



# **Infectious Disease Response and Reopening Plan**

for  
**Trinity Lutheran Church  
Rhineland, WI**



**In Accordance with the WI Council of Churches, OSHA, CDC, and Oneida  
County's Guidance on Preparing Facilities for COVID-19**

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## **INFECTIOUS DISEASE RESPONSE AND REOPENING PLAN**

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

Trinity Lutheran Church (Church) is committed to providing a safe and healthful environment for our entire staff and membership. In pursuit of this goal, the following plan is provided to establish guidance during this time of pandemic caused by the global outbreak of Covid 19.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It has spread from China to many other countries around the world, including the United States. Depending on the severity of COVID-19's international impact, outbreak conditions-including those rising to the level of a pandemic (COVID-19 outbreak was classified as a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020) – can affect all aspects of daily life, including worship, travel, trade, tourism, food supplies and financial markets.

It is important to note that people can become infected with Covid 19 yet feel normal and not know they can spread the virus. This means someone may come to Church not knowing they have the disease and spread it to others who unknowingly may spread it to those in the community.

#### **1.1 Purpose**

The Church looks forward to returning to in-person operations, support groups, and worship. However, we also recognize the need to follow a thoughtful and deliberate process with gradual changes based on the State guidelines along with the changing level of community transmission of Covid 19. This is our commitment to the community to minimize the transmission of Covid 19. Attendees may have differing viewpoints on when to reopen and how to reopen. It is important to emphasize being respectful of these different opinions while working to discern what is best for the Church and community.

#### **1.2 References**

EHS Management uses the knowledge of a Certified Safety Professional to prescribe controls in this plan based on the probability and severity of the hazards related to Covid 19. Also, this plan is rooted in the recommendation of all applicable health officials at various levels of government. The reopening plan will reflect recommendations given by the Badger Bounce back plan and also recommendations given by the

Oneida County Health Department. The reopening plan is based on differing levels of safety controls. As the risk of spreading Covid 19 changes based on the level of community transmission, the level of controls implemented will also change.

It should be noted that recommendations and mandates made by government officials may continuously change. Because of this, this plan may continue to change as government orders are made or other health official recommendation are made.

## **2.0 PREPARATION & RESPONSE**

Preparation for reopening and response to the hazards of the virus are critical components to this plan. Preparation and response to the hazards of the virus will require enhanced employee training, enhanced employee/membership communications, and increased hazard control implementation. It is important to emphasize patience as the Church enacts the reopening plan since recommendations and infection data is constantly changing. As the Church organizes its preparation and response, important tasks will include:

- Create a Reopening Team to do groundwork. Create a meeting schedule for the team to keep informed, review steps of reopening progression, and stay organized. Define roles by who will monitor local virus transmission spread data, who will provide communication to employees and members, who will consult with the Church insurance company regarding liability, who will perform tasks identified in each reopening steps, and who will amend the reopening plan when new guidance or government mandates are given.
- Have a specific person, from the Reopening Team, responsible for monitoring local community transmission to determine level of risk dictating which step of the reopening process the Church should be in.
- Utilize check lists for each step of the reopening progression. The checklists are attached to this plan.
- Establish methods of communication to employees and members to notify them of the expectations of all events, current level of transmission, and any upcoming changes. Utilize all avenues of Church media to send this message. Members should be made aware that they come to Church at their own risk, there will be an emphasis on touchless meetings and worship, and that there is a mandatory face mask rule. Also, members should be reminded to stay home if they are sick or if they have any of the Covid 19 symptoms (fever of 100 F or higher, cough/sore throat, shortness of

