

Returning to Public Worship Guidelines for the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee

Frequently Asked Questions

(date of answer) is in parenthesis

1. **Q: Are UV disinfection or long-term disinfection/sanitization procedures acceptable?**

A: The CDC recommendations for cleaning and sanitizing that are referenced in the guideline are currently considered sufficient. Ultraviolet room disinfection, antimicrobial surface coating and sanitizing, and antimicrobial cloth products are being aggressively marketed. Regulation of these products by the EPA, FDA, and various state regulatory bodies are limited and often not subject to premarket approval or efficacy standards. Often the evidence is only available from the manufacturer. Companies make and sell UV devices with various levels of effectiveness. At this time, the effectiveness of these products against **COVID-19** “like” viruses (SARs and MERS) has only been shown in the laboratory.
(6/11/2020, rev. 7/16/20)

2. **Q: Are temperature checks recommended or required for entry into a service?**

A: No. Fever is not present in most early cases of **COVID-19** and would not be present in Asymptomatic **COVID-19**. Temperature screening devices are generally inaccurate and mandatory screening has resulted in unnecessary exclusion. The screening questions *in the Guidelines* are the most well confirmed early symptoms of COVID-19 to use for screening. **(6/11/2020, rev. 7/16/20)**

3. **Q: Are COVID-19 Immunity-Based Licenses (“Immunity Passports”) Valid/Ethical and should they be accepted?**

A: No. At this point, there is not enough evidence about the effectiveness of antibody-mediated immunity to guarantee the accuracy of an “immunity passport” or “risk-free certificate.” The implementation of such documents also raises serious ethical and legal issues.
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31034-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31034-5/fulltext)
(6/22/2020)

4. **Q: Do parishioners, visitors, or clergy need to sign an informed consent to attend, or participate in worship?**

A: A signed consent is not required. Each parish should have a means to inform clergy, congregation, and visitors of the safety practices that will be in effect, and the information from the CDC for individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness from **COVID-19** so that they can make an informed decision prior to choosing to attend/ participate in group worship. **See the Guidelines for references. (6/16/2020, rev. 7/16/20)**

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5. **Q: Can number of people be increased to 20 for the first two sessions of outdoor worship to better test procedures?**
A: No, the first two sessions should be limited to 10, consistent with the majority of Phase One recommendations. Use the individuals in family groups to test size and spacing of layout. **(6/23/2020)**

6. **Q: Where can I find the current COVID-19 symptom screening questions?**
A: As information becomes available, the CDC will regularly continue to update the symptom list here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> **(6/23/2020)**

7. **Q: Can attendees to Eucharist Services where participants are in cars leave their cars?**
A: No. The concept of ‘stay-in-the car with your household, drive up’ worship allows the safest, lowest risk, group worship experience for higher risk individuals and in counties with the highest rates of COVID-19. ***"Leaving the vehicle to assemble on lawn chairs or blankets compromises the low risk nature of the Eucharist Service where participants stay in cars, realigning the event with other forms of outdoor worship."*** **(7/2/20, rev. 7/16/20 and 8/27/20)**

8. **Q: Can a parish conduct a Eucharist service online and then have attendees come to the church to only receive communion.**
A: The Task Force has concerns with this approach to the Eucharist and communion but is continuing to examine this possibility.

If a parish wishes to continue to conduct on-line services and distribute communion immediately following by having attendees enter the church building, a full plan with detailed instructions must be submitted and approved.

Parishes who conduct on-line Eucharist services per the Guidelines and wish to distribute communion outdoors, on the church grounds, immediately following the service without entering the building (drive-up) may submit an abbreviated plan just providing information on the drive-up distribution only. **(7/2/20, rev. 7/16/20)**

9. **Q: Are sample plans available?**
A: Yes. The Task Force, through the processing of reviewing the plans, has seen many creative solutions to fulfill the desire to meet in-person with the reality of the disease. Therefore, we are providing a link to all approved plans for your use.

The following is the link:

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<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RSmIXMYpaofhJZQptaQfsq9LgdIwG4v5?usp=sharing>

The following is a guide to plans that address specific forms of worship or events:

St. John Chrysostom – Small Church general plan.

Trinity Baraboo – Multiple In-Person service plan.

St. Simon’s Port Washington – ***“Temporary License Under Special Circumstances: Distribution of Communion in conjunction with an Online Service (TLC)”***

Trinity Wauwatosa– ***“Temporary License Under Special Circumstances: Distribution of Communion in conjunction with an Online Service (TLC)”***

Trinity Platteville – Drive-up/Walk-up Fund Raiser
(7/16/20, rev. 7/23/20 and 8/27/20)

10. Q: Are mask exemption forms or passes valid and should they be honored?

A. No. They should not be honored.

The US Dept of Justice has issued an Alert about fraudulent Face Mask Exempt Cards. These documents reference the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and many of include the United States Department of Justice seal. These are not valid, despite their threatening language and “official seal”, and should not be accepted.

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-mdnc/pr/covid-19-alert-fraudulent-facemask-flyers>

Medical Exemptions may be written by health care providers for individuals with unique medical conditions. These exemptions should be from the healthcare provider treating the individual for the condition that makes masking problematic. Because serious lung conditions and ‘trouble breathing’ put individuals at higher risk for serious COVID complications, there are compelling reasons to wear a mask and avoid group gatherings. Those seeking exemption should discuss attendance in group gatherings with their provider. ADA guidelines require reasonable accommodations. For masking intolerance these accommodations could include avoidance measures, such as drive up services and home eucharist delivery and on-line services. Pastoral intervention would be helpful in those instances.

