

Recommendations for a Safe Return to Worship

PROTECTING
THE GREATER
GOOD¹



Preparation

PLANNING

- Assign responsibility for monitoring and incorporating government orders and guidance.
- Assign responsibility for coordinating with local health authorities and law enforcement.
- Provide leaders, staff and volunteers with masks and other protective equipment to wear while serving.
- Establish protocols for physical distancing before, during and after services including seating arrangements, modified worship practices and dismissal procedures.
- Continue offering online worship options for those who are sick, higher risk, have been exposed to a coronavirus (COVID-19) patient within the last 14 days or are otherwise uncomfortable gathering in person.
- Develop isolation protocols should a staff member, volunteer or attendee become ill at your facility.
- Minimize use of printed or hand-held materials such as bulletins, hymnals, bibles and attendance pads.
- Do not share equipment used for worship services such as microphones, etc.
- Minimize areas of your building(s) being used during services and gatherings to minimize disinfecting needs.
- Block off unused areas of your building(s).
- Designate 1-in-1-out protocol for tight spaces.
- Establish frequency and processes for enhanced cleaning and disinfecting — between services at minimum.
- Develop admission criteria for worship services, noting that anyone who is ill or appears ill should plan to worship remotely.
- Postpone children's activities such as nursery/child care or implement additional safeguards.
- Discontinue playground use or implement additional safeguards and limitations.
- Postpone mission trips and summer activities such as vacation bible school (VBS).

CRITICAL NUMBERS

- ✓ Six feet of distance = 50 square feet per person when removing overlap.
- ✓ The virus may live on surfaces up to seven days.
- ✓ Disinfectants may need 2-10 minutes of contact to be effective (see EPA list).
- ✓ Symptoms typically show within 7-14 days.

BUILDING

- Conduct a thorough facility inspection/walk-through to check on the safety of your building before it is reopened.
- Restart systems and reset thermostats and lights.
- Flush hot and cold water through all points of use in your building if unoccupied for a prolonged period.
- Complete spring HVAC (professional) maintenance.
- Address overgrowth and other issues stemming from building vacancy.
- Check for any rodent/pest activity or infestations.
- Address any slip, trip and fall hazards.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the building and contents** before reopening.
- Ensure cleaning supplies and disinfectant have been ordered and are on hand.
- Make hand sanitizer and/or hand wipes available throughout the building.
- Post signs regarding social distancing, safety measures and handwashing.

Preparation

SUPPLIES

- Disinfecting agents for your facility.
- Hand sanitizer for staff, volunteers and attendees.
- Masks and gloves for staff and volunteers.
- Face coverings for attendees.

COMMUNICATION

Prior to reopening, communicate your plan via multiple channels such as email, website, newspaper, social media, phone calls, etc.

- Communicate the plan and make it available to members and non-members alike.
- Update and share details of the plan as circumstances change.
- Reinforce messaging that persons who are ill or higher risk should continue worshipping remotely.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Develop on-site instructional materials such as signs or projected images to generate awareness of new protocols and procedures.

- Directions to aid the flow of people and vehicles.
- Information on physical distancing and face coverings.
- Messaging to stay home if sick.
- Importance of handwashing and hygiene practices.

TRAINING

Train staff, leaders, ushers and volunteers on established plans and protocols for worship services and gatherings.

- Addressing high(er) risk individuals that arrive or those presenting signs of illness.
- Maintaining physical distance requirements among those who attend.
- Understanding cleaning and disinfecting procedures, as well as the supplies used.

Implementation

BEFORE SERVICES

- Disinfect the worship area.
- Disinfect worship materials such as microphones and music stands.
- Disinfect restrooms and other common areas.
- Replenish disinfecting and covering supplies.

DURING SERVICES

- At entrances, prop doors open (weather permitting), apply admission criteria and provide hand sanitizer.
- Seat individuals or family units from front to back if building entrance is located rear of the worship area.
- Modify "passing the peace" or greeting time to avoid physical contact.

AFTER SERVICES

- Dismiss attendees from closest to furthest from the exit.
- Disinfect your worship area, materials, rooms used and frequently touched items such as doors, light switches, chairs, etc.
- Provide hand sanitizer and new protective equipment (masks and gloves) to those that have post-service responsibilities such as counting offerings, etc.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

- Disinfect activity areas and equipment before, between and after activities.
- Establish admission criteria and have parents drop children off outside the activity area.
- Plan for activities that maintain appropriate spacing.

OFFICE OPERATIONS

- Create accountability for yourself and your co-workers regarding established protocols.
- Maintain physical distance and wear face coverings to protect each other.
- Consider having office spaces deep cleaned on a weekly basis.

Resources

Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

Recommendations for Community Facilities with Suspected/Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>

EPA's Registered Antimicrobial Products for Use Against Novel Coronavirus
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

Federal Guidelines for Opening America Up Again
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Guidelines-for-Opening-Up-America-Again.pdf>

Resources for Community- and Faith-Based Leaders
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>

Basic Guide for Returning to your Church Building after COVID-19 (Georgia Baptist Mission Board)
<https://gabaptist.org/reopening-your-church-building/>

Guidelines for Returning to In-Person Worship Services (National Apostolic Christian Leadership Conference)
<https://www.upci.org/file/177/Guidelines%20For%20Returning%20to%20In-Person%20Worship%20Services.pdf>

COVID-19 Suggested Church Reopening Guidelines (Christian Law Association)
<https://christianlaw.org/covid-19-suggested-church-reopening-guidelines/>

Post-Coronavirus Facility Re-Opening Checklist (Smart Church Solutions)
<https://try.espace.cool/post-coronavirus-facility-reopening-checklist/>

Hartford Steam Boiler Equipment Checklists and Logs
<https://www.munichre.com/hsb/en/products/commercial-lines-insurers/equipment-breakdown/commercial-equipment-breakdown/logs-and-checklists.html>

HERE TO HELP!

If you have questions about safely returning to worship, contact Risk Control Central.

Call: (800) 554-2642 (Option 4) Ext. 5213
Email: riskconsulting@churchmutual.com

Visit coronavirus.churchmutual.com for more COVID-19 resources.

