



Southern California Conference  
of Seventh-day Adventists®

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# Requirements & Protocols for Church Operations

Dear friends,

During this time of a world-wide pandemic, in the Southern California Conference, it is our duty to make decisions and give guidance based upon our historical focus on physical, mental and spiritual health. This pandemic is like the thief referenced by Jesus in John 10:10 that comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but Jesus came so that we may have life and have it in abundance. Jesus has instructed us to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Our requirements are and will continue to be based on prioritizing the health and safety of our members and families in this very difficult time, while encouraging ministry to continue and expand in new ways with a focus on protecting the physical well-being of our congregations. Although we know we have the special blessing of God, we are also told by Jesus in Matthew 5:45 that our heavenly Father causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and that He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Our guidance is given within the context of knowing that we are not immune to the effects of this pandemic and must at this time have a very high priority on the physical health of our members and guests.

It will be important to educate some of our likely more vocal members in the future that a significant percentage of transmission occurs from individuals who have no symptoms at the time they are infecting others. This will remain a major background element of our guidelines as long as community transmission continues to occur.

**Coronavirus Intervention Committee**  
*Southern California Conference*

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# UNDERSTANDING CA'S TIER SYSTEM

The state of California has implemented a system of determining when various sectors can open or have less restrictive guidelines in place. At this time, as it relates to churches, the new reopening plan will only determine if there can be indoor services in a given county, and if so, what the allowed occupancy will be. All California state and local public health regulations must be followed regardless of Tier assignment.

The newly announced reopening plan has two indicators:

- newly tested positive cases per 100,000 population
- the positivity percentage of tests

California Blueprint for a Safer Economy				
	Higher Risk → Lower Risk of Community Disease Transmission			
County Risk Level	Tier 1 - Widespread	Tier 2 - Substantial	Tier 3 - Moderate	Tier 4 - Minimal
	<i>Many non-essential indoor business operations are closed</i>	<i>Some non-essential indoor business operations are closed</i>	<i>Some indoor business operations are open with modifications</i>	<i>Most indoor business operations are open with modifications</i>
Daily New Cases/100k	More than 7	4-7	1-3.9	Less than 1
Positive Tests	More than 8%	5-8%	2-4.9%	Less than 2%
Church Operations	Outdoor only	Max capacity lessor of 25% or 100	Max capacity lessor of 50% or 200	Max capacity of 50%

These two indicators (newly tested positive cases per 100,000 population & the positivity percentage of tests) will ultimately determine which Tier a county is classified in. A detailed description of the four Tiers can be found on the next page.

Visit <https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus> or **↑ simply click this link ↑** for updated tracking of these two indicators and current Tier assignments for the counties SCC serves.

## TIER 1 – WIDESPREAD

Tier 1 is the most restrictive, and all five of our SCC counties are currently classified in this Tier. While classified in this Tier, the risk of COVID-19 transmission is considered to be “Widespread.” Indoor services are not allowed (use of the sanctuary is allowed only for streaming with the restrictions that are outlined on pages 7-10 of this document). Outdoor services are allowed using the restrictions as outlined on pages 7-10 of this document. Even when in other Tiers, outdoor vs. indoor services are always encouraged due to decreased risk of virus transmission.



## TIER 2 – SUBSTANTIAL

Tier 2 is less restrictive than Tier 1. When classified in this Tier, the risk of transmission is considered to be “Substantial.” Indoor services are allowed with a maximum number of total individuals in the church being the lessor of 25% of occupancy or 100, whichever is less.



## TIER 3 – MODERATE

Tier 3 eases the restrictions on the number of individuals in the church to the lessor of 50% of occupancy or 200, whichever is less. While classified in this Tier, the risk of virus transmission is considered to be “Moderate.”



## TIER 4 – MINIMAL

Tier 4 eases the restrictions on the number of individuals in the church to 50% of occupancy without a stated maximum. While classified in this Tier, the risk of virus transmission is considered to be “Minimal.”

## HOW CAN COUNTIES MOVE FROM ONE TIER TO ANOTHER?

In order to move to a less restrictive Tier, a county must have **both published indicators** within the range of a less restrictive Tier for **two consecutive weeks** and must have been in the more restrictive Tier for a minimum of three weeks.

