

Returning to Public Worship Guidelines for the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee

from the Way Forward Task Force

As we make plans to begin reimagining our common life together as the Church, the following are requirements and recommendations set forth by the Bishop in consultation with the diocesan Way Forward Task Force. These are given to express Christ's and our love for each other spiritually, physically, and emotionally. The primary health risk of reopening is transmission of illness by individuals who are infected but have no symptoms or very mild symptoms. The Four Pillars of preventing this are:

1. Hygiene: handwashing, hand sanitizer, and cleaning surfaces
2. Distancing 6 feet apart or more and limiting the amount of time spent close together in an enclosed space
3. Masks to prevent droplet and aerosol transmission
4. Screening to minimize exposure to active infection

These requirements and recommendations apply to all gatherings for worship including baptisms, weddings, and funerals and should be addressed in individual parish plans.

After reviewing the following guidelines, each congregation must submit a plan for their parish's return to public worship to the office of the Bishop for review and approval by the Way Forward Taskforce. Public worship may begin once the parish has received notification of approval.

Requirements

Attendance, Distancing and Screening

1. During Phase 1 – services will be limited to 10 people including the celebrant and musician(s).
2. During Phase 2 – services will be limited to 50 people including the celebrant and musician(s).
3. The criteria to determine Phase 1, 2, and 3 will come from your local health departments, Wisconsin Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control. Badger Bounce Back guidelines can be found at:
content.govdelivery.com/attachments/WIGOV/2020/04/20/file_attachments/1431305/Badger%20Bounce%20Back%20PlanFINAL.pdf
4. Each parish will decide on a system that works best for them to create a schedule of when people will attend services.
5. No one who is ill shall attend public worship.

6. Each parish will ask screening questions of each attendee. If anyone answers “yes” to one or more of these questions, it is recommended that they not attend in person worship.
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fsymptoms.html
 - a. Do you have any of the following symptoms
 - 1) Cough
 - 2) Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - 3) Fever
 - 4) Chills
 - 5) Muscle pain
 - 6) Sore throat
 - 7) New loss of taste or smell
 - b. In the past two weeks have you had exposure to anyone diagnosed with COVID -19?
7. Social distancing of at least 6 feet must be maintained.
8. Sunday School, nursery care, and coffee hour should not be held during Phase 1. A determination will be made for beyond Phase 1.
9. Each parish shall create a plan to maintain a list of those who attended each service. Parishes will assist public health departments with contact tracing. If a parishioner who attended worship tests positive for COVID-19, the local department of public health will perform contact tracing for that individual.
10. Clergy and vestry members will create a strategy for addressing possible behavior of non-compliant and defiant attendees.
11. Each parish will contact their insurance carrier to determine coverage for infectious diseases and specific requirements.
12. The use of supply clergy shall be addressed in the plan or approved by the Bishop on a case by case basis.

Hygiene and Masks

1. All present over the age of 2 must wear masks.
2. Cleaning must follow the guidelines below. (see Cleaning Guidelines)
3. Multiple services may not be held in the same space, on the same day. They must be held in separate spaces using separate entrances, inside or outdoor, if held on the same day. (see Cleaning Guidelines)
4. No congregational or choral singing or wind instruments.
WCC Church Music in the age of COVID : <https://www.wichurches.org/2020/05/08/church-music-covid19/>
5. The peace shall be exchanged verbally only.

6. Offering plates should be placed at the entrance/exit and/or encourage congregation to give online. After each service, place the offerings given in a secure place and wait at least 72 hours to handle and count the money given.
7. Gifts that are to be consecrated should be placed on the credence table before the service or on the altar itself.
8. Communion shall be distributed in one kind (bread only).
9. Remove hymnals, BCPs, reusable papers, pencils, etc. from pews.

