



Communication Protocol When a Parishioner Has Confirmed COVID-19 Disease

Remember, as the pastor or lay leader of your church, you have both a pastoral responsibility toward a parishioner who is ill with COVID-19 and their family, and a responsibility to safeguard parishioners who have potentially been exposed to the virus. A calm presence is incredibly important. Here is our communication protocol:

Begin by speaking with the infected person or family member (preferably by phone, email if necessary) to offer pastoral care and get information as to when symptoms first appeared, to determine potential infectious time period. Find out where the person has been during that time, especially any church functions or with any members of the congregation. CDC is suggesting that the infectious incubation period could be up to 14 days before symptoms appear.

Determine the level of information the individual/family feels comfortable with being shared.* Stress that those with whom the individual has had recent contact should be informed about a potential exposure. Offer to contact church members with whom the individual has had contact during the incubation period. Offer the individual or family member the following levels of confidentiality:

- Keep name completely confidential. Inform them that we need to contact those exposed, but the name of the individual will not be shared.
- Include the name of the person when sharing with the congregation that a member of the church has tested positive for COVID-19. Be clear in which formats this information may be shared (email, newsletter, prayer list, phone calls, and/or personal conversations, etc.).

Ask permission of the individual/family to share with your District Superintendent and the GNW Cabinet that one of your church members has tested positive, and then keep the cabinet apprised of the situation by notifying your DS. No names will be shared. Statistics (number of positive tests, hospitalizations, number of deaths, etc.) will be shared by district without naming individuals.

Contact all the parishioners who have potentially been exposed, share with them the appropriate information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

According to the stated request of the individual/family, you may then share the appropriate information with the church. Inform the congregation that a member of the church has tested positive with COVID-19, that all who were identified as having been in contact with them during the incubation period have been notified, and to hold the named or unnamed individual in prayer. If permission is given to share the name, then you may do so at your discretion.

**HIPAA allows health care entities to share that an unnamed person has tested positive to COVID-19, but permission is required from the individual to share personal information.*