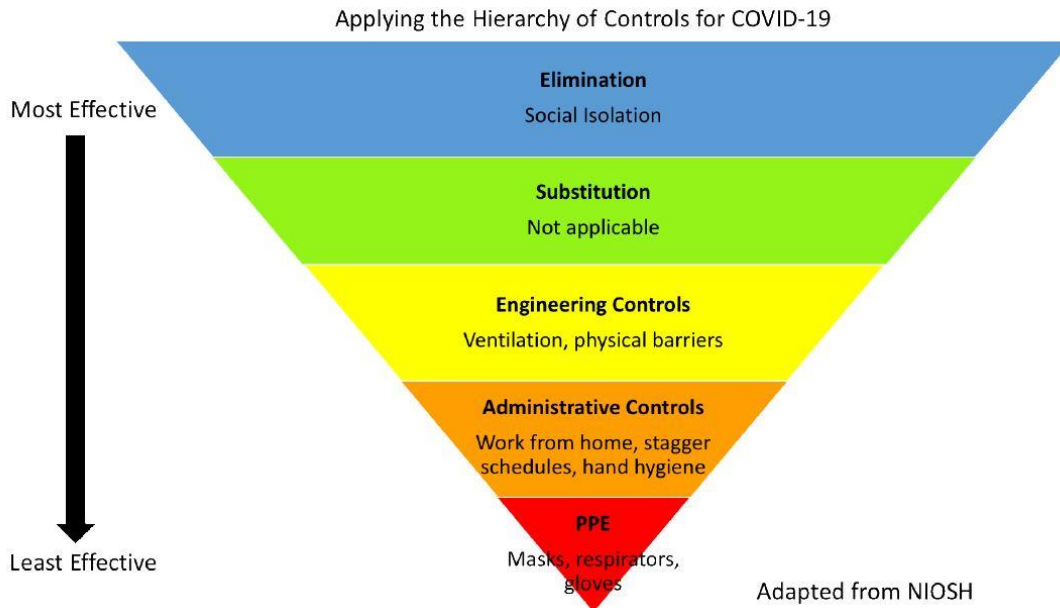
breath) or if they have potentially been infected because they have been in contact with someone with Covid 19 in the last two weeks, or do not want to wear a mask. Communications should also include information educating those that are high risk (over 60 years old, lung problems, weakened immune system, COPD, heart conditions or other health issues) should also stay home. Also, communications cannot emphasize enough the recommendations regarding practicing respiratory etiquette, washing hands frequently, and practice social distancing. These communications should also include all pertinent information regarding how meetings and worship will be held. Also, that families should arrive at Church together if possible. Provide updates to employees and members as the reopening processes changes.

- Establish method of preregistration for meetings and worship. Options include Microsoft outlook calendar events, Eventbrite subscription, voicemail messages, or Breeze online.
- Block/tape/rope off every other pew, commons area furniture, and any other areas that might promote gatherings.
- Calculate room capacity using 6 foot social distancing guidelines and post the new occupancy limit for those rooms.
- Stay stocked on sanitation wipes, disinfectant sprays certified for Corona viruses, nitrile/latex gloves, and masks for employees or members who may need them
- Training of employees/staff should include what to do if an outbreak occurs.(notify Oneida county Health Dept, notify staff/volunteers/members while maintaining confidentiality of the person with the confirmed case of Covid 19, instruct employees to work from home until further notice, cancel all events until further notice, clean and disinfect all areas used by the ill person especially frequently touched areas)
- Continue to have an online option for those who are high risk and unable to attend in person meetings for worship; live stream on Facebook or other social media outlets.

This plan includes various steps involving all of these tasks and many more. Checklists have been provided with this plan giving the reopening team a useful tool to help organize efforts. These checklists note the required action items that need to be completed prior to progressing to the next step in the reopening succession.

### **3.0 UNDERSTANDING HAZARD CONTROLS**

The risk of spreading Covid 19 can be reduced by implementing safety controls. As the risk increases, additional controls should be put into place. Correspondingly, as the risk of the virus decreases, the number of controls may be lessened. Contemporary safety protocols used by Certified Safety Professionals include using the Hierarchy of Controls when ordering implementation of safety controls.



As the Church implements this reopening plan, the following safety controls will be used to reduce the risk of transmission:

#### **3.1 Social Distancing**

The main tool of social distancing is staying 6 feet from one another. Another aspect of social distancing is limiting the number of persons in any one room at a time for meetings or worship. Rooms will be posted with the maximum number of occupants at any one time during this pandemic. Gatherings that are not viewed as critical may be canceled; fellowship activities, coffee hours, food gatherings, etc. The Badger Bounce Back plan offers guidelines for the size of gatherings, including religious gatherings.

#### **3.2 Improved Ventilation**

The best way to improve ventilation is to dilute indoor air with outside air. Do not recycle air in the buildings if possible, exhaust internal air if possible and utilize more outside air for make-up air.

Opening windows is considered a good practice, except that it upsets the climate and temperature control of the rooms if temperatures are hot or cold outside. Change to high efficiency particulate air filters (HEPA) and change them daily or as often as feasible. As an alternative to disposing of filters, filters may be disinfected using an ultraviolet light (UV) disinfecting cabinet.

