



Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac

The Episcopal Church in northeast and northcentral Wisconsin

PROTOCOLS AND BEST PRACTICES DURING A PANDEMIC

from the Bishop of Fond du Lac with the Covid Task Force

Effective September 1, 2021

INTRODUCTION

This document provides protocols and recommends best practices for congregations and ministries based on information issued by public health agencies, church leaders, and the medical knowledge and experience of Task Force members. Points of reference include trends in Covid illnesses and tests, vaccination levels, hospital capacity and risk of transmission. More frequent and larger public gatherings, virus variants and loosening safety protocols suggest continued, but optimistic caution in church activities.

The decision of when and how to hold in-person services and activities in church buildings is to be determined by the rector, vicar, priest-in-charge, or warden if there be no cleric, in consultation with the vestry. It is to account for local risk factors and demographics of the congregation. Fully vaccinated means those who completed the second shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or single shot of Johnson & Johnson, at least two weeks before a church event. Fully vaccinated participants is the most effective way to reduce risk of transmission. Resources with links to information may be found at diofdl.org/covid-resources. Most municipalities maintain a community specific Covid-19 resource page.

PROTOCOLS IN ALL SITUATIONS

- ◆ *MASKS*– All persons are strongly encouraged to wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status, when in a church building. A supply of disposable masks is to be made available by the church.
- ◆ *DISTANCING*– Distancing is encouraged, especially when vaccination status is unknown. Allowance must be made for those who wish to remain distanced.
- ◆ *ATTENDANCE*– Anyone feeling ill, experiencing symptoms of illness, or has been exposed recently to a confirmed case of Covid-19 is to refrain from attending in-person activities.
- ◆ *CONFIRMED CASE*– If it is learned a participant with a confirmed case of Covid-19 attended an in-person church activity, church leaders will cooperate with public health authorities in reporting and response. An announcement is to be made through regular church communications that a participant with a confirmed case attended a specific event.
- ◆ *SINGING INDOORS*– Congregational hymn singing is not allowed indoors.
- ◆ *FOOD SERVICE*– Any persons serving food or drink must be fully vaccinated and masked.

BEST PRACTICES

- ◆ *HAND SANITIZER*– Hand sanitizer is to be made available with its use encouraged.
- ◆ *DOOR PROPPING*– Doors are to be propped open.
- ◆ *VENTILATION*– Refer to **Addendum A** - HVAC considerations.
- ◆ *MOVEMENT*– Signs and verbal directions are to direct movement in one direction.
- ◆ *CONTACT*– Activities are to minimize physical touching and offer non-contact options.

- ◆ *WORSHIP*– An announcement is to be made at each church activity to contact the church if they or an family member becomes ill or experiences illness symptoms following attendance.
- ◆ *VIRTUAL WORSHIP*– Presenting worship virtually is encouraged. Those unable to offer them are encouraged to connect members to congregations that do.
- ◆ *HAND-WASHING*– Liturgical leaders are to wash hands with soap and water before each service. Hand sanitizer is to be used during the service, especially before handling Eucharistic vessels.
- ◆ *CHOIR AND MUSIC*– Choir members who are fully vaccinated may sing while masked and distanced from the congregation. Wind instruments may be used in a location that maximizes the distance from the congregation.
- ◆ *COMMUNION*– Hand sanitizer stations are to be placed for use before and/or after receiving. Bread and wine are both to be consecrated.
 - *ELEMENTS (BREAD)*– Only fully vaccinated persons may handle the elements and distribute. Hosts are to be covered through the consecration with gluten free hosts separately covered and distributed.
 - *ELEMENTS (WINE)*– Refer to **Addendum B**. Consecrated wine is not to be reserved.
- ◆ *HOLY WATER*– Holy Water receptacles are to be empty.
- ◆ *PASTORAL CONTACT/HOME VISITS*–Masks are to be worn when any participant is not fully vaccinated or when the person visited requests it. Guidelines of local communities (e.g. hospitals, assisted living facilities, nursing homes) for visiting protocols are to be followed.

