

**One church in De Queen and two in Nashville are among 44 churches on an Arkansas Department of Health list as having documented exposure to COVID-19.**

**New Beginnings Church in De Queen was listed as both a blue dot cluster and a red dot cluster on the statewide map of churches released late last week. A red dot cluster, according to the Health Department, is defined as two to eleven people. A blue dot is under two.**

**De Queen is the county seat of Sevier County which now has 700 positive Covid-19 cases.**

**In Nashville, New Beginnings Baptist Church was listed as blue dot cluster and Lifeline Ministry Church of God in Christ is a red dot cluster. Nashville is the county seat of Howard County which has 89 reported cases.**

**The information was reported to the Department of Health during case surveillance and contact tracing efforts as reported by a known COVID-19 case. The church locations are places patients reported visiting during their infectious period, but it doesn't necessarily indicate they became infected there, the information from state officials said.**

**"All of this information comes from talking to patients about where they have been before their diagnosis. It does not mean for certain that they got the virus at church but it is certainly possible to get COVID-19 at church," said Gavin Lesnick, a spokesman for the Arkansas Health Department.**

**Lesnick said there have been discrepancies in the report since it was released and some churches have been taken off the list.**

**"We are not specifically tracking churches. Our overriding message is just be careful. By and large, churches across the state are doing great jobs," Lesnick said.**

**Church leaders in Arkansas are advised to encourage staff and congregation members to maintain good hand hygiene and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Supplies should include hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, tissues and no-touch trash cans. Staff and congregation members should cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of their elbows and wear cloth face coverings.**