



FACILITY REOPENING PLAN

As an Ohio Conference team, we eagerly await the day that every church building is open and hosting worship for our faith community. However, at the same time the safety of every church member is of utmost importance. There are many things to consider prior to reopening your church facility.

We will likely be living with the threat of COVID-19 until there is an effective treatment or vaccine for this disease. As church facilities in the Ohio Conference reopen, we encourage you to follow these guidelines. These are considerations, not mandates.

BEFORE YOU REOPEN

Prepare Your Facility

1. Deep clean your entire church facility. Identify where germs are most likely to be transferred. Consider shampooing carpets, sanitizing pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, microphones and all high-touch surfaces.
2. Use chemicals and disinfectants as directed and allow for the proper dry times. Here is a list of approved disinfectants for COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>.
3. Pay attention to the preschool and children's areas. Consider removing everything nonessential from the room to limit surfaces for potential contamination and do a thorough cleaning in between uses. Refer to the [Children's Sabbath School Classes](#) section for more information.
4. Remove Bibles, hymnals, pens, information cards, etc., from the backs of chairs/pews.
5. Post signs about not shaking hands and instructions for no physical contact greetings.
6. Consider placing some kind of blocks in your sanctuary or classrooms to ensure social distancing. Tape, remove chairs, use cones, etc. to indicate the distance needed.
7. Tell your congregation through flyers on doors, email, and social media about how you have prepared the building to resume in-person worship. Be sure to use the words "clean, safe, and mindful of health needs" to prepare attendees for a non-physical contact experience.
8. Install sanitation systems at entrances and strategic points in the facility.
9. Insist that those who are sick stay at home and join online instead.
10. Consider posting signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 and promote everyday protective measures, such as washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, and properly wearing a face covering.

REOPENING BEST PRACTICES THROUGHOUT COVID-19

Preparing for Worship

1. Retain an online meeting option for those who are afraid or unable to attend your service in person.
2. Consider offering multiple services to encourage social distancing. One way to ensure your services are evenly distributed is to have people sign up for a service. For example, you can use Facebook events and have people mark which event they plan to attend. Other options include Google Forms, Eventbrite, etc.

3. Remember that if you have multiple services, you will need to clean between each service. You can shorten the service time to help with the timing of cleaning thoroughly. Some churches are planning multiple services during the week to allow for cleaning in-between service times.
4. Determine how many volunteers you have available to assist. Limit volunteers to those who do not have preexisting conditions and those who are under 65 years old.
5. Consider having attendees sit in every other pew to help maintain social distancing.
6. Supply masks for those without one to increase comfort levels. These may be difficult to obtain, but you could have people make masks as a service to the church.

Platform Participants and Management

1. Avoid passing microphones. Best practice would be for each platform participant to have their own mic and stand.
2. Abbreviating the worship service will allow for fewer participants to manage on stage.
3. Be sure to practice social distancing on stage as this sets an example for attendees to do the same.

Tech and A/V Teams

1. Clean microphones, headphones, computers, laptops, etc. after every use. Keep a record of when each item was cleaned. DO NOT use water. Rubbing alcohol or 60% alcohol-based cleaners are best.
2. Rotate your tech team if possible. Encourage those who feel sick or run down to stay home.
3. Continue using your online services. Facebook may be more accessible as many people have accounts but consider other options like YouTube for those who'd like to watch on their smart TVs or other devices.
4. Consider use of projectors for song lyrics, announcements and other bulletin content.

The Worship Service

1. Celebrate the return! Plan a Comeback Service. Encourage praise and testimony.
2. Household groups can sit together. Otherwise attendees should observe the recommended six-foot social distancing.
3. Remember to avoid handing out bulletins. Consider projecting announcements on screens and/or adding to the church website/Facebook page.
4. Masks and appropriate face coverings are strongly encouraged.
5. Highlight online giving options.
6. Come up with a fun way to greet others in a no-contact way.
7. Clean the pulpit after every use.
8. [Adventist Risk Management](#) advises churches to consider suspending any group practice for praise teams or church choir. The deep breathing of singers during practice may also promote the spread of viruses. Pianos and other church-owned instruments should be thoroughly cleaned after each use.

