

**Plan for Worship and Activities Amid a Pandemic**  
**Bethlehem Lutheran Church ELCA, Portage, WI**  
**Revised July 15, 2020**

This document has been drafted by the Covid-19 Task Force (C10TF). The purpose of this document is to provide a guide to our church family and surrounding community of our plan and criteria for worship and church activities amid a pandemic. The C19TF uses information from local organizations, state and county health departments, Wisconsin Council of Churches and the ELCA as their guidance when making decisions. **This document is a work in progress and will continue to evolve as the afore mentioned revise their advice to churches.**

**Columbia County's Covid-19 Activity Level is currently considered: High**

Source: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/local.htm>

**Number of people currently allowed in group gatherings: 25 outside, 10 indoors**

Source: <https://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus/forward-dane/current-order>

The following gating criteria and resources regarding covid-19 cases and statistics will be used when deciding to increase numbers of people allowed or make changes:

#### GATING CRITERIA

- SYMPTOMS: Downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses (ILI) reported within a 14-day period AND downward trajectory of COVID-19-like syndromic cases reported within a 14-day period
- CASES: Downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests within a 14-day period
- HOSPITALS: Treat all patients without crisis care AND Robust testing programs in place for at-risk healthcare workers, with decreasing numbers of infected healthcare workers

Source: Badger Bounce Back Plan, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02653.pdf>

#### CASE AND STATISTIC RESOURCES

- Wisconsin Department of Health Services: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/local.htm>

- Public Health Madison & Dane County\*:  
<https://cityofmadison.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/e22f5ba4f1f94e0bb0b9529dc82db6a3>  
\*Important to Note: We are using Dane County information as a guideline as Columbia county does not have specific information like this and we have members commuting between Dane and Columbia.
- Local orders from the City of Portage: <https://www.portagewi.gov/>
- Consult with the Wisconsin Council of Churches:  
<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/03/11/coronavirus/>

## WORSHIP GUIDELINES

- Continue to hold online worship services on Sundays at 9 am via our YouTube channel
  - Only 10 people will be allowed in total in the church building for this service: the pastor, video crew, organist/pianist, reader, family of the reader
  - All are required to: wear a facemask (reader may unmask when reading), sit in approved seating areas, bring own communion elements, wipe down the area they sat in after worship is over (wipes will be provided)
- At this time, only outdoor service will be offered on Sundays at 10 am and Wednesday nights at 5:30 pm. NOTE: any public gathering will increase your risk of possibly being exposed to the virus. Those with compromised immune systems and those at high risk are encouraged to continue to worship from home. We ask that all people consider their own individual and family's risk factors and make the choice that is best for them. The following will be required for outdoor services:
  - A maximum of 25 individuals (clarification: 25 individuals not family units), besides the pastor and volunteers
  - Face-covering/mask worn by all (if you have a medical reason you are not able to wear a mask, please contact the church office). We will have masks for those who do not have one. These masks will be kept at church and laundered after services on Wednesday/Sunday.
  - Call or email to make a reservation with the church office. This is crucial. This will allow for us to keep our number in alignment with what is allowed, and it will also provide us with a contact tracing list if someone contracts the virus.
  - Bring own chair
  - Bring own communion elements
  - Only sit in family units

- Must sit at least 6 feet apart from the next family unit
- Will offer single-use bulletins to be taken home and no-touch alternatives for collecting the offering

## OTHER CHURCH ACTIVITIES

- **Ceremonies**

- Any baptisms, weddings or funerals should be kept to less than 10 in attendance, if indoors.

- **Small Groups and Faith Formation**

- Bible studies and small groups less than 10 can meet in person or online. Following the indoor requirements: face mask and 6 ft apart.
- Any mission trips or activities will be limited to the local communities.
- A plan for faith formation for Sunday school and Confirmation is currently being developed.

- **Church Business**

- Regular office functions may resume while maintaining social distancing and wearing masks. Continue to attend to cleaning and sanitizing the office. Pay particular attention to high-touch surfaces and cleaning hands after dealing with the offering.
- Church councils and leadership teams of less than 10 can meet in person while wearing masks and maintaining social distancing or continue meeting online.
- Allow building users/renters to resume operations, following guidelines and signed agreement to observe gathering and distancing protocols set by the C19TF. Maximum of 10 people indoors.

- **General Building**

- Post signs indicating symptoms and urging people to stay home/seek medical attention if they have symptoms.
- Maintain a good stock of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer and disposable paper towels for drying hands.
- Clean the building regularly and between user groups, paying extra attention to high-touch surfaces.
- If we become aware of someone in the church or a building user is infected with COVID-19, the C19TF will communicate that immediately to the affected parties.