



Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac

The Episcopal Church in northeast and northcentral Wisconsin

PROTOCOLS AND BEST PRACTICES

*from the Bishop of Fond du Lac with the Covid Task Force
effective December 7, 2021*

INTRODUCTION

This document provides protocols and recommended best practices for congregations and ministries based on information issued by public health agencies, church leaders, and medical knowledge and experience of Task Force members. Points referenced include trends in Covid illness, vaccination levels, hospital capacity and risk of transmission. Fully vaccinated is most effective to reduce risk of transmission. More frequent and larger public gatherings, virus variants and loosening protocols suggest optimistic caution in church activities.

The decisions regarding in-person services and activities in church buildings is determined by the rector, vicar, priest-in-charge, (or warden if there be no cleric), in consultation with the vestry. They are to account for local factors and demographics of the congregation. Resource may be found at diofdl.org/covid-resources. Most municipalities maintain community Covid-19 resource pages.

PROTOCOLS FOR ALL SITUATIONS

- ◆ *MASKS*– All persons are strongly encouraged to wear a mask when in a church building. Signs are to be posted encouraging mask wearing. Disposable masks are to be made available.
- ◆ *DISTANCING*– Distancing is encouraged with allowance made for those desiring to remain distanced. Signs are to be posted encouraging distancing.
- ◆ *SINGING*– Congregational and choir singing is allowed while distanced with masking strongly encouraged.
- ◆ *ATTENDANCE*– Anyone feeling ill, experiencing symptoms of illness, or has been recently exposed to a confirmed Covid-19 case is to refrain from attending in-person activities.
- ◆ *POSITIVE TEST*– If it is learned a participant with a positive Covid-19 test 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.
- ◆ *COMMUNION*– 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)*– Distribution is to be only by methods found in **Addendum B**.
- ◆ *FOOD SERVICE*– Any person serving food or drink must be fully vaccinated. Masking is encouraged.

BEST PRACTICES

- ◆ *HAND SANITIZER*– Hand sanitizer is to be made available and its use encouraged.
- ◆ *DOOR PROPPING*– Doors are to be propped open, when possible.
- ◆ *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 asking participants to contact the church office if they have a positive Covid-19 test following a church activity.
- ◆ *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, especially before handling Eucharistic vessels. Sanitizer stations are to be placed for use before and/or after receiving.
- ◆ *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 improved **air exchange** as air movement may increase risk.

- ◆ Commercial style HVAC system often use air exchange vents.
- ◆ Furnace systems often use outside air for combustion with air to heat (or cool) only circulating through that space (i.e. air movement).
- ◆ Contained hot water systems provide 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 the heating system and possibly other building systems.

1. With assistance from a qualified HVAC advisor determine unit type and have it serviced at least twice each year. Install highest-level filter recommended. MERV 13 filters are recommended, but not all units may 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 pulling in outside air, another pushing out inside air.
3. Do NOT run fans inside closed spaces or buildings - only for air exchange.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Some items on the market may supplement HVAC systems.

- ◆ **Humidifiers** can help keep humidity up which may help reduce spread of viral droplets, though may add to mold problems. Worship space size may make multiple units necessary.
- ◆ **UV light** attachments are available for some systems. Cost may be prohibitive.
- ◆ **Ionization Technology:** Two types: fanless and fan based. Purchase as standalone units for use in buildings. Worship space size may make multiple units necessary.
- ◆ **HEPA filters** are considered effective for air purification but varies by unit. Some are combined with ionizing units. Worship space size may make multiple units necessary.

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.