

# FAQs for Churches During COVID-19: Reopening church buildings

**Note:** These FAQs are in addition to the [guidelines](#) previously sent regarding in-person worship and ministry. We continue to ask for no in-person worship through June 15. These FAQs are for the present time and to help you prepare for the future.

## What does the annual conference most want its clergy and laity to do and know?

- Practice frequent washing of hands.
- Wear a mask whenever you encounter others in public.
- Monitor your own symptoms related to health. If you don't feel well, please stay home.
- Keep a six-foot distance from others.
- Maintain civil and open conversation with others.

## What is the recommendation regarding masks?

According to the CDC and state guidelines for similar venues, staff and volunteers are required to wear face masks or cloth face coverings. In an effort to protect everyone and love our neighbors, we ask everyone in attendance to wear face masks or cloth face coverings. Churches should have a plan in place to address those who are unwilling to wear masks. Clergy and others on the platform can remove masks during preaching and worship leadership if they have more than six feet distance with other persons on the platform and more than twelve feet distance from the first row of occupied chairs.

## What is the recommendation regarding congregational singing and groups and individuals leading singing during worship?

Based on the science available to us, we recommend no congregational singing. Churches who choose to have limited congregational singing should make people aware of the risks involved while requiring increased social distancing (beyond six feet) and the wearing of masks. Choirs and other large ensembles singing in close proximity are prohibited. Soloists and small vocal ensembles can lead singing and music from the platform if they have more than six feet distance with other persons on the platform and more than twelve feet distance from the first row of occupied chairs.

## What is the recommendation about day camps and preschool this summer?

We understand many preschools and day camps will choose not to have programs this summer since public schools remain closed. Day camps and preschools must follow all the CDC and [state guidelines](#), which are extensive. Churches wanting to open a day camp or preschool must send their District Superintendent a clear plan on how they plan to abide by the guidelines.

Links: [CDC Interim Guidance for Schools & Day Camps](#) | [CDC Interim Guidance for Child Care Programs](#)  
[Child Care Reopening Operational Checklist](#) | [Parental Acknowledgement & Disclosure](#)

## How do we create a healthy conversation among our leaders?

We encourage you to listen to the concerns of your leaders. Attempt to understand what may be behind their concerns or what may be their unstated concerns. Help leaders and attendees visualize what church will look like if they return with social distancing, masks, no singing, etc. Create a video to help people visualize. Reframe questions and frequently check for understanding.



## What is the recommendation for HVAC and airflow within buildings?

It is recommended that you discuss with facility staff and trustees how to increase ventilation and the flow of outside air to ensure proper air circulation when persons occupy buildings.

## What if your pastor is part of the vulnerable population?

Pastors in the vulnerable population should discuss how to cover worship leadership until they feel comfortable in returning to worship. Staff Parish committees should discuss with all clergy their comfort level in returning to worship. Confidentiality regarding a pastor's health should be maintained.

## What about small gatherings for funerals, weddings, baptisms, etc. before June 15?

Small gatherings of less than ten persons are permissible, but clergy must seek permission from their Superintendent and follow specific guidelines approved by the Cabinet.

## What screening questions should we use with employees/volunteers who return to campus?

Standard recommended screening questions have been created around symptoms and contact with persons who may have symptoms or have tested positive to COVID-19. Links: [Team Member Screening Questions](#)  
[Employee Acknowledgement & Disclosure](#)

## What do we do when an attendee doesn't follow the guidance/written guidelines?

Churches should have a plan in place on how to respond if someone does not follow the guidance. It would be best if the pastor reminded everyone gathered of the covenant they have entered into together by agreeing to follow the protocols. Posting signage at the entrance of the church with a simple statement of the covenant around masks and distancing can help prepare people. Pastors can approach persons unwilling to follow the protocol or train a few key leaders to assist with this work. Approaching someone unwilling to follow the guidance should be done with care and love.

## What do we do when someone who has been on campus tests positive?

Church facilities will need to be regularly [cleaned according to the CDC guidelines](#). If someone tests positive, additional cleaning should take place. Churches should call their local health department for guidance on whether it is necessary to close facilities for a period of time. Additionally, churches should contact the Ministry Protection Office and their District Superintendent around best practices of letting congregants know of the possible exposure. At no time should someone's individual identity be disclosed.

## What will the guidelines look like after June 15?

We are allowing in-person worship after June 15 according to strict guidelines. We recommend six feet between family groups in all spaces which will limit your capacity to 15% to 25%. We strongly recommend outside worship or drive-in worship. We recognize the need for flexibility and contextuality. Safety remains our primary concern.

## How will my congregation know when it is ready to return?

We would encourage a team-based approach. Consider virtual listening sessions or surveys. Read together ["Why Reopening a Church is Different."](#) It should not be simply based on what other churches are doing. Many in our state and church communities are part of the most vulnerable populations. Pay attention to your local COVID-19 rates and reach out to health experts. Be prepared to modify plans if cases in your community rise. Acknowledge the diversity of feelings and responses within your community. Continue to allow for online options and conference calls.

