



The Diocese of Fond du Lac

The Episcopal Church in northeast Wisconsin

The Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter, Bishop

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Celebrating Eucharist During the Covid Pandemic

Directions from the Bishop and Diocesan Covid Task Force - April 29, 2020

In consultation and with the advice of our diocesan Covid-19 Task Force, as your bishop, I have decided to allow priests with cures to celebrate Eucharist in their church buildings. This is **optional** and up to the priest in consultation with the vestry to decide whether to do so. Morning Prayer at home or church remains a valid and acceptable option. This is a limited option and does not indicate any further loosening of existing restrictions prior to the end of May 2020.

If Eucharist is celebrated, it will be under the following conditions:

The priest completes the Celebrating Eucharist During the Covid Pandemic form (see last page). This is not an application form, but we want to know where Eucharist is being celebrated under current circumstances. The bishop or a member of the diocesan Covid-19 Task Force may contact the priest to ask clarifying questions about the planned practices.

Who should be involved?

- Three or four persons, including the priest, should be present. This allows for a minimal community of the body of Christ gathered on behalf of the rest of body.
- The CDC has defined people at elevated risk (bit.ly/covidpeoplehigherrisk). Those who attend the Eucharist should not be in this category or living with those in this category. This includes the clergy.
- Efforts should be made to select participants who are not essential workers, nor those in contact on a regular basis with a larger community.
- The representative congregation will always be the same three or four people, so as not to rotate through a larger group of people.
- No one feeling ill in any way should participate.
- If any of those participating develops Covid-like symptoms local health authorities will be contacted regarding best practices regarding quarantine.
- No one should travel to and from counties/communities with an elevated infection rate in order to participate.

During the liturgy

- The priest will lead all prayers from the Chair or the Altar.
- Physical distancing will be scrupulously observed before, during, and after the liturgy with all participants remaining at least 6 feet apart.
- A cloth should be placed over the elements during the Consecration.

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During the liturgy continued...

- All participants will wash hands with soap and water, or use high-alcohol hand sanitizer, before and after the liturgy, when the Altar is set, and at the ablution.
- Only the celebrant will receive the Wine.
- The paten with the Bread will be left on the altar, the railing, or wherever else is convenient for the other communicants to come and commune themselves. If the resources of the parish permit, multiple patens or ciboria may be laid out, each with a single host.
- The peace will be exchanged minimally, observing physical distance, with no physical contact between participants
- We recommend facemasks be worn before and after the liturgy, and during the liturgy by those without speaking roles, e.g., celebrant, lector, preacher, etc.
- When possible, the addition of music is welcome but those present at the liturgy should not sing as it has been determined that this increases the risk of spreading the virus.

Rationale

1. These directions are well within the Stay Safe at Home directions from the Governor of Wisconsin and the guidelines of the Wisconsin Council of Churches.
 - The governor has allowed for the essential nature of the church and the directive allows for “less than ten in a gathering.” We are staying under five.
 - We are confident that, done with due care, under the above conditions, this is a safe option, at least as safe as going to the grocery store, etc.
 - Physical safety is the fundamental concern while we are living with the Covid-19 phenomenon. But, as we go on living under the “lock down”, emotional and spiritual well-being are also important.
 - Knowing Eucharist being celebrated in their church building by their priest and watching when will be spiritually edifying for many of our members.
2. “The Holy Eucharist, the principal act of Christian worship on the Lord’s Day and other major Feasts” -*BCP, p. 14.*
3. The sacrifice/offering of the Eucharist, and with it “ourselves, our souls, and bodies” to God by the Church, even a small assembly, is a spiritual good in itself.
4. The small congregation serves as representatives of the whole congregation. Not unlike delegates representing the congregation at convention but with a stronger sense of participating on behalf of the rest of the congregation.

The Congregation

Who might make up the three or four members of the representative congregation? First of all, it is essential that this is **strictly voluntary** and no one should feel, or be made to feel, obliged to participate. Attention should be given to the number of households represented. The fewer households present, the better as it minimizes the circle of potential contact. Given that, the following pool of members is where we suggest you look for potential candidates.

1. The priest(s) and spouse, if spouse volunteers (will help reduce number of households)
2. Deacon(s) spouse, if spouse volunteers (will help reduce number of households)
3. Those licensed to serve, e.g., Eucharistic Ministers/Chalice Bears as well as Acolytes, Lay Readers, etc.
4. Members of the vestry or a vestry member and spouse
5. If there are more than two or three besides the priest who would like to participate, pray then draw lots to determine who will do so.

Celebrating Eucharist During the Covid Pandemic Form

Print and complete this form for each Eucharist.

Keep a hard copy of the completed form in your Register of Services

Also, report each service to the Diocesan Office

- ♦ online with the link at diofdl.org/clergy or ♦ email information below to diofdl@diofdl.org
for email, please add the subject "Eucharist during Covid"

Eucharist Date _____ Church _____

Name & Location

Priest _____

Representative Congregants

Will you be livestreaming Yes No
or recording the liturgy Yes No
(to distribute digitally)

If livestreaming or recording, how or where? _____

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Eucharist Date _____ Church _____

Name & Location

Priest _____

Representative Congregants

Will you be livestreaming Yes No
or recording the liturgy Yes No
(to distribute digitally)

If livestreaming or recording, how or where? _____