Assignments can occur any day of the week, and lagging data will be used to calculate the indicators that is a seven-day average and old enough to be deemed reliable. When moving to a more restrictive Tier, the county must comply with the requirements of the more restrictive Tier on the day following the announcement. Also, when moving to a more restrictive Tier, there may be two or more Tier movements at a time, i.e., a county would move from Tier 3 to Tier 1 if the seven-day average for either of the indicators is in the Tier 1 range.

At times, a county may be moved to a more restrictive Tier through a “safety brake” analysis, such as there being limited hospital capacity available either through physical capacity or staffing constraints.

# OUTDOOR VS. INDOOR SERVICES

***CHECK YOUR COUNTY'S CURRENT TIER STATUS & LATEST SCC GUIDANCE***

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At this time, we are following the state of California guidance per county using the new state Tier system versus mandating indoor/outdoor services on conference-wide basis.

Due to the high current volume and increase in cases, the state applied the "safety brake" on Monday, November 16, and reclassified all counties in the state based upon the latest reliable seven-day average indicators. With that, all counties served by the Southern California Conference were placed back into Tier 1 effective Tuesday, November 17.

With all counties we serve now in Tier 1, indoor services are not allowed. Outdoor services are allowed if all restrictions are followed (as outlined on pages 7-10). It is permissible to continue to stream from within the church building if streaming restrictions are followed (as outlined on page 10).

# SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

The chart below outlines the Sabbath morning in-person service requirements, roughly ordered how they would take place from beginning to end of the service. The second and third column designate how each item relates to indoor or outdoor services. The key to the left defines each icon used.

KEY	
✓	Applicable
✗	Not allowed
N/A	Not applicable

INDOOR  
OUTDOOR

<b>L.A. COUNTY APPENDIX F</b>	✓	✓	Churches located in L.A. County MUST completely fill out, comply with and publicly post Appendix F.
<b>VULNERABLE POPULATIONS</b>	✓	✓	Individuals in vulnerable/at-risk populations, as defined by the CDC and outlined on page 11 of this document, are strongly discouraged from attending in-person services at this time.
<b>SERVICE LENGTH</b>	✓	✓	Due to the fact that risk of virus transmission increases with the length of time a gathering continues, service times should be kept as short as reasonably possible.
<b>MEETINGS</b>	✗	✗	Board or other business meetings are not allowed to occur at this time, whether indoors or outdoors. These should be done via Zoom.
<b>SABBATH SCHOOL &amp; PRAYER MEETING</b>	✗	✗	Not allowed in person. Recommended to be done virtually.
<b>VESPERS</b>	✗	✓	Not allowed indoors. Recommended to be done virtually. May be held in person outdoors with strict social distancing. All attendees and leaders must be masked at all times. If held outdoors, it is recommended that a virtual option be made available for those who cannot physically attend. Format should be presentation only with no verbal participation (discussion, singing, etc.) by attendees.
<b>CHILDREN, YOUTH &amp; PATHFINDER SERVICES</b>	✗	✗	Services for ages 17 and under cannot be held indoors or outdoors at this time. Even in church services, any children 17 and under must be in the direct control of a parent/guardian at all times.
<b>PARKING</b>	✓	✓	Block off every other parking spot either using a taped "X," printed signs or with cones, if you have them available.
<b>SIGNAGE</b>	✓	✓	Assure signs are posted at the entry to the site that include the verbiage outlined on page 13 of this document.

