

## FAQ published 1/13/2021

### Why does the Diocese of Fond du Lac continue to limit the number of persons allowed for in-person worship?

The short answer is that the Bishop and Task Force are making the safest decision for our worshipping community. The goal is to reduce the risk of transmission. Continued high case rates and health system strain upholds the action of continued suspension of larger gatherings. It is the responsible and faithful thing to do. The Task Force considers the risk of transmission to an individual, but more appreciably considers the increased risk to others which larger gatherings have. As stated in a November letter, "it is an act of neighbor-love to do what we can do to prevent further strain on the health system until we are on the other side the spike."

For additional information, here are five bullet points explaining the why.

- **RATE:** The rate of infection in Wisconsin continues to be from 3 to 15 times higher than the Spring 2020 "spike". A more contagious strain of the virus has appeared. The rate of infection is unlikely to drop soon.
- **VACCINE:** Vaccination decreases the risk, but vaccinating the populace will take time to make an impact on the rate of infection.
- **TIME:** Risk of transmission increases by the amount of time a group is together. This is true even when masked and maintaining social distancing (both reduce, but do not eliminate risk).
- **SPACE:** Risk of transmission increases by the number of people in a fixed space. Being indoors, especially in winter, adds to this increased risk. This is true even when masked and maintaining social distancing (both reduce, but do not eliminate risk).
- **HOSPITAL:** In Wisconsin, our health systems are strained by the care of Covid patients, impacting other forms of care. This strain is compounded by the strain it causes to health care staff. Overburdening the health system dramatically increase care provided to all.

#### *What about...*

What about other churches who are holding larger gathering?

There are worshipping communities who gather following protocols that are different than ours. Each community may determine their own practices. We follow what we discern is our responsibility for our worshipping community by focusing on doing all we can to minimize the risk of transmission to our members and the community at large.

What about those who are going to stores?

Shopping at a store is different than attending a worship service. For example: most stores have commercial air exchange systems which reduce risk. Many churches do not. Shopping may expose one to more people but the length of time of exposure is usually much less than at church. For many, going out in public for shopping will tend to be more guarded with intentional distancing and mask wearing. Going to church will tend to be more comfortable so more likely to inadvertently drop our guard in terms of social distancing and masking.

#### *Conclusion*

For the time being, the Task Force and Bishop, working with the best information they can gather, affirm that for the time being, it is the best practice to continue to limit gatherings in our churches to no more than 4 persons. When information is received that suggests expanding that number, it will take action to relax the limitation.