Greetings and Greeters

1. "No-Contact" greetings should be encouraged.
2. Ensure doors are propped open or have the greeters hold them open.
3. Consider foregoing guestbook signing for the time being.
4. Greeters and Volunteers should be able to answer questions on procedures and policies upon the return to the building. Train them beforehand.
5. Consider a temperature check on all staff and volunteers, and perhaps all attendees.

Offering

1. Highlight the benefits of online giving. Consider providing a tutorial as part of the worship experience.
2. Consider placing an offering drop-box in the lobby or rear of the sanctuary.
3. Avoid passing offering plates from person to person.
4. Train treasury staff in the proper handling of money and tithe envelopes when counting money and preparing for deposits. PPE (gloves) should be worn when handling money within 48 hours of collection.

Communion Service

1. Avoid passing a plate or bowl. [LifeWay.com](https://www.lifeway.com) and [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) offer combined elements of communion that can be picked up as people enter – but make sure that people are not passing or picking from the same bowl.
2. Forgo footwashing for the time being.

Sabbath School Classes

Adult Classes

1. If you choose to resume classes right, away maintain 6-foot social distancing guidelines.
2. Avoid passing Sabbath School offering envelop (encourage online giving or use of offering drop-box).

Children's Sabbath School Classes

1. Children's Sabbath School Classes are not recommended during this early phase of resuming physical worship services.
2. When given guidance to resume children's Sabbath School, avoid use of items that are not easily cleanable...i.e. stuffed animals, blankets, costumes, fabric. Consider removing non-solid items from room to reduce temptation to handle. Only items that are solid plastic, rubber, wood metal etc. should be used and handled. Place felts and other fabric items in storage for use at a later time.
3. Consider an intake procedure/health screening where parent or responsible party is interviewed as to recent symptoms the child may have experienced.
4. Do not hand out printed material, but send via post or in digital format.
5. Consider asking parent/guardian to attend to help reinforce social distancing as well as reduce teacher to child contact.

Fellowship Meals

1. Best practice...don't (for now).
2. During a later phase when food gatherings are encouraged, be sure to avoid food gatherings where the food is served from common dishes (i.e., family or buffet style).
3. If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes, bottles or bags for each attendee.

Restroom Management

1. If you choose to keep your restrooms open (some churches are keeping them closed), be sure to post signs in bathrooms about washing hands with appropriate [how-to guidelines](#).
2. Recruit volunteers to staff restrooms and perform wipes downs of all high-touch surfaces as appropriate. Consider a wipe down after each use.
3. Consider acquiring no-touch trash cans and paper towel dispensers.

A FEW FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Please Consider

- Advise those leaders and congregants with confirmed cases of COVID-19 not to return to the facility until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>.
- Consider Zoom or other social media platforms to host small groups and midweek meetings.
- We will keep you informed of any changes at www.ohioadventist.org/virus, *Faithpoints* e-newsletter, and our social media platforms.

Helpful Links

- **CDC Best Practices:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>
- **Cleaning & Disinfecting Tool (PDF):** https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/ReOpening_America_Cleaning_Disinfection_Decision_Tool.pdf
- **6 Steps for Safe & Effective Disinfectant Use:** <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-04/documents/disinfectants-onepager.pdf>
- **Face Coverings:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/cloth-face-coverings-information.pdf>
- **How to Protect Yourself & Others:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention-H.pdf>
- **What to Do If You Are Sick:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/sick-with-2019-nCoV-fact-sheet.pdf>
- **Stop the Spread of Germs:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs.pdf>
- **How to Maintain a "Closed" Building:** <https://adventistrisk.org/en-us/safety-resources/solutions-newsletter/2020/may/nadeng-how-to-maintain-a-closed-building>
- **Guidelines for Reopening Our Church Facilities:** <https://adventistrisk.org/en-us/safety-resources/solutions-newsletter/2020/may/nadeng-guidelines-for-reopening-our-churches>

Thank you for helping to ensure #MinistryDoesNotStop here in the Ohio Conference!