

COVID-19 Guidance for Faith-Based Organizations as of 3/13/2020

Juneau County Public Health is taking proactive steps to protect the health of our community by making recommendations for best practices to slow the transmission of COVID-19 and protect the most vulnerable members of our community from exposure to this disease.

Symptoms/Risk

The symptoms of COVID-19 include: fever, coughing, tiredness, and shortness of breath. While this virus has infected people from all backgrounds and ages, it appears that those at highest risk are:

- *older adults (>60)*
- *those with underlying serious health conditions (compromised immune system, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, liver disease)*

Prevention

COVID-19 is spread mainly by close contact with an infected person who coughs or sneezes. There is currently no vaccine and no treatment, so **prevention is the key**. The best way to protect yourself and your congregants from COVID-19 is to:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water frequently for 20 seconds each time
 - Hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol is a suitable alternative to soap and water
2. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose with unwashed hands
3. Avoid close (<6 feet) contact with people who are sick
4. Stay home when you are sick and avoid contact with others. Remind your members of this also!
5. Cough and sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away
6. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects regularly with disinfectant wipes; this includes tables, phones, counters, door knobs, and light switches in reception areas (list of effective cleaners here: <https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>)
7. Avoid large crowds, especially in poorly ventilated rooms
8. Avoid touching things like elevator buttons, door handles, light switches & handrails with your bare skin

Recommendations

1. Temporarily suspend the practice of the Common Cup for communion
2. Limit the number of those involved in the preparation & distribution of communion, be sure all those involved feel 100% healthy and ensure that they wash or sanitize their hands beforehand.
3. Temporarily suspend the practice of shaking hands.
4. Temporarily suspend the practice of receiving bread by mouth, instead place in hands.
5. Have hand sanitizer available for use as members are leaving your place of worship. If this is not available due to shortages, consider a general hand washing reminder as everyone is leaving.
6. Offer video/audio options for your services and large meetings or events
7. **Implement social distancing measures:**
 - a. **Consider canceling large gatherings and social events of over 250 people.**
 - b. **Consider canceling gatherings of more than 10 high-risk people (see definition above).**



Long Term Plans

Look ahead to the next few months and make contingency plans for future large community gatherings in case they may need to be cancelled.

Do you have contingency plans if the head of your congregation were to become ill and unable to perform his/her duties for a period of time? What if there weren't other leaders that could travel to help you? Assess the current resources you have in your own congregation and make plans for the future.

Long Term Care/Community Visiting

After careful review of the CDC recommendations, area nursing homes are starting to limit visitation to residents of their facilities. They are also cancelling non-essential, outside groups from coming to their facilities. They are encouraging alternative means of communication with loved ones, such as writing, calling or using technology like FaceTime or Skype.

Consider looking at how you will stay in contact with your vulnerable populations while keeping their fragile health in mind.

Consistent Messaging

Please know that there is a lot of misinformation about this public health threat, so it is vital that you access the most updated and accurate information possible. There are two sources of information that you should rely on and encourage your colleagues and members to rely on:

CDC: www.cdc.gov/COVID19

WI DHS: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/covid-19.htm

Be Alert

If you are not yet receiving Emergency Information to get the latest **local** information on this disease, now is the time to get connected. To do so, go to <http://www.co.juneau.wi.gov/emergency-information.html> .

You may also sign up for emergency notifications via phone by enrolling in CODE Red. To enroll, go to <https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/BFB7CC4C6C0A> .

Juneau County Health Department will send out further updates and recommendations as the situation evolves. Please feel free to call with any questions.

Thank you, and be healthy.