

The following are guidelines discussed on a recent call with Governor McMasters. While the Governor stated the authorities will in no way interfere with churches reopening and beginning to meet soon, some basic safety precautions should most definitely be considered and taken. Doing this will hopefully allow churches to avoid any legal liabilities moving forward.

Recommendations to Consider Before Reopening:

1. **Development of a Written Plan:** This is critical to being able to consistently and clearly communicate your plan to your members and regular attenders.

**** As a part of your written plan have a way to identify who is worshipping with you each service. In the event someone does get infected and tests positive, you are better able to trace and inform those who came into contact with them.**

2. **Timeline:** While the timing is flexible concerning when each church chooses to begin reopening and churches remain autonomous in the making of this decision, please keep in mind reopening is recommended to be done in phases.

Phase One: Worship Only

Phase Two: Sunday School & Children's Activities

Phase Three: Complete Reopening

2. **Congregation Size:** **The reopening maximum size is highly recommended to be no more than 20-30%**

This will impact our larger churches more so given the numbers of regular attenders and the size of their sanctuary, leading to holding multiple services to accommodate all that wish to gather.

Some of our smaller churches will be able to accommodate a larger percentage of attendees given their membership size and sanctuary capacity, but are still expected and encouraged to following the recommendations below.

It is recommended that none of our churches reopen on Mother's Day. The tendency to over shoot the maximum percentage recommended may be much greater and even greater precautions will need to be put in place even sooner opening the door to oversights and possible mistakes. ***Again this is just a recommendation ---the decision belongs to the individual church.** Given that God has so successfully sustained our churches financially and physically, there is no reason to rush too quickly to reopen.

When you do set a date to Reopen-Plan to continue Practicing Social Distancing

3. **Doors:** Designate certain doors to be open and used by everyone: This will prevent people from having to open or touch the doors and allow less contamination. Have ushers man the doors.

4. **Bathroom Usage:** Have someone man each bathroom and limit the numbers in each bathroom at one time based on space and facilities. This will help minimize unnecessary gathering and unhealthy proximity.

5. **Tithes & Offering Process:** DO NOT pass the plates to avoid touching and spreading of unnecessary germs. *Place Plate or Basket at a designated location or have ushers stand at exits where folks can simply drop their Tithes and Offerings in as they exit.

6. **Hymnal Usage:** If possible, use screens to project words of songs on to in order to prevent handling of Hymn books.

7. **Pew Spacing:** Rope or tape off every other pew so as people sing or touch pews, they are not spewing or spreading germs as easily. Families can sit next to one another, but non family should be encouraged to space themselves from other families or individuals at least 6 feet if possible. Use your best judgment though if space is an issue

8. **Meet & Greet:** **REFRAIN FROM HAVING MEET & GREET TIMES** in Phase One until further notice.

9. **Lord's Supper:** Use disposable items like kits with cup and wafer on top so no one has to touch a plate.. *Ushers with gloves can hand these out to folks as they arrive.

10. **Touching:** Ask people to **REFRAIN FROM HUGGING AND SHAKING OF HANDS**

11. **Water Fountain Usage:** **COVER ALL WATER FOUNTAINS AND LABEL AS "OUT OF ORDER"** to avoid people using them and exposing each other to greater risk of infection. If your church is able to provide bottled water, designate a station for small bottles and communicate where water can be obtained.

12. **Mask Usage:** While this is not considered a requirement, it is strongly recommended if folks can physically tolerate wearing one. Encourage people to bring their own or make masks available at the church. If someone is unable to wear a mask or chooses not to wear one, then ask them to sit by themselves or with family they've already been exposed to safely.

13. **Multiple Services:** If you are having multiple services, allow enough time between services for cleaning to avoid spreading germs to the next service

As you can see, there is much more to reopening than just starting back up as you have in the past. Many precautions must be taken to ensure to the best of your ability the safety of your members and guests as well as safeguard your church against lawsuits, warranted or not.

Being prepared is your best defense and your responsibility. Please take this seriously when considering your plans for reopening. You cannot communicate your plan or these recommendations and details too much. Do so frequently for the health and safety of everyone, as well as the church in general.