### **3.3 Physical Barriers**

Physical barriers provide an effective means to prevent people from entering unauthorized areas, sectioning off areas to prevent unwanted gatherings, or dividing areas up to promote social distancing. Physical barriers, in certain forms, can also prevent virus transmission and/or increase security to personnel.

### **3.4 Handwashing/Disinfection**

Handwashing facilities should be made available to all employees and members. In areas where hand washing facilities are not feasible, a hand sanitizer solution should be made available. Have a supply of 65-95% alcohol based hand sanitizer available for employees, volunteers, and church attendees to use. Hand sanitizer dispensers should be located at all used entrances, offices, and meeting areas. Touchless water fixtures and touchless hand sanitizer dispensers are preferred.

### **3.5 Common Surface Disinfection Plan**

Stay stocked on disposable wipes and or sprays that are certified to disinfect Corona Viruses. At least once per day, clean and disinfect office keyboards, desktops, computer mouses, phones, and chair arms. Also, routinely clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched; door handles, tables, sinks, check-in-stations, touch screens, etc. Plans should be in place to disinfect immediately after meeting rooms are used and immediately after worship service. Disinfecting supplies should be made available for users of meeting rooms to disinfect the rooms themselves unless janitorial staff is available. If multiple worship services are given on any one day, they should be staggered with sufficient time to disinfect between services: pews, countertops, tables, bathrooms, etc.

### **3.6 Employee Training**

Staff and volunteers should be trained on new safety guidelines and protocols in this plan. Employees and volunteers should be made well aware that it is their responsibility to self-monitor for symptoms and report those symptoms to the Church. Janitorial staff and maintenance staff should receive training in the proper use and care of PPE also.

### **3.7 Communication**

Communication to employees and members regarding the new expectations and safety guidelines is critical. New requirements such as seating arrangements, social distancing, mandatory masks, pedestrian flow, Covid 19 symptoms, when to stay home, and worship options should be communicated. Mass emails, mass mailings, social media, and signage will be utilized to communicate

these messages. Various posters should be used such as room capacities, handwashing reminders, PPE requirements, pedestrian flow directions, and Covid 19 symptoms.

### **3.8 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Facemasks or cloth coverings is a State mandated requirement for everyone over the age of 5 while attending indoor gatherings. Nitrile or latex gloves and masks should be worn by personnel performing disinfecting duties or ventilation maintenance. It is important to note here that Church employees should have documented training to properly put on, take off, and care for PPE. Also, Church janitorial staff should have documented training on protecting themselves from not only the Covid 19 virus, but also from all bloodborne pathogens.

## **4.0 UNDERSTANDING LEVEL OF COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION**

Transmission of the disease in the local community will be a determining factor as the Church transitions toward reopening. It may be necessary to halt progression toward reopening , or even regress toward a previous step in response to a spike in virus transmission. It is imperative that the reopening team monitor the Oneida County Health Department website for the most recent information and recommendations regarding reopening guidelines. Adjust the reopening progression based on the most recent recommendations given. In the event a person diagnosed with COVID-19 is determined to have been in the building and poses a risk to the community, it is strongly suggested to cancel all Church functions, then properly clean and disinfect the area and the building where the individual was present before resuming activities.

### **4.1 Oneida County Health Department**

The Oneida County Health Department is a great resource to monitor local virus transmission metrics. The website is usually updated weekly and give up to date recommendations. This is a resource that should be monitored by the reopening team to determine when to progress or regress through the steps of the reopening plan. Their website is found at:

<https://publichealth.co.oneida.wi.us/services/communicable-disease/onward-oneida-county-reopening-guidance-metrics/>

### **4.2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

The CDC is a great resource to monitor overall virus transmission metrics. The website is usually updated weekly and give up to date recommendations. This is also a resource that should be monitored by the reopening team to guide the reopening team. Their website is found at:



<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covidview/index.html>

### **4.3 Wisconsin Council of Churches (WCC)**

The WCC is also a resource that the reopening team may consider monitoring. The WCC gives information regarding what others are doing in response to the virus and offers several up to date recommendations that might be considered. Their website is found at:

<https://www.wichurches.org/>

## **5.0 STEPS OF REOPENING PROGRESSION**

The reopening plan will be broken down into various steps. These steps will reflect the phases of the State “Badger Bounce Back Plan” guidelines progressing from strict social distancing to limited social distancing recommendations. Progression to the next step should only be made when all preparations have been completed for the next step. Please refer to the Appendices for checklists corresponding to each step of reopening that should be used by the reopening team. Also, the reopening team should continue to monitor the website references listed above to for information regarding community transmission and recommendations regarding reopening. In order to continue down the path of reopening safely, the level of community transmission should continue to show a downward trend. It should be noted that additional directions may be given at any time by federal, state, or local authorities. These directions should be monitored by the reopening team and implemented into this plan.

