

South Korea reports lowest new virus infections in days

March 8 2020

Hundreds of churches across South Korea closed their doors Sunday and held online services as the country reported its lowest number of new coronavirus cases in more than a week.

South Korea—which has the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases outside China with 7,313—added 272 new cases Sunday, far below daily increases of around 500 recently.

Two more people died, bringing the [death toll](#) to 50, according to the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Despite the smaller rise in COVID-19 cases, we are not at a point where we can say the situation has improved," said health minister Park Neung-hoo.

"Small cluster infections can emerge at any time in closed spaces like group facilities or [religious events](#)," KCDC director Jung Eun-kyeong told reporters.

Yoido Full Gospel Church—the largest Protestant Church in South Korea with around 560,000 registered members—was among hundreds of churches that held [online services](#) on Sunday.

"Although it is the rule to come to church for service, this is an emergency situation," said elder Kim Doo-hyung.

"Even though they are attending the service from home, we have asked members to dress and worship in the same manner as they would at Church," Kim told AFP.

Most of the country's infections are linked to the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, a religious sect often condemned as a cult.

One of its members attended at least four services before being diagnosed.

Scores of events—from K-pop concerts to sports matches—have been cancelled or postponed over the contagion, with school and kindergarten breaks extended by three weeks nationwide.

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