



GUIDEBOOK FOR CHURCH FACILITIES RE-OPENING

I Chronicles 12:32

“... people who understood the times and knew what Israel should do. . .”

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Introduction

Although our facilities have been closed, the Church of Jesus Christ is always on the move. However, the reality of the global pandemic of COVID-19 has made us recalibrate how we provide opportunities for worship and our meetings as a community in wise and prudent ways for the greater protection and care of our parishioners. We emphasize that BOTH faith and wisdom be employed for the benefit of our brothers and sisters, the testimony of the Church, and the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

The National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NaLEC) offers this handbook of guidelines for reopening your congregation and faith community. This manual is only a recommendation to consider and use at your discretion and judgment. Each congregation must contextualize it to the realities of its context and according to the laws of its state and municipality.

As federal and state ordinances are shifting from quarantine to relaunching businesses and communities, it is imperative to understand that the world has changed significantly. The Church has also recalibrated, regarding how we worship, equip, and most of all, how we make disciples during this pandemic. However, we remain the Church, and as such we will work to create strategies to reopen the doors of our facilities, hold ecclesiastical events and worship services with a thoughtful relaunch guide. This document attempts to provide a roadmap to assist us with that goal.

Pastors Gabriel y Jeanette Salguero

[Sample Message from You to Your Congregation](#)

It is critically important to lead soberly during times of uncertainty. Therefore, having met in prayer with our leadership team to navigate this time of transition, we have evaluated the mission to which God has called our church and we have identified how we can continue to serve our community. As we implement the reopening, we will continue to stream our services through our social media platforms. We know that people will be at different levels of comfort, so we are committed to wisely shepherding everyone in our congregation. We will be mindful not to forget vulnerable and high-risk communities. We pray that, in all our processes, God will guide and help us to be prudent stewards of all our actions of reopening and reintegration.

HYGIENE, CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

We understand that there are some basic logistical elements that must be addressed before inviting people back to our campus. Therefore, we will take time for a walk-through of our campus with attention to detail and a plan to institute and / or expand maintenance and cleanliness. We understand that the overall appearance of our campus will communicate to our visitors and congregants more clearly than ever about the importance of their health and safety. The following person will be responsible for overseeing campus cleanliness and implementing necessary cleaning and disinfection protocols:

Name:

Department / Ministry:

Email:

Telephone:

General Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols

- ✓ Facilities will be thoroughly cleaned every night after use.
- ✓ All high-touch surfaces such as tables, doors, light switches, desks, telephones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc... will be disinfected with EPA-registered disinfectants.
- ✓ We will take steps to ensure that all water systems (drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after prolonged closure to minimize the risk of water-associated illness.
- ✓ We will put up posters on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 around the facilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>

Maintaining Healthy Operations

- ✓ Hand sanitizing stations will be installed at all entrances of our campus and / or we will have hand sanitizer available in key areas of the facilities.
- ✓ We will have non-contact garbage cans: (1) they will be automatic or otherwise - (2) remain open - to reduce the spread of germs.

Contact Protocols

We will mitigate the risk of transmitting COVID-19 wisely and graciously by eliminating physical contact between the parishioners until further notice:

- ✓ We will require the use of masks in all meetings and when they are in the facilities by everyone except minor children 2 years and under. (Only the individuals in the pulpit will temporarily remove their masks, maintaining physical distance/social distancing, for better voice projection.)
- ✓ We will limit the size of the meetings according to the guidelines and directives of the state and local authorities (6 feet of distance between each home nucleus (“household”)). This includes weddings, funerals, and any other public events.
- ✓ We will greet each other from 6 feet away without physical contact.
- ✓ We will not offer or distribute food, except if they are prepackaged or if they follow CDC protocols.
- ✓ Children cannot be left alone without parental supervision / guardians.

Monitoring & Surveillance

- ✓ We encourage any staff and congregant who feels ill to stay at home.
- ✓ We will notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been to the facility. We will communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the *American Disabilities Act (ADA)*.
- ✓ We will ask that people exposed to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 stay home, self-monitor and follow CDC instructions if symptoms develop.
- ✓ We will close the areas used by a sick person and will not use that area until after cleaning and disinfecting it. We will wait 24-48 hours to clean and disinfect that area to reduce the risk to the cleaning team.
- ✓ We will ask staff and congregants who have been exposed or are ill not to return to the facilities until they have met the CDC criteria: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>

Communication Protocols

We will share the information of our opening processes to our congregation and to the community in the following ways:

- ✓ We will post a *pdf* copy of the handbook on our congregation website and we will also email it to all congregational leaders and parishioners who have emails.
- ✓ We will make a virtual announcement about our plan that we will put on our social networks (including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and radio stations, etc. whenever possible).
- ✓ Guidelines for worship services and meetings in the church will be communicated from the pulpit.
- ✓ We will put informational fliers and signs around the facilities, particularly the areas of greatest use, such as the bathrooms and the lobby.
- ✓ We will train all staff and leaders using this manual and monitor implementation. If necessary, we will reconvene and retrain to fine-tune the protocols.

