are, at the dawn of the new year of 2021. We have lived almost ten months in the season of COVID-19, and most of us are pandemic weary.

Thank you to everyone who is taking the coronavirus seriously. I affirm our churches, schools, Gem State Adventist Academy, Barefoot Media Ministries, and Camp Ida-Haven for vigilantly and carefully following the appropriate protective protocols. Our number one priority has been and continues to be the safety of our members, employees, and friends. Please do not relax on employing the safety practices. The coronavirus continues to surge in Southern Idaho and Eastern Oregon. I strongly encourage you to continue to provide safe spaces for our members and friends.

Among my greatest concerns is the potential reality that one of our Idaho Conference entities could become a super-spreader in the community they serve. Typically, it takes years to build a robust reputation of love, care, kindness, and grace in a community. However, that sterling reputation can vanish in a careless few seconds.

The expectation of the Idaho Conference administration and Board of Directors is that all Conference entities will carefully and dutifully employ the safety protocols previously published in numerous installments by the Conference and government jurisdictions. If you have missed those publications, please let us know, and we will provide them for you.

There is not a singular practice that will best protect people from the coronavirus. A collective of best practices seems to minimize the risk of acquiring COVID-19. We need to employ a combination of wearing face coverings, physical distancing, good ventilation, and sanitizing hands, surfaces, and spaces. I appeal to you to continue to make these best practices and safety protocols a priority.

The coronavirus is real. Some of our employees and many of our church members have acquired the disease and suffered from its impact on them. Most of them have recovered from it. Sadly, I am aware of two of our dear church members who have passed away from COVID-19. We and their families and friends grieve their passing. We will miss them greatly.

There are numerous rumors and conspiracy theories about COVID-19. The pandemic has generated considerable speculations related to end-time events and misinterpretations of the Bible. Some have associated the wearing of masks with the mark of the beast (Rev. 13-14). It should be noted that Seventh-day Adventists believe that the end-time controversy and the mark of the beast center on the law of God as embodied in the Ten Commandments, specifically on the fourth commandment. Seventh-day Adventists understand and teach that the mark of the beast is not a literal mark, but a sign of allegiance that identifies the bearer as loyal to the power represented by the beast. The coronavirus pandemic is not an issue of the Sabbath or worship. It is a health matter.

Let us continue to move forward together safely and creatively in mission proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages to a spiritually hungry and hurting world during this pandemic. Feel free to contact me should you have questions or concerns. Thank you.

Sincerely,
David Prest Jr
President