



COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR REOPENING FAITH-BASED SERVICES

Guidance provided is intended for religious services conducted in churches, congregations, and places of worship. These guidelines are based on recommendations from the CDC, to help communities of faith continue their mission while keeping their staff and congregations safe, and to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Communities of faith have an essential role in communicating clearly about actions being taken to protect the health of their congregants and staff.

Inside the Springfield city limits, mass gatherings are restricted to 25 people or less. Faith-based organizations are encouraged to perform virtual or drive-in services.

General Guidance

- Limit the size of in-person gatherings in accordance with the guidance and directives of state and local authorities.
- Consider holding services and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors.
- Have a plan to divert or delay entrance of people if capacity limits are reached.
- Post signs at entrances asking sick people not to enter the building.
- Screen members prior to service for fever (≥ 100.4), shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, cough, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and new loss of taste or smell. Anyone with those symptoms must stay home
- Use no-touch thermometers if available.

- Encourage the use of cloth face coverings at all gatherings, except on children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Ensure doors are propped open or have greeters hold them open until service begins and when it ends.
- Post signs encouraging hand washing and respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes).
 - Encourage staff and congregants who are at higher risk for severe illness to participate virtually, if possible. Individuals at higher risk are those over 60 years old and/or those with underlying chronic medical conditions or are immunocompromised.
- Offer multiple services to encourage a greater chance of social distancing.
 - There should be at least a four-hour gap between the end of one in-person service, and the beginning of the next in-person service. The facility should be cleaned between services, in accordance with CDC cleaning and disinfection guidance.
- Consider temporarily removing frequently touched/shared objects, such as worship aids, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts and other bulletins, or other items passed or shared among congregants. Encourage congregants to bring their own, if possible,
- Avoid handing out bulletins or announcements; show them on a screen and/or email to members prior to service
- Modify the methods used to receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box, the mail, or electronic methods of collecting regular financial contributions instead of shared collection trays.
- If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee whenever possible, instead of a buffet or family-style meal.
- Avoid food offerings / communion when it is being shared from common dishes.

Physical Distancing Guidance

- Practice physical distancing of 6 feet in all areas. Only allow as many people to enter that the building can accommodate while maintaining physical distancing.
- Modify all gatherings to incorporate social distancing measures.

- Designate one-way traffic within the building.
- Post signs with clear instructions of steps employees and patrons should take to maintain social distancing.
- Encourage non-contact greetings, such as nodding, bowing, or waving instead of shaking hands, hugging, or kissing. Avoid holding hands.
- Block off areas or tape off areas in all rooms to ensure 6 feet of physical distancing.
- When physical distancing is not feasible, encourage the use of face coverings.
- Ensure proper spacing between attendees:
 - Keep at least two empty seats (or six feet separation) between parties in any row, except as follows:
 - Two or more members of the same household can sit adjacent to one another, with two seats (or six feet separation) empty on either side.
 - Two individuals who are not members of the same household but who are attending together can sit adjacent to one another, with two seats (or six feet separation) empty on either side.
 - Alternate rows between attendees (every other row left empty).
- If bathrooms are in use, have greeters ensure handwashing and physical distancing is being followed.
- Consider suspending choirs / musical ensembles or limiting the number of members to allow for appropriate physical distancing.
- Limit the gathering size in Sunday school/ small groups/daycare
 - Designate a drop off/ pick up area for children, where only the teacher or leader is taking them to the classroom
- Consider whether other gatherings may need to have attendance limited or be held virtually if physical distancing is difficult, such as funerals, weddings, religious education classes, youth events, support groups and any other programming.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance

- Routine cleaning and disinfecting should be done between each service (e.g. chairs, pews, restrooms, music stands, microphones, drums, pianos/organs, headphones, etc.) as well as high touch

surfaces (e.g. tables, workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, doorknobs, etc.)

- Encourage everyone to wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Ensure adequate supplies (e.g., soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, tissue) to support healthy hygiene practices.
- Have hand sanitizer stations throughout the building.

Employee Health Guidance (Staff)

- Health screen staff upon arrival:
 - Self-monitor for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever ≥ 100.4 , shortness of breath, chills, repeated shaking with chills, sore throat and muscle aches).
 - Design a protocol for reporting self-monitoring before beginning shift.
 - Consider use of touchless infrared thermometers to check temperature of each staff member before service.
 - If employee is ill, require them to return home and stay home if they are sick.
- Stagger shifts for the AV/Tech teams.
- Rearrange desks to maximize the space between staff members.
- Discourage sharing of tools/equipment and workstations/areas between staff.
 - Avoid passing around a microphone or assign microphones to specific people.
 - Do not share choir robes. Robes should be cleaned after each use.
- Postpone or cancel trips that could expose staff, volunteers, or members to potential community spread of COVID-19. Persons returning from travel to areas with community spread of COVID-19 must follow guidance they have received from health officials.
- Implement flexible sick leave and related flexible policies and practices for staff.

When a confirmed COVID-19 case has been in the facility

- Give any person who is sick a facemask and separate them from others until they can safely leave.
- If needed, arrange transportation for people who need medical care.
- Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfection. Wait 24 hours to clean and disinfect to reduce risk to the individuals cleaning.
- Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility by following the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.
- Advise sick staff and congregants not to return to the facility until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation.
- Notify and coordinate with local health officials to determine course of action, which may include contact tracing, short-term facility closure, activity cancellations or restricting access.
- Communicate with staff, members and the people you serve. Coordinate with local health officials to communicate closure decisions, alterations to services, and the possible COVID-19 exposure.
- Maintain confidentiality of the person who is a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Drive-in Services

Drive-in Services (Attendees)

- Cars must be parked in every other parking spot or at least 9 feet apart.
- Vehicles should contain only members of a single household and must not exceed vehicle occupancy. Do not bring your neighbors or others outside of your household.
- Participants may not interact physically with staff or participants in other vehicles. (This includes, but is not limited to, collecting donations by basket or plate.)
- Cars may have windows down, however, no interaction with others outside of their vehicles may occur.
- No one may exit a vehicle at any time.

Drive-in Services (Staff)

- Audio and visual broadcast must be maintained in a way to allow for participants to stay in their car and cannot exceed allowable noise levels for the community.
- Traffic flow for services may not impede the regular flow of public streets. Plans should be in place for possible traffic congestion issues.
- Modify the method for collecting regular financial contributions as to not pass a collection tray or basket. Examples: Online, Mail, Drop-Box
- Modify regular communion practices. Encourage participants to bring their own communion elements.
- Bathrooms are closed except for emergencies to limit congregating.
- Staff must be at least six feet apart from one another at all times.

Additional Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

<https://gabaptist.org/reopening-your-church-building/>

<https://ncbaptist.org/covid-19-reopening-your-church/>