



East Central Synod of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

**Statement from Bishop Anne Edison-Albright on the Delta Variant of Covid-19
August 9, 2021**

Dear ones,

This morning we learned that all [of the counties](#) in the East Central Synod of Wisconsin began to show substantial or high levels of Covid-19 activity according to the CDC. At an alarming rate, we are [watching our region on trend](#) for the fourth surge of Covid-19 in Wisconsin: this time, the highly contagious delta variant.

Here is what we know:

The whole Body is beloved of God and the whole body is inextricably connected. No one deserves the long-term illness and death that can come with this preventable disease.

The wellbeing of the Body, and of all creation, depends on vaccination and mask-wearing: proven, safe, and effective means of preventing the spread of Covid-19. The church will make decisions, act and urge others to act for the sake of the common good and particularly for the sake of the most vulnerable.

Vaccination is safe, effective, free, and [available near you](#).

Masking protects even those who are vaccinated from spreading the virus. The Covid-19 virus spreads through airborne droplets. Masking is an effective act of love for vulnerable neighbors and children.

Physical distancing, providing options for gathering online, limiting large gatherings, and increasing air flow assists in mitigating transmission of Covid-19.

All of the measures we have used during previous surges are effective and important.

The bishop and synod office staff will:

Wear masks when we are in the office while Covid-19 levels are high. Visitors to our office: plan to be masked, as well.

Wear masks when gatherings, worship, meetings and events are indoors and outdoors when distancing is not possible.

When there is not affirmation that people in attendance for indoor gatherings will mask regardless of vaccination status, make accommodations for online meetings, outdoor meetings, or rescheduling meetings or events. To reschedule or reaffirm details, please call the synod office or e-mail ecsw@ecsw.org.

Continue to monitor recommendations from the CDC and other trusted sources and be ready to change our behavior and plans if needed, and communicate those changes with you.

We urge:

Mask wearing at all indoor gatherings for all people 2 and older, regardless of vaccination status.

Vaccination for all who are eligible.

Layered mitigation approaches, which draw on everything we've learned about preventing the spread of infectious disease: physical distance, handwashing, limiting singing, increasing airflow, etc.

Revisiting the plan your congregation has made and being flexible and ready to make new plans as the surge continues. Using science-based data that is consistent and clear is an act of faith in line with Gospel values. To participate in awareness of how other congregations in the synod are responding, participate in this [brief survey](#).

Prioritizing care and hospitality for immune-compromised people and children.

Communicating clearly, often, and through a variety of voices and means. It is important that communication be shared from the decision-making body, the staff, pastor, and task force members. Communicate in diversified ways with your people: consider written mail, e-mail communications, social media posts, and videos.

Assisting your community in removing barriers to vaccination. Identify specific people who can help set up appointments and help answer questions. Be on guard against misinformation about vaccines and masking. Consult with experts who can speak on vaccination in a trustworthy way. Provide rides, care for pets and kids, etc.

Hosting a vaccination clinic at your congregation. You can sign up to be a clinic site with help from the [Wisconsin Council of Churches Covid Outreach Team](#) or the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#).

Being a good listener in the midst of grief. Be on guard against cynicism, misinformation, and misdirected anger. Decision fatigue is real; the grief process is at work.

Above all, base decision-making on your congregation's mission and the Gospel. Prioritize values which tend to the wholeness and healing of the most vulnerable: people with compromised immune systems and people who are not vaccinated, including children.

May the God of healing bring you peace as you continue the work of ministry in your context. We are all ministers, bearing Christ Jesus to the world. In the words of the call to ministers in the ordination rite: *"Be of good courage, for God has called you - and your labors in the Lord are not in vain."*

Gratefully, your sister in Christ,

The Rev. Anne Edison-Albright
Bishop of the East Central Synod of Wisconsin

Resources

Covid 19 Activity Level Data by County

[Centers for Disease Control](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Health](#)

Wisconsin Council of Churches Recommendations

"By Faith We Stand Firm: Ministry in the Era of Covid-19 Variants" (July 27, 2021)

The Ecumenical Consultation on Protocols for Worship, Fellowship, and Sacraments

"Care Filled Worship and Sacramental Life in a Lingering Pandemic"

Prayers of intercession for inclusion in worship in the coming weeks.

August 15: "God of healing, sustain nurses, doctors and other caregivers as serious illness and death from Covid-19 rises again. Give hope and healing to all who are ill from Covid-19, in our community and around the world. Give courage and strength to leaders, decision-makers and each of us to protect medically vulnerable people. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**"

August 22: "God of difficult teaching, bless congregations and communities that are deeply divided. As we seek to prevent further death and suffering in this pandemic, give us wisdom, courage and compassion beyond divisions. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**"

August 29: “We pray for all who feel unheard and all who are anxious. In this season of covid-19 variants, grant us attention and discipline: to focus on selfless acts of love that show mercy and care for the vulnerable, the least, the little, and the last. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**”

September 5: “You embolden leaders with courage and vision. Sustain weary leaders with your Spirit. Especially we pray for church council leaders, covid19 task force leaders, and others who make decisions for the wellbeing of many. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**”

Events

Virtual Gathering for Lay Leaders, Council Executive Teams, Covid-19 Task Force Members, and Lay Staff with Rev. Kerri Parker, Executive Director - Wisconsin Council of Churches.

Monday, August 16th @ 7:30-8:45 pm via Google Meet

Focus: An opportunity for lay ministry leaders to connect with other decision makers and meet with the Rev. Kerri Parker and the team at the Wisconsin Council of Churches (WCC). Since the beginning of the pandemic, the WCC has worked to compile resources to guide congregations in their action plans to care for the wellbeing of all people. With access to public health experts, medical professionals, and policy makers, the Wisconsin Council of Churches is well equipped to help communities of faith navigate this lingering pandemic with gospel values. Rev. Kerri’s focus for this meeting: What is important for church leaders to know in the age of Covid-19 Variants? Q&A will be available. This meeting will be recorded and shared with lay leaders unable to be present.

*WCC Kerri Parker Meeting with ECSW Leaders
Monday, August 16 · 7:30 – 8:30pm
Google Meet joining info
Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/wrn-xbgj-zrq>
Or dial: (US) +1 601-909-0231 PIN: 809 118 662#*

*****Unconfirmed - Connecting with Colleagues - A virtual meeting for clergy with Rev. Kerri Parker, Executive Director - Wisconsin Council of Churches***

Tuesday, August 17th @ 11 am via Google Meet