

To College Community,

Christmas and the New Year are time for comfort and renewal of the Christ message that we are all the beloved children of God.

As we read in last week's Bible Lesson, "The advent of Jesus of Nazareth marked the first century of the Christian era, but the Christ is without beginning of years or end of days. Throughout all generations both before and after the Christian era, the Christ, as the spiritual idea,—the reflection of God, —has come with some measure of power and grace to all prepared to receive Christ, Truth." (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 333:16-23).

We want to keep you up to date on Covid-19 matters as they relate to Principia College. The College Covid Team and College administration are monitoring events across the globe, around the nation, and in our local region. We have been tracking the decisions of other colleges and universities, and continue to heed advice of local and state health authorities. As of December 30, we are confident of a safe opening to in-person classes on Monday, January 24.

You may be aware that national and local Covid-19 transmission rates are rising. The St. Louis area rates are currently up to around 25%. Principia's St. Louis campus is experiencing this impact. The School administration has determined it is prudent to delay the start of the School spring semester by one week. Instead of beginning Tuesday, January 4, School classes will resume in-person on Monday, January 10, 2022.

While rising, the transmission rates in Jersey County, home of the College, are substantially lower—around 7.5%. This last week of 2021 there have been two positive cases among our students and four employees are in quarantine at home due to contact with a family member who has tested positive.

While we have an unusually large number of students residing on campus over the winter break, we are grateful to report that none of the student or employee cases affect these students. Our winter athletic teams—men's and women's basketball, and swimming and diving—have just returned to campus. Two members of the women's basketball tested positive and are presently under quarantine in their dormitory rooms. As a precaution, the team is isolating itself from the rest of campus, wearing masks at all times, and restricting its activities for the next few days. Pursuant to NCAA guidelines, our athletes are tested regularly.

The Illinois Executive Order No. 87 still requires all students and employees in higher education institutions in Illinois to be vaccinated or weekly test. This requirement is currently limited to students residing on campus over break and those employees working on campus.

We will continue to monitor our sports teams and their competitors around the region. Our sports teams are cohorted by team and our new students will be living briefly in "new student housing." New international students will arrive on campus on January 12 and new domestic students will join them on January 18. New international students and new domestic students will be expected to follow Blue Phase when they arrive on campus.

Likewise, when returning students arrive and everyone moves into their permanent dormitories, the entire campus will be in Blue Phase, in which the wearing of masks will be mandatory even within dormitories. Blue Phase is expected to end on January 29th at 8am, unless there is a need to remain in it for another week.

We encourage everyone—students, staff, and faculty, and our Principia families and friends—to care for yourselves and each other, especially through the power of prayer, as we prepare for the coming semester. In the weeks before your return to campus, we encourage everyone to take appropriate steps to prepare for the Spring term. Please continue to adhere to Principia’s and the CDC’s COVID-19 protocols while on break, including masking, social distancing, avoiding large gatherings, and continuing conscientious hygiene practices. As much as possible, try to self-isolate. Refrain from additional holiday travel and out-of-home events. We recognize this request may not be possible based on work/family obligations, but we are asking you to minimize contact with others outside the home prior to the return to school. When there is a need to go out in public, always wear a face mask and maintain physical distance from those outside your immediate family.

This message is meant as a call to action for all of us to take time to prayerfully defend ourselves, our community, our country, and the world, knowing that the power and grace of Christ, Truth is ever-present and with us each step of the way.

“He our ever-present guide
Faithful is, whate’er betide;
Gladly then we journey on,
With His arm to lean upon.
From earth’s fears and vain alarms
Safe in His encircling arms,
He will keep us all the way,
God, our refuge, strength, and stay.”
Christian Science Hymnal, Hymn 53.

John W. Williams, JD
President
Principia College