



COVID – 19

Church Reopening Best Practices

An inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists in any public place where people are present. COVID-19 is an extremely contagious disease that can lead to severe illness and death.

This document is not policy or a directive, it is guidelines and recommendations for reopening congregations collected from reviewing several reopening plans, CDC guidelines, State of Florida guidelines, and conversations with insurance professionals. They are a collection of best practices that are designed to assist congregations as they reopen to remain as safe as possible.

- Do not publish policy when putting out reopening plans. Ensure all documents state “these are guidelines and recommendations” to prevent them from being used to hold the church liable if legal action is brought.
- Delay in-person gathering until the State of Florida moves to Phase 3 and/or until your area has experienced a decline in cases for 14 consecutive days
- When announcing your service, request attendees RSVP so you will have an idea as to how many people to expect. Also, remind members that if they are in the at-risk category or not feeling well, please refrain from attending.
- Limit your service to one each Sunday and continue your virtual services for those who do not wish to attend in person until the risk is diminished further.
- Require masks be worn before, during, and after the service. Have masks available if someone does not have one.
- Suspend choir activities and refrain from singing during the service. Limit the congregational responses during the service as much as possible.
- Ensure the air-conditioning system fans and any fans in the sanctuary remain running during the service to provide constant air circulation.
- Entry/Doors
 - All doors and surrounding areas should be cleaned and sanitized before and after each service. Hand sanitizer should be available at each door for entering and exiting the building.
 - Ushers greet from a distance and with no handshakes. People will be reminded to maintain social distancing.
 - If feasible, have ushers take temperatures of the people as they enter the church (no touch thermometers are available to eliminate the need for contact)
 - Doors should remain propped open during the service and someone should monitor the doors during service for late arrivals.
- Conduct your service completely or as much as possible, hands off
 - Do not use bulletins
 - Hymnals and Bibles should be removed from the pews and stored where they will not be accessible during the service.



Florida-Bahamas Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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- Refrain from communion: however, if you are going to commune, consider utilizing the single-serve prepackaged elements. These packets should be available as congregants enter the church.
- Do not share the peace
- Announce at the beginning of the service something like; “although we know we have not seen one another in a while and we know you have missed your church family, please refrain from shaking hands or hugging to keep everyone safe”
- Offering plates should be placed near the rear of the sanctuary, to allow offerings to be given while entering or exiting the service
- Seating
 - If your church is so equipped, removed rows of pews to allow 6 feet between each row. If not, tape off rows so they are unavailable to sit in.
 - Mark pews to show 6 feet between seats
 - People from different families should sit 6 feet apart and in different rows. Congregants from the same family may sit together in the same row.
 - Provide hand sanitizer in each pew
- Chancel area
 - If possible, install a plexiglass partition in front of the chancel area to protect both the pastor and those seated in the front rows from unnecessary exposure.
 - Refrain from activities that would require parishioners to approach the chancel area.
- Water fountains should be covered and unavailable for use.
- Trash cans should be available and used without lids or covers.
- Restroom doors should be partially propped open to eliminate the need to touch the handles. Hand sanitizer should be available in all restrooms.
- Upon dismissal, have ushers keep people moving while exiting the church and request they do not congregate outside near the doors

Again, these are only suggestions and we do not want to diminish your services in anyway. Our intent is to provide practices that will assist you in mitigating the inherent risks of gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have any questions or additional suggestions, please contact me.

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