

# Wisconsin Council of Churches: Calls Churches not to abandon COVID-Safer protocols

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STATEWIDE – Prompted by recent Centers for Disease Control guidance, the Wisconsin Council of Churches today released [The Needs of the Saints: Returning to Church 4.0](#), including the most significant updates yet to its core guidelines for churches gathering in the COVID era.

The new guidelines expresses concern that CDC reliance on hospitalization rates downplays the ongoing pandemic and may be too little, too late to respond to new and potentially more dangerous surges in COVID-19 infections.

Instead, the WCC encourages practices rooted in Christian values of community, hospitality, and care and concern for the vulnerable. According to the document text, “We respect the CDC and the work of the scientists within that institution. However, the latest recommendations seem connected with values more aligned with commerce, industry and public sentiment than the values that have guided us since the beginning of the pandemic.”

In contrast, Returning to Church 4.0 counsels the use of a sliding scale of conditions to make nuanced decisions that center the concerns of persons with disabilities, the immunocompromised, and other vulnerable individuals, while respecting the varying comfort levels of community members.

Returning to Church 4.0 offers best practices in masking and distancing, vaccination requirements, communication and adapting mitigations in adaptive and responsive ways. It also offers advice for churches when their communities are relaxing COVID-safer protocols, and suggests ways to prepare for the future and long-term impacts of the pandemic.

An executive summary and full text of Returning to Church 4.0 is available for download at: <https://www.wichurches.org/2022/03/04/returning-to-church-4/>. WCC Executive Director Rev. Kerri Parker and WCC Community Health Program Director Daniel Schultz are available for interviews on the new guidelines and the importance of additional care for faith communities.

The Wisconsin Council of Churches is a network of Christian churches and faith-based organizations committed to working together across differences. Exercising holy imagination, the organization helps its members and friends make courageous choices that lead toward peace with justice, the vitality of the church, and the well-being of neighbors. The ecumenical organization counts twenty-one Christian traditions representing over 2,000 congregations in its membership, and has been providing information and advice to churches during the COVID-19 public health crisis. Its resources have been shared nationwide. For information on the Council's COVID work, visit its website at [wichurches.org](http://wichurches.org).