

# GSLC COVID-19 TASK FORCE AGENDA

February 14, 2021

12:00 via ZOOM

**Attending:** Rick Blum(staff), Pr. Chris Enstad, Jared Stellmacher, Sarah Iverson, Bob Beggs (chair), Betsy Johnson, Paul Friesen, Stephanie Barth, Greg Simmons, Paul Hutson, Sara McCormack, Kristi Jones

The meeting began at 12:03 with an introduction of the new chair of the Task Force, Bob Beggs, and new members Greg Simmons and Paul Hutson. It was also explained that this is the first official meeting of the merged Reopening and COVID-19 task forces. Pastor Chris then opened us with prayer.

**January Minutes:** Bob moves approval of January minutes. **Betsy moves to approves. Paul F. seconds. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**Introductions:** Bob then let Greg Simmons and Paul Hutson give introductions. Greg explained he's married to Kay Wiederhoeft. He was CEO of Metastar, which does health care quality improvement. Paul Hutson explained he's a faculty member at the College of Pharmacy. He's authorized to do vaccines. He hasn't done it yet. He says we're being held up with the lack of vaccine doses.

**Dane County COVID-19 Data:** Paul Friesen looked at the data for Dane County. We're averaging 80-100 cases a day. Vaccinations are up. 44% of 65+ are vaccinated. This sounds good. The question is what should we expect? The big worry is the new variant. Word on the street is the variants are handled by the current vaccines, but the protection is not 100%. The variants are more contagious and potentially more dangerous. We're back to the level we were in July and August. Went down from 5.9% to 1.8% Paul also thinks the testing system at UW is much better.

**Little Blessings COVID-19 update:** Rick explained that we have had a teacher in our 4K classroom in Verona be diagnosed with COVID-19, and because of that, we have had to make that class go virtual for 2 weeks. No one else has been diagnosed with COVID, and the preschool at both campuses remains open.

**Dane County Guidelines:**

[https://publichealthmdc.com/documents/2021-02-08\\_Order\\_13.pdf](https://publichealthmdc.com/documents/2021-02-08_Order_13.pdf)

Bob asked about increasing the small group size. Paul H. wanted to know what the groups risk tolerance is? If there's a group of 50, chances are 1 in 4 that someone is COVID positive and don't know it. Paul F. – the committee has recommended we be justifiably cautious. We've been more stringent than the county. We're protecting our particular audience, along with our staff.

Kristi: at public health, we're staying virtual until the vaccination rate goes up, even though much of our staff is vaccinated.

Pr. Chris: we've tried to be a good neighbor. At the same time, people are getting burned out from the precautions. My risk tolerance has changed over the last 11 months. I brought Sarah and Jared into the conversation to talk about in-person worship. We've had outdoor worship last fall and it was well received. Do we start planning now to start bringing people back into worship? I would like to start writing things down to figure out how to do this.

Betsy: I agree. People want to know what the target is. We also need to know what the phases are and are we following our own guidelines. I think we should move forward to start getting people back in the building because we already have our own guidelines.

Jared: I agree what everyone is saying, and there's so many levels to this. The thing that goes through my head is that once people get vaccinated, they feel invincible. That population will be the first to come back. But the staff is likely to be at the end of the list. The church is also multi-intergenerational. It's birth to death. I don't know if now is the best time. I think now is the time to set parameters.

Sarah: there's a lot of people that I want to see vaccinated before me. A lot of our prime timers are scheduled for early March. But I think it's unethical to not start making a plan. But it's also not like turning on a switch. It's a little overwhelming. I think it would take a little anxiety away from staff if we knew people like you we're putting together a plan. It's the intergenerational groups that worry me. I'm ready to plan. I'm not ready to implement a plan.

Jared: some of the anxiety is the staff has ideas, but they need to be thought out more, and we want to avoid scrambling a week or two before we do something.

Rick T.: it's interesting the difference between the interest in November and now. In November, everyone wanted to meet. Now, it just seems to be boy scouts and people that want to use the gym.

I think the next month should be used to come up with a plan.

Bob: my next question is what worship protocol looks like? How will we do the reservation system? Distancing?

Pr. Chris: the best thing is to give us the parameters, and have the staff come up with the plan. If you tell us what's possible, we can develop from there. I want to know what we CAN do. That includes outdoor worship and Holy Week activities.

Bob: I would ask us to ask friends and relatives to see what they're doing.

Paul F.: what does the synod say?

Pr. Chris: the synod doesn't help, because they don't do things with big churches in Dane County.

Greg: I'm been really gratified that we have taken a conservative and science-based approach. Whatever we need to do, we need to find a science-based approach. People will ask why we are doing it, and we need a better answer than "It's the right thing to do." We also need to limit expectations. The expectations we set will be important.

Kristi: I like doing as much outside as possible.

### **Outdoor worship guidelines**

What are the guidelines if we worshipped under a tent?

Rick B. explained that he has a proposal before the foundation to have them pay for us to rent a tent for 4 months. There's also an option to buy a tent. The reason we've decided to do this is to give us more options for how to bring people back to church.

Paul H.: It would be unpredictable, given the weather. The outdoor setting also takes away some of the remote options.

Someone asked whether we're committed to doing the virtual service as we continue to open up.

Jared: unofficially, we've made a commitment to keeping the virtual service indefinitely.

Bob: the question to the group is does the tent pose any bigger risk than the outdoor worship?

Paul H.: I don't think we have the data.

Paul F.: ventilation won't be a problem. Close contact will be the bigger issue.

Pr. Chris: what phase are we at?