### **5.1 Step 1-Online Worship and/or Drive Up Worship**

Under the “Stay at Home” order, the Church will limit all activity. During this step, the Church will employ:

- Online and/or Drive Up worship services only
- Other meetings will only occur virtually only: AA meetings, bible studies, etc.

### **5.2 Step 2-Small Groups**

As the trend of community transmission declines and after the recommended safety controls are implemented for this step, gathering restrictions may be loosened. Gatherings of 10 persons or less is only recommended. During this step, the Church will employ:

- Online and/or Drive Up worship services
- Online meetings when possible

- In person meetings of 10 person or less using all recommended safety guidelines; 6 foot social distancing, mandatory mask wearing, and hand sanitizer availability. (AA, quilting group, etc.)
- Increased cleaning and disinfection efforts
- Increased ventilation efforts
- No children's activities

### **5.3 Step 3-Medium Groups**

As the trend of community transmission declines and after the recommended safety controls are implemented for this step, groups of 50 or fewer people may meet in person. This step corresponds to Phase 2 of the Bader Bounce Back plan. In person worship will still be delayed however to allow for more preparation time. During this step, the Church will employ:

- Online and/or Drive Up worship services
- Online meetings when possible
- Registration method for controlling in person meeting maximum capacities
- Staggered group meetings to enable disinfecting facilities between meetings/events
- Social distancing of 6 feet during meetings, wearing masks, and hand sanitizer availability
- Continue with increased cleaning and disinfection efforts
- Continue with increased ventilation efforts
- Continue with no children's activities

### **5.4 Step 4-In Person Worship**

As the trend of community transmission continues to decline in a downward trend and after the recommended safety controls are in place for this step, the Church will resume in person worship with a maximum of 50 persons. During this step, the Church will employ:

- Online worship services as needed
- Online meetings when possible and/or group meetings that follow social distancing
- Registration methods for controlling in person meetings and worship maximum capacities
- Staggered in person worship services as needed based on registration counts
- Continued social distancing of 6 feet during meetings and worship, wearing masks, and hand sanitizer availability
- Implementation of "touch-free" environments where feasible; doors propped open, no sharing the peace, no handouts or hymnals, greeter sprays disinfectant on attendees' hands on way in or automatic dispenser

- No fellowship activities such as coffee/refreshment/food gatherings/gathering before or after worship
- No singing
- Offering plate stationed in rear of church or similar area for attendees to place offering
- Adjusted communion
- No use of common literature; remove hymnals, etc.
- Continue with increased disinfection efforts
- Continue with increased ventilation efforts
- Continue with no children's activities

### **5.5 Step 5-Back to "New Normal"**

There is much to learn between now and when the Church will enter this last step. This step corresponds to phase 3 of the Badger Bounce Back Plan. We will not enter phase 3 until the State has been successful at "flattening the curve" of infections, hospitalizations, and deaths. At the time of writing this plan, Oneida County is currently in phase 2. Phase 3 will potentially lift all occupancy limits to religious gatherings, assuming that no changes are made to the guidelines between now and the beginning of phase 3.

- Continue online worship as needed
- Continue online meetings when possible as needed
- Return to normal facility use based on current recommended safety guidelines
- Return of children's activities and childcare
- A return of coffee, refreshments, and other fellowship activities

### **6.0 CONCLUSION**

The Church will continue to monitor the current status of this situation. As new recommendations are offered, the Church will review our response plan to minimize inconveniences and maximize the ability to offer Church functions.

Along the way, we encourage everyone to take the precautions that they feel are necessary to protect themselves and their family. We ask everyone to respect the guidelines that we have put into place for the benefit of our congregation and community. We also urge everyone to respect the decisions and feelings of all other people, who may have differing perspectives on how our Covid 19 response should be coordinated.