



Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church

E.L.C.A.

Rhineland, Wisconsin

IMMANUEL'S COVID ADVISORY TEAM: Social Distancing Must Continue

You may not know it, but Immanuel has assembled a special Covid-19 Advisory Team of eight church members who have backgrounds in science or health care, along with Pastor Tammy. Its goal is to monitor the pandemic in Wisconsin and Rhineland and to determine how we should respond to its influences on our Church. The team's recommendations will be offered to Council to help them in setting guidelines on when and how to worship and otherwise manage during the unfolding pandemic. For most of us, we are walking warily on an uncertain and ever changing path. We are humbly mindful of covid-19's serious dangers to us.

Fortunately, we have several outstanding advisory documents on best responses to the pandemic prepared by the State of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Council of Churches, and ELCA national office, all of which have been built upon CDC guidelines. Under the harrowing circumstances, we feel blessed in being so well advised.

The pandemic is still in its early, growing stages in the United States and Wisconsin. Its effects on individuals can range from merely minor consequences to debilitating sickness and death. Those who are most often seriously affected are individuals over 65 and/or with underlying medical conditions.

At this time, and into the foreseeable future, the ELCA and Wisconsin Council of Churches strongly recommend that Church communities avoid in-person worship, and all other gatherings. Immanuel's Covid Advisory Team concurs, and has recommended such to Council. Even though, Governor Evers's Safer-at-Home order was cancelled by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the deadly virus remains unaffected, and is still rampaging uncontrolled around the state. Its threats are very real and, in fact, may be greatly magnified by the new relaxation of social distancing. We are deeply worried about this. Therefore, we recommend that everyone continue to diligently practice social distancing and proper hygiene. We further strongly recommend that surgical-type cloth masks be employed as an enhancement of social distancing. It not only protects us but especially our fellow citizens. It stands as a symbol of our solidarity in commitment to the safety of our communities. To beat the virus, it must be engaged relentlessly by the whole community.

Immanuel's Covid Advisory Team will convene as often as necessary to address changes in the pandemic or in the State/Federal guidelines on social distancing. We hope to soon return to in-person worship, but realistically, it may not happen for many months as Bishop Eaton has recently forewarned. Please be safe and be well.