



# COVID-19 Recommendations for Faith-Based Services

SCPH recognizes that spiritual health is important, especially during the holiday season. For many faith traditions, gathering together for worship is at the heart of what it means to be a community of faith. But as we are all aware, gatherings present a risk for increasing the spread of COVID-19. While new case counts have been decreasing, Sauk County remains at a Very High COVID-19 Activity Level. We encourage Faith Leaders to take the following information into consideration when choosing how to provide Faith-Based Services.

## The Safest Options: Virtual Services & Drive-In Services

### Virtual Services

- The safest option is to provide worship services virtually via online streaming, radio, telephone or dial-in conferencing options.
- **Virtual services are the only way to guarantee that places of worship do not become sources of new infection.**

### Drive-in Services

- Drive-in services involve congregants driving to a common location and worshipping together from their vehicle while listening to either a remote service or one broadcast through speakers. If done correctly, this type of service poses a low risk of infection.
- Best practices for Drive-in Services include:
  - Encouraging congregants attend in a vehicle with their household.
  - Congregants remain in their vehicles.
  - Maintain 6 foot distance between vehicles.

## Things to Consider About In-Person Services

Recognizing that the safest and recommended options are listed above, and that large gatherings pose a greater risk of spreading COVID-19, here are some additional things to consider if your Faith Community is thinking about providing in-person services:

- Does the congregation include individuals at highest risk of complications from COVID-19 (people age 65+, those with underlying medical conditions, or those with reduced immune systems)?
- Can physical distancing be ensured between congregants from different households?
- Are there adequate cleaning and disinfection supplies for congregants to clean their hands and cover coughs/sneezes? Supplies include soap, water, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, disinfectant wipes, tissues, masks, etc.
- Can the facility be cleaned and disinfected between services?
- Is the ventilation system working properly? Can air circulation be increased?



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## Additional Safety Measures For In-Person Services

- **Ensure that physical distancing is practiced by congregants/attendees from different households.**
  - Develop and communicate a social distancing plan to the congregation. Include in this plan changes in seating, where congregants will sit, how they will enter/exit the seating areas, arrival/exit times, and how social distancing will be maintained during the service.
  - Reconfigure the worship space by blocking off chairs/pews, etc.
  - Consider the use of plastic partitions between speakers/attendees.
  - Limit lines if possible by implementing staggered/scheduled arrival/exit times. Encourage congregants to go directly to seating areas.
  - Consider capacity limits and conducting multiple, small services.
  - Encourage and make a plan to provide virtual services to high-risk individuals. If high-risk individuals choose to attend in person, enforce strict safety protocols. Consider a reservation system to assign seating in areas to ensure distancing for these individuals.
- **Encourage and educate congregants on the proper wearing of face coverings.**
- **Ask that congregants self-screen for symptoms before attending services.**
  - **Encourage congregants who are sick, or who have household members that are sick, stay home.**
  - Develop a plan to include these congregants in services virtually.
- **Enhance cleaning and disinfection practices.**
  - Provide hand sanitizer/hand washing stations for congregants.
  - Ensure facility is cleaned and disinfected between services.
- **Modify or Avoid the Riskiest Activities.**
  - COVID-19 spreads primarily through respiratory droplets in person-to-person contact.
  - Singing and group recitation increases the likelihood for transmission through respiratory droplets. Consider modifying these practices by:
    - Calling for silent recitation,
    - Using pre-recorded music,
    - Having a single singer in a separate area with speaker transmission.
    - If these practices cannot be modified, ensure physical distancing and consider installing plexiglass to provide physical barriers between people.
  - Discourage greetings and person-to-person contact. Take measures to remind people to wave or use other greetings.
  - Modify Communion by providing pre-packaged communion items on chairs prior to the service, avoiding the use of a common cup, and offering communion in the hand instead of on the tongue.
  - Discontinue potlucks, or buffet-style meals.
    - Consider offering community meals via pick-up, delivery, or to-go instead.