<b>DOORS</b>	✓	N/A	All doors that open from the sanctuary to the outside should be blocked open to allow for outside air circulation as much as possible.
<b>FANS</b>	✓	N/A	Ceiling fans should not be used. Portable fans may be used at non-entry doors with fan blowing air outdoors only. Other doors and/or windows should be open to allow outside air to come in the building.
<b>BULLETINS</b>	✓	✓	Virtual/digital options are strongly encouraged. If you prefer to print, place bulletins on the pews or chairs and ask people to take bulletins home with them.
<b>HAND CLEANERS/ DISINFECTANT</b>	✓	✓	Make hand cleaner/disinfectant available at entry and other places as appropriate for attendees and identified locations in church plan.
<b>SOCIAL DISTANCING</b>	✓	✓	Ask attendees to strictly follow social distancing guidelines including refraining from any physical contact, such as shaking hands, hugging, kissing or elbow bumping, etc. Social distancing (six feet or more between any individual/household unit and another individual/household unit) must be maintained at all times, including on the platform during speaking, introducing others, etc. There must be a minimum of 15 feet in front of any speaker to the nearest individual.
<b>MASKS</b>	✓	✓	Mandatory for all attendees except when unable or unsafe, i.e., small children or others to whom wearing a mask would present risk. Masks must always cover both the mouth and nose. Have extra cloth masks on hand for attendees who come without required facial coverings.  Mask can only be removed while speaking in front of outdoor service or for praise team in outdoor setting ONLY. Masks may only be removed by a speaker immediately before speaking and re-applied immediately following speaking. A speaker must not return to their seat or move to the side for another speaker to speak without re-applying their mask.
<b>INDOOR MAX CAPACITY</b>	✓	N/A	Not applicable for Tier 1; Tier 2 is 25% of maximum capacity or or 100 individuals, whichever is less; Tier 3 is 50% of maximum capacity or 200 individuals, whichever is less; Tier 4 is 50% maximum capacity. In all Tiers, social distancing between households must be maintained.
<b>OUTDOOR MAX CAPACITY</b>	N/A	✓	No limits as long as social distancing guidelines are strictly maintained between households.
<b>ATTENDEES AGE 17 &amp; UNDER</b>	✓	✓	Attendees at church and other services must always be under the direct supervision of their parents/guardians at all times.
<b>SEATING</b>	✓	✓	Seating must allow for a minimum of six feet around each family unit.
<b>MOTHER'S ROOM</b>	✓	✓	Mother's rooms may only be used for parents with infants. If a mother's room is large enough to allow more than one family unit while maintaining social distancing, mark out "sections" of the room for individual family units that allows six feet of separation between each family unit. Parents must diligently supervise toddlers.

<b>ATTENDEE DOCUMENTATION</b>	✓	✓	Take pictures with appropriate resolution/distance to identify attendees, electronic check-in process is encouraged.
<b>DISINFECTION</b>	✓	✓	Disinfection of podiums/microphones should occur prior to any individual use and at each change of users.
<b>CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER/GARDEN OF PRAYER</b>	✓	✓	Prayer requests cannot be submitted verbally unless congregants are told to do so <u>without</u> removing their mask. It should be encouraged to submit prayer requests electronically during the service or via email in advance. There can be no physical gathering at the front of the church or elsewhere for a Garden of Prayer.
<b>INDOOR SINGING &amp; WIND INSTRUMENTS</b>	✗	N/A	No singing of any kind is permitted indoors (solo singer, praise team, congregational singing, etc.) according to state regulations. Use of wind instruments is also prohibited indoors.
<b>OUTDOOR SINGING &amp; WIND INSTRUMENTS</b>	N/A	✓	Congregational singing is not allowed outdoors. Praise team singing and/or use of wind instruments is allowed with greater than 10 feet side to side and greater than 15 feet in front of any singer/musician playing a wind instrument to the nearest individual. <u>Churches in Long Beach may not have any singing outdoors.</u>
<b>CHILDREN'S STORY</b>	✓	✓	Children are not allowed in front; must be with and under direct supervision of parents all times.
<b>OFFERING COLLECTION</b>	✓	✓	Continue offering online giving options. Have stations in the church where people can drop offering instead of passing a plate.
<b>COMMUNION</b>	✓	✓	Unleavened bread and grape juice must be picked up prior to service (or made at home). Foot washing must observe social distancing and may only be performed by family units living together.
<b>BAPTISM</b>	✓	✓	For guidance on baptisms, please refer to the document found at <a href="https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/baptism">https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/baptism</a> . It is recommended that the church rent an outdoor baptismal tank. Please note that baptisms may also occur indoors via livestream as long as the guidelines on page 10 of this document are followed. For L.A. County other than churches in the cities of Long Beach and Pasadena, baptisms that take place off the church premises (the beach, etc.) are subject to the L.A. County Safer at Home order (dated November 28, 2020), which does not allow gatherings where mixing of households takes place.
<b>WEDDINGS</b>	✗	✓	L.A. County other than churches in the cities of Long Beach and Pasadena must follow L.A. County Guidelines for Weddings ( <a href="https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/weddings">https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/weddings</a> ) that limit total attendance to the officiant, the couple and one witness. Review wedding guidelines with the couple as soon as a wedding is requested. In other areas, weddings may be held using the same guidelines as for church services.

