



As we begin to think about reopening our churches, we recognize this as a time for planning and preparation. These guidelines are designed as a resource to aid pastors and church leaders in their planning for the days ahead. This document is intended to outline factors for consideration in local planning, rather than lay out specific directives. Although we do not yet have specific dates when churches will open, it is important to have a plan of action in advance. Our primary goal is to keep our members safe as we begin to gather and worship together again.

## REOPENING FLORIDA CONFERENCE CHURCHES

The following guidelines and recommendations were compiled from official sources like <http://cdc.gov> and [www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica](http://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica)

### EXPECTATIONS FOR LOCAL CONGREGATIONS:

1. If a stay-at-home order is still in place in your area **YOUR CHURCH SHOULD NOT YET IMPLEMENT THESE GUIDELINES**. Pastors and local church leadership should stay informed with regards to local directives.
2. If your congregation is in a county that still has a stay-at-home order in place, you should continue distance-worshiping and refrain from attending church in person, regardless of whether other churches have resumed normal operation.
3. If you live in a county that has approved larger social gatherings, the decision to open the church for worship will be the responsibility of the pastor and other leaders of the local church. Local church leadership (the Church Board) has the decision-making responsibility to evaluate the safety of the congregation and the risks involved as they determine whether to open or remain closed.
4. Communicate these guidelines to all your members and contacts in advance of their attendance. Make these guidelines available as people enter our churches.

### GENERAL REMINDERS:

- Pastors set the tone for their flock. Consider going above and beyond to model the behavior you will recommend. Your calm and cheerful demeanor can encourage your congregants to adopt best practices.
- Individuals should CONTINUE TO PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE:
  - Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently-used items or surfaces.
  - Avoid touching faces.
  - Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of elbows.
  - Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.
  - Use face masks or face coverings in public settings to keep those who may be sick without symptoms from spreading COVID-19 to others. As much as possible, provide masks or face coverings to attendees that do not have one.
  - Anyone experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home.





## ■ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREPARING YOUR CHURCH:

- Consider placing a cap on attendance, and increase capacity gradually according to CDC guidelines.
- Think about closing common areas where people are more likely to be closely gathered.
- Configure seating to allow for increased social distancing. Churches with individual chairs may consider reducing the number of chairs or spacing them out. Churches with pews may need to limit seating to portions of every second or third pew.
- High-traffic areas, including restroom facilities, may require frequent disinfecting between uses. You may need to designate someone to sanitize commonly touched items and areas frequently.
- Nurseries and childcare facilities and children's activities are discouraged.
- Bibles, hymnals, pens, information cards, and similar items located on the backs of chairs/pews may present contamination challenges. Consider removing them temporarily.
- Posted signs may encourage hand washing and other good personal hygiene practices.

## ■ SOCIAL GATHERINGS:

- Those engaged in greeting ministries must set the example by demonstrating good personal hygiene.
- Consider checking the temperature of people who attend services. Seek professional counsel on proper procedures for assessing temperatures.
- Practice non-contact greetings and encourage waving, rather than handshaking, for “greeting time” or similar liturgy.
- Consider providing hand sanitizing stations at all entrances and encourage their use.
- Be alert for any signs of illness and be prepared to insist that anyone exhibiting symptoms goes home.
- Think about how your routines may need to change to maintain at least 6 feet of social distancing.
- Consider alternatives to passing out literature such as church bulletins. If materials are passed out, consider using gloves and other means to ensure that any material handed out is not contaminated.





## ■ **WORSHIP SERVICES**

- Rather than passing offering plates, think about collecting tithe and offering in a central collection box such as a basket placed near the back of the sanctuary. Better yet, encourage your congregation to utilize online giving channels.
- Think about seating configurations that encourage families to sit together but maintain the recommended six-foot distance between other families.
- Communion services should not be conducted for the time being.

## ■ **VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS:**

- Individuals age 65 and up.
- Individuals with serious underlying or pre-existing health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer, and other conditions requiring such therapy.

Updated: June 3, 2020