Recommendations

For Public Worship in the Church Building

1. If a person is concerned about whether they should attend public worship, they should consult with their health care provider.
2. Individuals at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are encouraged to continue to shelter in place.
 - a. The elderly
 - b. Pregnant women,
 - c. Those who are immune compromised,
 - d. Individuals with significant heart, lung, liver, or kidney conditions
 - e. For the complete list of those who need to take extra precautions see:
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html
3. If possible, keep doors propped open for ventilation purposes, and to prevent unnecessary touching of the same surface by multiple people.
4. If possible open windows and use fans for ventilation purposes.
5. Section off pews to place individuals at least 6 feet apart.
6. Families who reside in the same household may sit together.
7. Have masks available for attendees who do not come with one.
8. Have multiple bottles of antibacterial hand gel available:
 - a. At the entrance/exit doors.
 - b. In each pew if able.
 - c. Near the altar.
9. Make the liturgy available with the following:
 - a. Print the service in bulletins and have a bin available to have them thrown away in and/or encourage people to take bulletins home.
 - b. Create an online version that can be used on electronic devices.
 - c. Encourage attendees to bring their own BCPs from home.
10. Non-choral music is still encouraged!
 - a. All non-wind instruments may be used. If multiple musicians are used, they must be 6 feet apart.

- b. Soloists may be used if there is proper ventilation and space that allows them to be at least 20 feet removed from all those in attendance.
 - c. Remember that musicians count in the maximum number of attendees.
11. Keep the length of service time to a minimum. (see Additional Resources for further comment) In addition to omitting singing, the offertory, and passing the peace, the following changes to the principle Sunday liturgy are advised and permissible:
- a. Omit the Collect for Purity in Rite II or the Acclamation in Rite I
 - b. Choose the Trisagion or Kyrie instead of the Gloria.
 - c. Choose only one lesson in addition to the Gospel.
 - d. Be aware of the sermon length.
 - e. Omit the Confession.
 - f. Choose a shorter version of the Prayers of the People (Form III) or compose a POP that fulfills the rubric.
12. Parishes may choose a non-Eucharistic liturgy.

Should a Parish Choose the Liturgy for Holy Communion

1. It is highly recommended that communion wafers be used rather than homemade bread.
2. Only one member of the clergy will distribute communion.
3. Celebrant should use antibacterial gel before and after consecration, and after distribution.
4. If Deacon and/or other altar party is present, they all must remain 6 feet apart.
5. When distributing communion, the host should be dropped in the hand of those receiving to avoid hand to hand contact.
6. If hand to hand contact is made, the clergy person will use antibacterial gel before distributing to the next person.
7. Parishes may create a schedule and safe process to allow people to come to the parish to receive communion that maintains the four principles listed above for maintaining safe and healthy individuals and communities.
8. If the congregation comes forward to receive communion:
 - a. The people should not come to the altar rail, but rather the priest should stand at a place in the middle and have the people approach them to have the host dropped in their hand.
 - b. Each person must come up one at a time or as a family unit, maintaining 6 feet between each person.
 - c. Masks will continue to be worn by both the priest and the people.
 - d. After receiving the host, the person should step aside, 6 feet away from the clergy person, then remove their mask and consume the host or take the host back to their seat to consume it.
9. Clergy may also choose to go to the people in the pews.
 - a. To ensure people are 6 feet apart, there will likely be one or more empty pews between each person.
 - b. The clergy may walk in the empty pews in front of each person to distribute the host.
 - c. The person receiving the host would then wait until the clergy person has moved away from them to remove their mask and consume the host.

For Parishioners Sheltering in Place

1. When possible, parishes shall livestream or record their services to be viewed online.
2. When appropriate, parishes may provide resources for their parishioners at home to assist their participation in the service.
 - a. Service bulletin
 - b. Prayer for Spiritual Communion
 - c. Lectionary readings
 - d. Prayers of the People and a means to submit petitions
3. When appropriate, Eucharistic Visitors may take communion to those unable to attend worship in person. (see Eucharistic Visitor Recommended Guidelines below)
4. The diocese will continue to offer online Sunday Common Worship for those who are unable to be in public and whose parish is unable to offer online worship.

Building Considerations

1. Flush the water system if the building has not been in active use.
2. Open all faucets and taps and run the water for 5 minutes to flush the system.
3. Consider emptying and refilling the hot water heater.

Cleaning Guidelines

1. Be aware of all spaces that have been used throughout the time together. Nave, narthex, hallway, restrooms, offices, sacristy, etc.
2. Thorough cleaning and disinfection are required before each service or meeting. Disinfection guidelines can be found at: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html
3. Cleaning should take place a minimum of 24 hours after a space has been used. The more time between a service and the cleaning of the space, the better. PPE including masks, gloves, and gowns should be provided for and worn by cleaning crew.
4. All surfaces that may have been touched by all those in attendance must be thoroughly cleaned.
5. It is recommended that each parish make a checklist of all the spaces that need to be cleaned each week.

