

Recommendations for a Safe Return To Worship

PREPARATION

PLANNING

- 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 patient or are uncomfortable gathering in person.
- Develop isolation protocols should a staff member, volunteer or attendee become ill at your facility.
 - Take attendance at all services, for notification purposes
 - Self quarantine and person should absent themselves from church attendance
 - Session should meet to determine potential severity of the exposure to members and determine if services should be continued
 - Disinfect areas of the facility that the member had contact with.
- Do not use printed or hand held materials such as bulletins, hymnals, bibles and attendance pads-**remove all paper** from worship area.
- Do not share equipment used for worship services such as microphones, etc.
- Minimize areas of your building being used during services and gatherings to minimize disinfecting needs.
- Block off unused areas of your building.
- 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.
- Discontinue playground use.
- Postpone mission trips and summer activities such as Vacation Bible School (VBS).

CRITICAL NUMBERS

1. **Six feet of distance=113 square feet per person**
2. **The virus can live on surfaces up to seven days**
3. **Disinfectants may need 2-10 minutes of contact to be effective.**
4. **Symptoms typically show within 7-14 days.**
5. **Persons can be asymptomatic up to 3 days before experiencing symptoms.**

BUILDING

- 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.

SUPPLIES

- Disinfecting cleaning products for your facility.
- Hand sanitizer for staff, volunteers and attendees.
- Masks and gloves for staff and volunteers to use while preparing for church activities.
- 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.

Preparation

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.

TRAINING

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

- Addressing those presenting signs of illness
- Maintaining physical distance requirements among those who attend.
- Understanding cleaning and disinfecting procedures. Know where supplies are kept.

Implementation

BEFORE SERVICES

- Disinfect the worship area

Fill a spray bottle with 2 cups water, 1 cup white vinegar and about five drops dish soap. The vinegar disinfects and the dish soap works as an added cleaning element. Spray the solution onto the wood areas and wipe off with a damp cleaning rag. Using a damp rag removes traces of the vinegar and soap. Continue across the wood section until the area is cleaned and disinfected. Wipe the furniture with a dry-cleaning rag to remove any excess moisture. Be sure to dispose of any rags and cleaning materials.

- Disinfect worship material such as microphones and music stands.
- Disinfect restrooms and other common areas.
- Replenish disinfecting and covering supplies.
- Place blocks, tape, remove chairs in worship area to facilitate social distancing.
- Post signs throughout the building about not shaking hands and doing non-contact greetings. Also, reminders concerning hand washing if restrooms are open.

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. Family units should sit together.
- Modify "passing the peace" or greeting time to avoid physical contact.
- Modify communion. Avoid passing plates, bowls and intinction. Consider providing individual bags of communion elements.

<https://www.cokesbury.com/church-supplies-communion-supplies>

<https://www.kingdom.com/communion/kingdom-prefilled-communion-cups-juice-only.html>

- Continue offering online giving options. Have stations in the church where people can drop offerings instead of passing a plate.

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. If building is not used again until worship in 7 days, then no cleaning would be required before the next service.
- Provide hand sanitizer and new protective equipment (masks and gloves) to those that have post-service responsibilities such as counting offerings, etc.

CHILDRENS ACTIVITIES

- Disinfect activity areas and equipment before, between and after services (Remove unnecessary items from room before services and maintain a checklist of items that have been cleaned).
- Establish admission criteria and have parents drop children off outside the activity area.
- Plan for activities that maintain appropriate spacing.