<b>FUNERALS</b>	✗	✓	L.A. County other than churches in the cities of Long Beach and Pasadena must follow L.A. County Guidelines for Funerals ( <a href="https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/funerals">https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/funerals</a> ). If a funeral will occur, obtain funeral guidelines for L.A. County and educate the family of these requirements in advance of the funeral. In other areas, refer to the state guidelines for Places of Worship relating to funerals.
<b>FOOD SERVICE</b>	✓	✓	Close food service areas, and do not hold potlucks or similar family-style eating and drinking events that increase the risk of cross contamination. Temporarily disconnect and block off water fountains. Consider providing bottled water. In the city of Long Beach, no bottled drinks or prepackaged food may be provided at a religious service.
<b>DISMISSAL</b>	✓	✓	Deacons should dismiss rows/groups while practicing strict social distancing and allowing enough time between rows/groups for attendees to exit. There should be no mingling outside of household groups following a service without observing strict social distance and masking.
<b>STREAMED SERVICES</b>	✓	✓	If at all possible, provide streaming services online for members of your congregation that remain at home.
<b>MULTIPLE SERVICES</b>	✓	✓	If you need to do more than one service due to capacity constraints, allow more than one hour from the close of one service to the start of the next service. If multiple services are required, it is strongly recommended that disposable seat covers are used and changed out between services.

### STREAMING ONLY?

It is permissible to stream from within the church with a maximum of 10 individuals who are speakers, presenters or who technologically support the streaming process. When doing indoor streaming, social distancing should be strictly enforced with a minimum of 15 feet in front of the speaker and anyone else present. Masks must be worn at all times, with the only exception being the speaker while they are speaking (but he/she must be masked at all times while not speaking from the pulpit). Praise teams are not allowed indoors under any circumstances.

*The rest of the in-person service guidelines listed above are still in effect for indoor streaming only.*

# WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

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Church members who either are or who reside with a family member who is defined by the CDC as part of the vulnerable population should not attend in person services at this time.

The vulnerable population is defined as follows: *People 65 years and older; people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility; people of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including: people with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised, people with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher), people with diabetes, people with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, people with liver disease.*

Refrain from inviting guest speakers from other churches for the time being.

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## PASTORS & THE VULNERABLE POPULATION

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Pastors where either they or a member of cohabitating family unit are part of the vulnerable population should not physically attend services and instead join via an electronic medium, such as Facebook or YouTube Live. In the very rare case where it is determined they must physically be present, they should enter and exit through a different area than attendees whenever possible and must stay on the platform or area in the front of the church while, in an abundance of caution to protect them and/or their family members as much as possible, at all times maintain a minimum of 15 feet from other attendees.

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## AT-RISK POPULATIONS: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

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- What about ministry to vulnerable attendees?
- As mandated by the state/county, they will be the last to join large gathering worship service.
- Consider the following question: How can we offer other, safer options to minister to this important group? Be creative!

# PREPARING YOUR FACILITY

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## PREPARE DISINFECTION PROTOCOL & ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITIES

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If your church *hasn't* met in person for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the following are the first items that must be done once your church is able to and chooses to open for in-person services.

- Establish and meet with your church reopening team prior to the first Sabbath of in-person services.
- Prepare a specific disinfection protocol for facilities, including plans for cleaning during services & between multiple services.
- Assign individual team members to be responsible for preparing (cleaning & sanitizing) all areas within the church. Use this printable chart to track cleaning & sanitizing progress: <https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/disinfection-tracking-chart>.

## CLEANING & SANITIZING REQUIREMENTS

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- Deep clean your entire church.
- It is mandatory that you sanitize pews, bathroom, light switches and microphones. Please also consider shampooing carpet.
- Use chemicals and disinfectants as directed, including allowing for the necessary proper dwell time (the amount of time disinfectants need to remain wet on surfaces to properly disinfect). (Make sure you use COVID-19 approved disinfectants.)

## RESTROOM PROTOCOL

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- Assign a temporary maximum occupancy for each restroom (other than single restrooms) that will comply with strict social distancing protocol.
- Social distancing protocol must be followed at all times.
- Post signs in the restrooms about washing hands with appropriate guidelines to do so.
- Consider assigning individuals to clean restrooms (wipe down fixtures, countertops, doorknobs, etc.) between uses.