Sara M. Rick didn't mention that the foundation asked whether we need to have the tent rental longer. Sara also reminded people that we did register people for outdoor worship and space

Stephanie B.: how many can be in the tent?

Rick: rambling answer, best guess 100.

Betsy: what parameters do you want us to identify?

Pr. Chris: tell us what you can and can't do.

Better to start outside vs. inside?

Paul H.: This strikes me as a Verona event. Do we need to offer it in Madison? I don't know how many people want to go to a tent service. I think it's a matter of staff comfort.

Sarah: I think some people would sit in a tent. Some wouldn't. Could we use the Madison location as a place for prayer?

Paul H. : you could argue we're in the green right now. But I think we need to be more specific. I think we need to revise those phases. You could say we're in the green, and I don't think we're ready to open up yet. Hope Lutheran in Des Moines are letting people in.

Paul F.: the tent is a good first step. But I think we need to start to put the parameters for in-person worship. It's time. We can put together a plan that will work.

Bob: Phase 3 is explore worship. Maybe not 100. We can create clarity for staff and members. How we get there is the hard part. There's never going to be 0% risk.

### **Building requests:**

Rick T. The Boy Scouts have requested to use the space for an Eagle Scout ceremony in May, with an estimate of 50 people. He is recommending using Peterson Hall.

He is also getting requests for gym rental. His parameters for that would be 10 or less people wearing masks.

Rick T.: asked Stephanie if this is what she's seeing.

Bob: is gym rental OK?

Paul H.: by signing a waiver to rent the gym, the participants are showing risk tolerance.

Stephanie: I have problem allowing outside groups in, without allowing our own groups in.

Rick T.: I can hold off, the Boy Scouts, since their event isn't until May. The tent may also be an option for them.

He is also gotten a request from the Bhutanese church to meet. They usually have 25-30. More discussion was had.

Rick B. asked whether we can tell them to expect something in 1-3 months?

Sara M. asked whether can they use the tent?

Rick T.: I can give them 30 days notice.

Kristi: can we offer them the tent?

### **Possible motion for the board**

Sara: I think we need someone to make a motion for the board to consider?

Pr. Chris said what should be factored in is a request by Pr. Dara/Pr. Sheryl to have parameters for weddings and funerals.

Paul H.: group is taking on acceptable risk. My bigger concern is the staff. I'm more comfortable with that. The big question is how our staff feels about it.

Kristi: I think using Madison as space for prayer is fine, as long as they follow proper practices. The tent sounds like a safe way to get people together.

Stephanie: I'd be comfortable worshipping with 50 inside. I've been at a lot of athletic events, and they seem to have gone well and have not turned into super spreader events.

Sarah: if we have a plan, there's so much anxiety in the system. We need to walk them in to that space. Plan, space, implement plan.

Pr. Chris: Bethel did it the wrong way,. They announced they were opening, and then they had to backtrack. I think Betsy's idea of a working committee is a good idea. We still need an answer for the board.

Betsy: I started to have a conversation about AMPED. Could we get them in the same building? The 8<sup>th</sup> grade groups have 5 more scheduled AMPED nights. I would like to know what we can do? Can we get permission from this group to do this?

Rick B.: I'd be OK with AMPED coming back if Becca is OK with it.

Sarah: I think there's two tracks on reopening. Programming and worship.

Kristi: the kid thing. Younger kids spread it less than older kids. That's why MMSD is bringing back younger kids first.

Rick B. then comes up with a motion for the task force to recommend to the board that they can take action on.

**The motion: The COVID-19 Task Force recommends to the board that 1. The Madison sanctuary can start to be used as a prayer center for people that want to have access to a church 2. Up to 50 people will be allowed at weddings, funerals and baptisms, and 3. A subcommittee will be formed to come up with recommendations within a month of how to safely let people back into the church buildings.**

**Pr. Chris moves, and Sara M. seconds the motion.**

Betsy then reluctantly brings up the idea of whether this means we should start considering bring AMPED groups back. She's reluctant, because she hasn't told Becca about it yet.

Bob asks Betsy whether she wants a separate motion?

Betsy: we need to let Becca know we're encouraging it. If we're ok to do 50 person worship, we could have 50 kids inside for an AMPED event.

Rick B. then asked whether you want me to change the motion

Stephanie asked if we're willing to do that, why wouldn't we allow worship at 50?

**Rick B. then proposed an amendment to the motion, adding 4. The board will allow AMPED groups to resume meeting in the church buildings, once AMPED staff come up with a safe way to do so.**

**Sara M. asked to amend the motion. Paul Fr. Seconds.**

Jared said the key is how we're going to communicate to the congregation.

Kristi said she thought 50 is too much. Jared wondered if 25-30 was a better number.

Paul H. said the risk is to the staff, not to the people attending. Having a charge coming up by March is reasonable. He also asked how important is it to gather AMPED by March?

Pr. Chris: the parameters may be loosening, but we have to let the congregation we're working on parameters.

Paul F.: I'm worried about authorizing all meetings, and that by doing so, you may end up having one meeting that wasn't thought out to well leading to COVID spreading to the staff.

**Sara M. removed the amendment, with Paul F.'s support.**

**The motion (without the amendment) carries.**

Rick B. then asked to confirm we're not ready to go to GSLC Phase System. The task force agreed. Rick B. then said if the board agrees with the proposal, he will make sure to get [gslcwi.com/forward](http://gslcwi.com/forward) updated with the latest parameters once they are approved.

The meeting ended with the Lord's prayer at 1:55.