Worship Service and Gatherings

Seating Arrangements

We will adjust how and where people sit in order to encourage the required physical/social distancing:

- ✓ We ask that families arrive early so that we can accommodate them in their seats before services.
- ✓ Once you arrive at the parking lot, follow the usher's instructions regarding entrance and exit.
- ✓ Families will wait until ushers accommodate the family units inside.
- ✓ Every other row of seats will be unused, distancing one family from the next with six feet of distance.
- ✓ We will accommodate the maximum number of people possible inside our facilities keeping within the limits of social distancing. Once the sanctuary is full, families may choose to do the following:

Be accommodated in the overflow room (for congregations with such a space).

Stay in your vehicle for an drive-in service experience (depends on space and technological capacities in your context)

Wait until the next service (they will be the next in line to be accommodated).

Holy Communion

Prepackaged communion elements will be provided, but we will also encourage families to bring their own.

Offering

We will modify the methods used to receive financial contributions by placing a fixed collection box in the lobby (supervised by ushers) - we continue to encourage electronic donations. Electronic kiosks for giving will be kept closed to reduce the spread of germs.

Baptisms

Baptisms can be performed if a member of the person's family is able to baptize them. Otherwise, we will postpone baptisms until the COVID-19 vaccine is in full effect. (Some traditions provide baptisms without immersion and will make the necessary adjustments).

Altar Calls

As is our custom, we will continue making calls "to the altar". However, people will simply raise their hands from their seat for their request. We will not practice physical contact on an individual until it is safe.

Prayer requests can also be made by emailing: _____.

New Converts

For those who make a profession of faith, they will be asked to put their name, email and number in a basket in the lobby. They can also send an email to _____. Someone from the New Converts and Visitors Ministry will contact them and begin their virtual discipleship process.

Pastoral Care

We will continue to offer pastoral care through conference calls or virtual conferences. Requests can be made by emailing _____ or by calling _____.

PASTORAL CARE FOR VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES AND SENIOR CITIZENS

Attention to Particular Realities

We will continue to provide pastoral care and direct attention to people who cannot return to a face-to-face service due to their state of health or vulnerability or due to technological limitations:

- ✓ We will continue to call, Zoom-meetings or send texts to our elderly brothers and sisters and those who are in vulnerable and high-risk communities.
- ✓ We will provide assistance to people who want to learn how to connect to virtual platforms.
- ✓ We will continue to monitor these communities with our pastoral care team by phone calls and direct communication.
- ✓ We will continue to offer our services over radio and send text support messages.
- ✓ Our receptionist will continue to receive calls and transfer calls to the pastoral team for follow-up.

Staff

The staff are important and key personnel for the reopening of our facilities.

We will do our best to protect our employees and their families by taking the necessary precautions and informing them of the reopening protocols.

Accommodations will be made for high risk employees. Adjustments will also be made for staff with young children.

General Employee Protocols Regarding Cleaning and Disinfection

- ✓ Each employee will receive the following sheet in print form and will familiarize themselves with the information on it before they return to the office:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- ✓ Each employee will be responsible for disinfecting the surfaces and equipment in their office prior to its use.

Visitor Protocols During Business Hours

- ✓ An intercom system will be installed. Visitors can dialogue with the receptionist through the intercom system.

✓ If the visit is necessary, the receptionist will ensure that the visitor uses a mask and will offer clear instructions on our distancing protocols.

✓ Visitors will disinfect their hands before approaching the receptionist counter.

Phases for Reopening

Phase	Action	Date
1	Staff and leadership training on these guidelines.	
2	Cleaning and disinfecting of facilities.	
3	Transition of staff from remote work to offices (arrangements will be made for high-risk staff and staff with young children).	
4	Midweek services will reopen first as a practice for the largest meeting (no high-risk people).	
5	Sunday services will reopen (without high risk people).	
6	After the vaccine is in force, we will reintegrate high-risk people.	
7	Children's ministry to reopen.	