# PREPARING YOUR FACILITY

## OTHER NECESSARY PREPARATIONS & COMMUNICATION

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- Temporarily remove Bibles, hymnals, information cards, etc., from the backs/bottoms of chairs/pews. Remaining pencils, pens, etc., in the pews must be cleaned and sanitized if the church will be used within three days.
- Inform your congregation through phone calls, text messages, emails and social media about how you have prepared the church for their arrival. Inform them that the church facility is clean and safe for a healthy worship experience.
- If your church is holding in-person service, assure printed signs are posted at the entry to the site that state:
  - *In this current climate, there is an inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 in any place where people gather. COVID-19 is caused by a virus and spreads from person to person and through contact with infected surfaces. Its symptoms range from no symptoms to mild to severe illness or even death. It is also spread by infected individuals that have no symptoms. While everyone is at risk of contracting this illness, the CDC has advised that there is a special, higher risk for adults and people of any age who have underlying medical conditions. **By attending, you acknowledge that you are aware of these risks and that you personally and voluntarily assume any and all risk of exposure to or any illness from the COVID-19 virus, including the possibility that you could infect others.***
  - If your membership has groups of attendees that do not understand English, create additional signage in the appropriate languages as well.
- In addition, post signage at all entrances to the site or building that state:
  - *Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, dry cough, tiredness, aches and pains, sore throat, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, headache, loss of taste or smell, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, and chest pain or pressure. If you have any of these symptoms, do not enter this site and return to your home. If any symptoms are unusual or severe, seek appropriate medical attention immediately.*
- More details regarding this signage may be found at: <https://scc.adventist.org/coronavirus/signage>.

# MEETINGS, CLASSES & OTHER GATHERINGS

As a general principle, continue to seek ways to limit in-person gatherings (e.g., conduct board meeting on Zoom or livestream Friday night vespers).

	INDOOR	OUTDOOR	
<b>BOARD &amp; OTHER BUSINESS MEETINGS</b>	X	X	In-person board and other business-type meetings are not allowed at this time, whether indoors and outdoors. This type of event is considered a “gathering,” not a religious service, and is thus not allowed, even with the same restrictions as Sabbath morning service. Board meetings and committees normally held at the church must be held only with virtual technology, such as Zoom.
<b>IN-PERSON SMALL GROUPS</b>	X	X	Not permitted — use digital tools/platforms. Do not encourage or endorse any meetings or groups in individual homes.
<b>CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH PROGRAMS</b>	X	X	Services for ages 17 and under cannot be held indoors or outdoors at this time. Even in church services, any children 17 and under must be in the direct control of a parent/guardian at all times.
<b>PATHFINDERS, VBS, ETC.</b>	X	X	Not permitted in person. Must occur virtually at this time.

# FUNERALS

While indoor funerals are not allowed, it is permissible to conduct an outdoor funeral. Attendance at an outdoor funeral is not limited, but strict social distancing of individual household units from other individuals or household units must be observed at all times. Parents or other household members must assure the safe participation of children in attendance. Depending on the child's age and family preference:

- Children may be carried or placed in a stroller or other carrier during the service;
- Children may be seated or stand at the side of a responsible adult; or
- Children may be permitted to stand or sit apart from the group of mourners but close enough for careful oversight by an adult.
- It is the responsibility of the invited family to instruct their children not to touch anyone who is not part of their household or any item that does not belong to them.

Due to the high risk involved, there should be no singing or use of wind instruments at a funeral. If a podium or microphone is used, the podium and microphone should be disinfected prior to the service and between every speaker. Strict social distancing of a minimum of six feet between household units and proper masking of nose and mouth should occur at all times. Masks may only be removed by a speaker immediately before speaking and re-applied immediately following speaking.

Tissues and alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be provided for use by families and staff, and restrooms should be stocked with an adequate supply of soap and paper towels. Waste bins should be readily available for the disposal of tissues and paper towels.

People should not touch or kiss the body of someone who has died of COVID-19. If touching occurs, the person should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer prior to touching their face and anything or anyone else.

Use of shared objects should be limited when possible. Use of objects, equipment, and/or supplies that may be difficult to disinfect or make it hard to ensure physical distancing (e.g. tent walls) should be avoided.

- If a program is provided for the funeral, it should be in disposable form.
- Items that must be shared as part of the service must be disinfected between users.
- Food may be served as long as food service arrangements permit physical distancing and infection control.
- No self-serve or buffet food or beverages should be offered.
- Use of disposable dishes and utensils and easy access to trash receptacles should be provided.

# QUESTIONS?

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if you have any questions, please contact the Southern California Conference  
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Email the committee at [cic@sccsda.org](mailto:cic@sccsda.org).