

# COVID-19: Considerations for Reopening

As the Country will be reopening in phases, the Church ought to contemplate a new approach to ministry in the coming months.

## Phase One: Strict Physical Distancing

All vulnerable individuals continue to shelter in place and everyone continue to maximize physical distance from others. No worship/social activities of more than 10 people.

## Phase Two: Moderate Physical Distancing

Maintain appropriate physical distance and limit worship/social events to no more than 50 people. Use online resources for small groups.

## Phase Three: Limited Physical Distancing

Continue all sanitation and safety precautions. Allow for groups of 250 (or 500).

## Phase Four: Unlimited

Resume all activity.

(Adapted from Ed Stetzer, What Relaunching the Church Might Look Like Over the Next 3-12 Months)

## Building and Facilities Considerations

- **Cleaning COVID-19 style:** Health and safety concerns are as much about perception as reality. Sanitizers and wipes ought to be available for attendees. Post signs that state how cleaning is accomplished. Prop doors open so people are not using door handles. Create a statement to add to your website that states how cleaning is achieved. Invite small groups/Sunday School Classes to come prior to reopening to deep clean specified areas.
- **Gloves/Masks:** Have several of each available for people so that they may feel more comfortable in larger groups. Greeters should wear masks and gloves.

## Ministry Considerations

- **Worship:** Invite families to sit together and leave space between the next family. Discontinue 'meet and greet' for a while. Use "every other pew" or "every fourth chair" spacing. Provide a place for people wearing a mask and keep them separate from the rest of the congregation. Encourage those at high risk to remain home until safer conditions.

- **Invest in relationships:** People will be looking forward to being back together. Create times for fellowship. When able, have a neighborhood block party. Celebrate being together.
- **Fellowship:** Remove furniture from gathering areas (lobby/foyer) to prevent close contact.
- **Outreach events:** Let your local community know that you are ‘open for business.’ Some people will only want a reason to come, so create an event that invites them.
- **Will online worship continue?** Don’t underestimate the marketing value of online ministry. If your church offers a strong online presence, why discontinue? Will a new position need to be formed to account for this ministry?
- **Start new groups/classes:** If you are going to invest in relationships, why not center them around spiritual formation? Add some new ways for people to reconnect to the church. Maybe online (Zoom) gatherings have a new place in ministry. Consider opening with worship services only, then adding on-site small groups at a different phase.
- **Congregational Care:** Remember that shut-ins have had no visitors. Create a team of people to connect with the elderly. Don’t forget the families who were on the “fringe” when the ‘stay at home’ went into effect.
- **Nursery Care:** Should nursery care be offered right away? What ages? Childcare and children’s Sunday School classes may need added volunteers to help with physical distancing/sanitation.
- **How is communion going to be handled?** Initially, you may want to consider prepackaged elements for a few months. Offer clear communication on how communion is prepared in sanitary conditions.
- **Offering:** For the first few weeks, consider having a collection box or an individual with a single plate at the back of your worship area. Provide gloves for your money counters.
- **Creating a new budget:** As we are preparing a new fiscal budget, we ought to be conservative in anticipating income. The economy will turn around but will likely take some time. Be intentional with projected spending.
- **Church Board/Leadership Team:** As soon as possibly meet with your leaders. Express appreciation and share a vision for the immediate future. Offer a plan for welcoming people back to the building.