ADDENDUM A: HVAC CONSIDERATIONS

Regularly service air units to function at peak capacity as designed and intended for use.

AIR EXCHANGE OR AIR MOVEMENT

- ◆ **Air exchange** is moving inside air to the outside and replacing or recirculating with outside air.
- ◆ **Air movement** is circulation of inside air in a space.

To reduce risk requires improving **air exchange**. Air movement has essentially no effect on risk and may even increase it.

- ◆ Commercial style HVAC system often use air exchange vents.
- ◆ Furnace systems often only use outside air for combustion. The air to heat (or cool) only circulates through that space (i.e. air movement).
- ◆ Contained hot water systems are only air movement by rising hot air and sinking cold air.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Caution: being too aggressive in moving outside air inside, especially in extremely cold weather, may damage your heating system and possibly other building systems.

1. With assistance from a qualified HVAC service advisor determine your unit type and have it serviced at least twice each year. Install the highest-level filtration filter recommended. MERV 13 filters are recommended, but not all units are able to tolerate its high level of filtration.
 - a. Maximize air exchange.
 - b. Determine if there are exhaust fan capabilities and operate to remove air from closed spaces.
 - c. Determine if energy saver functions limit outside air intake and change to maximize air intake.
2. Explore options to create air exchange. Use fans with one fan pulling in outside air, another fan pushing out inside air.
3. Do NOT run fans inside closed spaces or buildings. Fans should only be used if they are set up to bringing outside air inside and push inside air outside.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are some items on the market which may be helpful supplements to HVAC systems.

- ◆ **Humidifiers** can help keep humidity levels up which may help reduce the spread of viral droplets. Humidifiers may add to mold problems. The size of most worship spaces may make multiple units necessary which may be impractical in terms of unit capacity and cost.
- ◆ **UV light** attachments are available for some systems. Cost may be prohibitive.
- ◆ **Ionization Technology:** There are two types: fan less and fan based. They can be purchased as standalone units for use in buildings. The size of most worship spaces may make multiple units necessary which may be impractical in terms of unit capacity and cost.
- ◆ **HEPA filters** are similar size to humidifier units. Considered effective for air purification but this varies by unit. Some combined with ionizing units. The size of most worship spaces may make multiple units necessary which may be impractical in terms of unit capacity and cost.

ADDENDUM B: DISTRIBUTION OF CONSECRATED WINE

OPTION A: INTINCTION

The wine is to be consecrated in a chalice suitable for intinction. A mask may be temporarily removed to receive the elements. The communicant may not intinct for themselves. The liturgical minister who intincts the host into the wine must take care to avoid contact with a communicant's mouth by anything other than the tip of the host. If contact is made, the liturgical minister's hands are to be thoroughly sanitized before continuing.

OPTION B: COMMON VESSEL, INDIVIDUAL CUPS

The wine is to be consecrated in a common vessel suitable for pouring, such as a cruet. A station of clean juice glasses is placed in an accessible location. Paper or plastic cups may not be used. A suitable receptacle to collect used glasses is to be placed near the station.

If it seems meet and right so to do, the priest may bless the glasses for the period of their use.

Taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are they who trust in him. The cup of blessing which we bless is a sharing in the Blood of Christ.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose blessed Son instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Grant that all who receive the holy Mysteries from these vessels, which we now consecrate for use in your Church, may be sustained by his presence and enjoy for ever his heavenly benediction, who lives and reigns in glory everlasting. Amen.

A mask may be temporarily removed to receive the elements. After receiving the host, the communicant proceeds to the station, takes a glass and approaches the liturgical minister. The liturgical minister pours a small amount of wine into the glass which is consumed by the communicant. The used glass is placed, by the communicant, into the receptacle. Following ablutions, the receptacle is removed to the sacristy.

After the service, used glasses are cleaned and rinsed in the receptacle with remnants of consecrated elements reverently poured into a piscina or outside directly to the ground. Glasses are to be washed to ensure sanitation before next use.