Home Communion Guidelines

Since there may be more people than usual who will request that communion be brought to their home, these guidelines are recommended as a way to make it possible for more people to receive the Eucharist and to minimize the contact between people in the process. Requests for Pastoral in-home visit will be addressed separately.

1. Each parish will recruit, as needed, several Lay Eucharistic Visitors (LEV) who are not at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 to distribute communion to parishioners who are unable to attend public worship and who have requested to receive communion.
2. If the LEV has not served in this roll before, they should also receive all proper training that is needed to serve as a Eucharistic Visitor, and their names must be sent to the office of the Bishop for licensing and recording.
3. Clergy may choose to distribute communion to parishioner's homes if they are not at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, but may want to reserve themselves for emergency pastoral care needs in order to cut down on their exposure and multiple contacts.
4. Each Eucharistic Visitor (EV) will be assigned 1-3 homes to visit.
5. They will be given:
 - a. An appropriate number of consecrated hosts.
 - b. A pix or other proper vessel for the consecrated hosts.
 - c. A face mask if needed.
2. The EV will contact the parishioners to arrange a time to come to the home.
3. It is recommended that the parishioners place a small table outside of the door they wish the EV to come to, and to place a bowl on the table for the EV to put the host in.
4. Once at the home, the EV will put on their mask.
5. They will place the appropriate number of hosts in the bowl provided.
6. They will knock/ring doorbell/call the parishioner to let them know they are there and remain 6 feet away from the door.
7. When the parishioner comes to the door, they will take the host from the bowl, proper prayers will be said by the EV and parishioner.
8. If there are multiple homes to visit, steps 7-11 will be repeated.
9. Once all visits are complete, bring the pix/vessel to the parish and cleanse with soap and water as directed.

Additional Resources

1. Amid the Coronavirus Crisis, a Regimen for Re-entry: Health-care workers have been on the job throughout the pandemic. What can they teach us about the safest way to lift a lockdown? By Dr. Atul Gawande www.newyorker.com/science/medical-dispatch/amid-the-coronavirus-crisis-a-regimen-for-reentry
2. CDC references and other peer reviewed scientific literature were used as references in the development of Returning to Public Worship Guidelines for the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee.
3. Choral singing was identified as a high-risk activity.
 - a. CDC Choir Outbreak Report – Washington State 5/15/2020
www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6919e6-H.pdf
 - b. Wisconsin Council of Churches Church Music in the Age of CoVid19:
<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/05/08/church-music-covid19/>
4. It is the consensus of the scientific and medical community that the lowest chance of transmitting respiratory illness will occur when the shortest amount of time is spent, by people spaced the furthest distance apart, in the most well ventilated space possible. Currently, there are no published peer reviewed scientific studies that have determined a precise time, distance, and rate of air flow in a space to prevent the spread of COVID -19.
5. Parishes considering UV disinfection or sanitizers, and cleaning devices that are being marketed, should read the CDC cleaning guidelines and the following documents **before entering into any agreement**. The peer reviewed published scientific evidence for UV light room sanitization is inconclusive to absent. No evidence is available.
 - a. Microchem Laboratory: <http://microchemlab.com/test/uv-room-disinfection-devices>
 - b. ECRI review: https://assets.ecri.org/PDF/COVID-19-Resource-Center/COVID-19-Clinical-Care/COVID-ECRI_HTA_Lytbot-Pulsed-Xenon-UV-System.pdf
 - c. ECRI review: https://assets.ecri.org/PDF/COVID-19-Resource-Center/COVID-19-Clinical-Care/COVID-ECRI_HTA_Ultraviolet-Light-Air.pdf
 - d. The International Ultraviolet Association (IUVA) <http://www.iuva.org/IUVA-Fact-Sheet-on-UV-Disinfection-for-COVID-19>
6. Regarding the safety of the host in communication, currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food. Before preparing or eating food, it is important that all participant always wash their hands or use hand sanitizer.

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/newsletter/food-safety-and-Coronavirus.html>