



December 18, 2020

Dear Residents, Families and Staff Members,

With Christmas Day just one week from today, let us share with each other the assurance of hope inspired by the birth of the Christ Child. This time of year always is filled with anticipation. And, typically for most of us, packed with a kind of busyness that can overshadow the true meaning of Christmas.

So while this Christmas will be quieter than most and truly unlike any other we have experienced, we might consider it a blessing to have time to remember and embrace a life patterned after the simplicity of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.

We stand at the portal of good news regarding COVID-19 and so, I believe, there are reasons to rejoice. Mercy Circle is hosting a series of celebrations—virtually, of course!—organized according to residents' settings for when they will receive deliveries of special holiday desserts and drinks to enjoy while watching a performance of Christmas music on Channel 8

- Assisted living residents should expect deliveries to their apartments close to 1:30pm on Monday, December 21
- Skilled nursing care residents will receive deliveries around 1:30pm on Tuesday, December 22
- Independent living residents are asked to stop at the Bistro to pick-up their Christmas treats between 6:00pm and 7:00pm on Tuesday, December 22, in time to return to their apartments to watch the Christmas program on Channel 8 which airs at 7pm

In addition to our regular broadcast of daily Mass, please mark your calendar for celebrations of this season here on

- Sunday, December 20, when Communion will be brought to all residents
- Christmas Eve at 2pm, a special prayer service will be broadcast on Channel 8 plus Communion will be carried to all residents throughout our community
- Christmas Day a televised liturgy will be complemented by Communion brought to each area between 10:15am and 12noon

We also encourage you stop in the Chapel and Agatha O'Brien Room where the season is represented by color, lights and music. And, throughout our community, be on the lookout for elves delivering treats of holiday sweets and beverages.

More good news!

We received initial confirmation today from CVS, our pharmacy partner for administering the vaccine to residents and staff members. While we have not yet received many important details, we do know that between 11am and 5pm on Saturday, January 2, 2021, CVS will conduct its first Clinic Day at Mercy Circle.

While it is not yet clear who—other than skilled nursing care residents and all employees—will be inoculated on that day, we must have all required documentation for all residents and staff—no matter where they live or department in which they work—in the hands of our Receptionist no later than Wednesday, December 23, if residents and employees want to be included in the CVS program here. The two essential documents are

- A completed and signed consent form which is available at the Reception Desk
- A copy of the front and back of your current insurance card even though the vaccine itself is free, there is an administration fee from CVS

As soon as we receive more specific information about the number of dosages Mercy Circle will receive and who can be vaccinated on Saturday, January 2, I will send a separate notification so you can confirm your scheduled appointment time.

CVS only will be at Mercy Circle one time for the first dosage and one time for the second dosage according to an approved schedule. All newly admitted residents and newly hired staff members will be vaccinated when CVS conducts a third visit.

People who miss their assigned time for any reason, however, only will have a second chance to receive the vaccine when it is available to the general public expected to be June 2021.

Testing plans and updates

During the week leading to Christmas Day, Mercy Circle will conduct its twice-weekly employee testing on Monday and Tuesday and again on Wednesday and Thursday. And residents in all our healthcare settings will be tested on Wednesday, December 23.

This past week, we administered tests on Monday and Tuesday to 103 staff members, and we tested 108 employees on Thursday and today. A total of five staff members have positive results for COVID-19.

- Today a member of the nursing team came to campus to be tested and received a positive outcome for the virus. This employee offers no threat of exposure to the virus for residents and colleagues because this individual has not worked at Mercy Circle for more than one month.

- Very late on Thursday after we distributed a 12-hour notice, a second member of our nursing staff in the skilled care unit tested positive for COVID-19 and immediately went home to recuperate.

On Thursday, December 17, you received a notice about positive tests results for three employees

- Member of the dining services team for independent living residents
- Nurse caring for skilled nursing care residents
- Member of the administrative team

And on Tuesday, December 15, you received a notice about

- One housekeeper, who worked in our assisted living area

As you already know, one assisted living resident, who is asymptomatic and self-quarantined in the person's apartment, received a positive result for COVID-19 on December 17. All other 57 assisted living and skilled nursing care residents and a total of 39 independent living residents had negative outcomes for their tests.

A glimmer of hope mixed with sobering facts

For Illinois citizens, this week is the second in a row with more than 1,000 deaths, the highest since March, attributed to COVID-19. On the other hand, the State announced 7,377 new and probable cases of the virus logged on Thursday, December 17, down from 8,828 reported for Wednesday.

The Illinois Department of Public Health also confirmed its seven-day positivity rate fell to 8 percent today, down from 8.4 percent reported on Thursday. Chicago's positivity rate today of 11.8 percent also declined from 12.9 percent seven days before.

Let us tap our creative resources to find a way to embrace the joys of Christmas while following all precautions to mitigate the virus' spread that include

- Wearing a face mask that covers your nose and mouth
- Practicing six-foot social distancing in all situations
- Washing your hands regularly with soap or sanitizer at numerous stations

While these practices seem so basic, experts confirm they can make all the difference.

Tier 3 stay-at-home advisory remains in place

Everyone, including independent living residents, who do not live in a licensed area of our community, should faithfully follow the practices we have instituted in response to Governor Pritzker's Tier 3 stay-at-home advisory.

Residents should ask Paul May at 312-307-9043 and Marge Everett at extension 3606 for assistance with shopping for the basics. We also encourage and assist residents with online shopping and ordering curbside orders for them. And any resident who leaves Mercy Circle—for an essential appointment or for even just one hour—should call our Director of Nursing Anita Ajayi, RN, at 773-253-3664. She will advise you about the prudence of or need for being quarantined.

Mercy Circle provides approved, safe way to visit

While Tier 3 does not allow indoor or outdoor visits, it does permit window visits. So, we now offer 20-minute “window” visits between 1pm and 4pm on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. They are set-up at the west end of Mercy Hall so two family members can be inside the vestibule but separated by glass doors from residents. Please bring your cell phone for talking while safely seeing each other.

Send your request to LifeEnrichment@MercyCircle.org. All visits must be scheduled 48 hours in advance. As part of the reservation process, an employee will review and confirm our prescreening protocol.

Please call me at 773-253-3627 with your questions and suggestions.

In anticipation of again welcoming the Christ Child into our lives,



Frances Lachowicz
Executive Director