<https://jamanetwork.com/channels/health-forum/fullarticle/2768376>
<https://www.natlawreview.com/article/no-mask-no-service-ada-considerations-business-owners-requiring-face-masks-retail> ***(7/23/02, rev. 8/13/20)***

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11. Q: Can blessing of the animals be conducted for St. Francis Day and does a plan need to be submitted?

A: A blessing of the animals may be conducted as a drive-up event without submitting a formal plan if the following conditions are met:

- The event is a drive-up event where no one leaves their vehicles
- There is no physical contact with attendees or their pets.

Walk-up, outdoor blessings or blessing in the church building would require an approved plan. **(8/13/20)**

12. Q: Can AA groups meet and what limits do they have placed on them?

A: Based on the current guidelines (V3 July 16, 2020), AA Groups can meet based on the mutual agreement of the parish and the group(s). They must meet the requirements for social distancing, masking and disinfection. The maximum number of the group should be limited to 10 or less unless the Risk Assessment Dashboard allows more. It is highly recommended that they meet outdoors. **(8/13/20)**

13. Q: How are the color codes for the Diocese Regathering Risk Assessment Dashboard?

A: The following are the criteria used for determining the color codes for the Diocese Risk Assessment Dashboard:

- 'Green' is less than 50 cases per 100,000 population.
- 'Yellow' is 50 or more but less than 100 cases per 100,000 population.
- 'Orange' is 100 or more but less than 200 cases per 100,000 population. There are two shades of orange, the darker is 150 cases or more.
- 'Red' is 200 cases per 100,000 population but less than 400 cases per 100,000 population. There are two shades of red, the darker is 300 cases or more.
- 'Purple' is greater than 400

'Green' has a risk of 1% or less of someone from the population having COVID-19 attending a gathering of 10 or less, and for some with greater than 10 people (the 1% risk must be verified on the Dashboard prior to meeting).

'Yellow' has a risk of 1% or less of someone from the population having COVID-19 attending a gathering of 10 or less. Larger gatherings have a greater risk and are not allowed.

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Other colors have a risk greater than 1% or less of someone from the population having COVID-19 attending a gathering. Gatherings are not allowed. **(8/13/20)**

14. Q: Can live stream services be streamed to outdoors or other rooms in the building with separate entrances?

A: No, there are too many potential opportunities for spread of the virus. A plan for a specific event for a special circumstance may be submitted as needed. **(8/27/20)**

15. Q: Can we safely add live music to our service to enhance the worship experience?

A: The Task Force investigated the current research using resources from the ongoing International Performing Arts Association Aerosol Study, Association of Anglican Musicians, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, the Journal of Voice, National Association of State High School Associations, and the University of Colorado-Boulder to respond to this question.

Based upon the current research our current guiding principles are still supported:

- The virus is spread through direct contact, large respiratory droplets, **and** small particles in the air (aerosols).
- Risk Analysis is based on:
 - The formula for assessing the risk of COVID Infection: **Risk of Infection = Exposure to Virus X Time** (spent with contagious people and /or air containing the virus).
 - In evaluating risk, we also need to be aware that **Risk of Outcome = Likelihood X Consequences** (infection, hospitalization, and death)
- Risk Mitigation includes:
 - The shorter the time spent together breathing the same air, the lower the risk of aerosol exposure.
 - Masks and physical distance decrease exposure to large droplets and aerosols containing virus.
 - Handwashing decreases transmission from hand to hand, the spread from hand to mucous membranes (eyes, nose, and mouth), and the less common spread from contaminated objects to hands.
- Current research summary:
 - There are currently **NO** devices or strategies, aside from staying home, that eliminate risk of transmission of COVID.
 - There are currently **NO** devices or strategies that eliminate risk of contact, aerosol, and droplet transmission of COVID from **singing, playing musical instruments, or public speaking.**

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- The highest risk activities include group vocal and instrumental rehearsals, choral and congregational singing, public speaking/preaching to a group, and traditional theater. The lower risk activities are individual home recordings, remote and virtual rehearsals, virtual services, and virtual performances.
- There is no published evidence that “Singers Masks” provide better or equivalent protection to ordinary facemasks.

Based on the current available research the Task Force is providing the following Guidelines:

- Guideline 4 (Hygiene and Masks) is modified as follows:

No congregational or choral singing or wind instruments. ***Choir or ensemble rehearsals inside or outside the church building are not allowed at this time.***

- Any time gathered indoors **or** outdoors shall limited to less than 30 minutes and masks worn
- Snug fitting masks shall be worn by all, including during preparation for the service (vesting), pre-recording, videotaping, or livestreaming (if participants are not from the same household) inside the church, especially in poorly ventilated spaces.
- Outdoor Tents with sides or low tops should be considered an indoor space.
- Indoor spaces shall have open windows and/or doors for ventilation (even in winter).
- Recommendation #8 in the Guidelines is now a Requirement and updated as follows:

8. Non-choral music is still encouraged!

- a. All non-wind instruments may be used. If multiple musicians are used, they must be 6 feet **(in the center of a 6x6 foot space)** apart **and positioned in a straight line (not curved line or staggered)**.
- b. Soloists may be used if there is proper ventilation and space that allows them to be at least **30** feet removed from all those in attendance.
- c. Remember that musicians count in the maximum number of attendees.

Based on the Task Force’s findings recording of music at home using free software like Spire and Audacityteam.org is the least risky option. (9/24/20)