

Below is a series of helpful resource links as you prepare to return to church. There is a lot of great information from a wide variety of sources. To get you started, here are eight, practical things to consider— not mandates, simply suggestions— before you return to corporate worship gatherings:

**1. Stay informed with the latest [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommendations and your state's specific instructions for reopening.**

As most have noticed, news changes quickly in this COVID-19 world. Additionally, states are opening at different rates and with different qualifications. It's important to stay up to date with your state and local regulations on when and how they're reopening and what qualifications businesses and organizations need to follow in order to do so.

You can find resources regarding your state's specific ordinances and procedures at your state's government website.

**2. Communicate clearly and often with your members about what they can expect.**

Communicate with your members about what they can expect regarding when and how your church resumes Sunday worship gatherings. Reassure them facilities will be cleaned thoroughly before, during and after services.

Be sure to also communicate some of the changes they'll see and how they can continue to maintain social distance during worship. While everyone is likely eager to return to corporate worship services, not everyone will be ready. Reassure your members their return isn't mandated, and everyone should return at the pace they feel comfortable.

There's a lot to consider before reopening. As you seek counsel from your leaders, the CDC and government officials, [consider surveying your members](#) to gauge how they're feeling and how they're processing reopening.

**3. Keep online services available for the foreseeable future.**

People will likely return to corporate worship services at their own pace, so keep the option of an online worship gathering available for those who may not feel comfortable returning to the church building and those who are unable to do so.

Also, organize a way to follow up with new Christians and guests who join online by creating a digital decision card ([sample here](#)) using an online form. [You can find more sample resources about following up with people digitally here.](#)

**4. Deep clean and sanitize your church—cleanliness will likely matter now more than ever.**

Before reopening, walk through your church and take inventory of everything that needs to be cleaned, and thoroughly clean and disinfect everything. Clean surfaces and objects commonly touched, like doorknobs, light switches, water fountains, pews and seats, etc.

Also, consider cleaning high-traffic areas between services and use. Consider removing Bibles, hymnals, pens, information cards, etc., from the backs of chairs and pews.

## **5. Consider what resources need to be available throughout the church building.**

If possible, provide:

- plenty of hand sanitizer throughout the church.
- ample soap in the bathrooms.
- tissues.
- no-touch trash cans.

Encourage members to wear and bring their own masks or provide disposable masks for those who don't have one. You'll also need to decide if you'll keep your restrooms open.

Display and post signs encouraging social distance, washing hands and using hand sanitizer.

## **6. Rethink how you can reduce personal contact during the service.**

A lot has changed. We have changed. Church staff will likely need to rethink a lot of the aspects of a Sunday worship gathering that entail and encourage human contact, like passing communion and offering plates, serving coffee and food, a meet and greet time, handing out bulletins or programs, etc.

Consider the following alternatives to help rethink personal contact:

- Instead of passing out bulletins, consider posting the order of worship and announcements on a screen or emailing them before or after the service.
- Consider having more than one service and ask members to sign up for the service they'll attend to keep from overcrowding.
- Have volunteers either hold doors open or keep the door propped open.
- Consider abstaining from serving food and coffee.
- Allow households to sit together but keep space between people who don't live in the same home.
- Avoid sharing microphones on stage.
- For the Lord's Supper, consider offering combined elements—juice and bread—to avoid passing a plate or bowl.
- Encourage giving online.

## **7. Expect things to be different.**

This may go without saying, but it's worth reiterating. Even when stores, jobs and churches reopen, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will likely be here to stay a while longer. Things will not return to "normal" quickly. Expect and embrace a measure of awkwardness and continue to extend grace to yourself, your staff and your members as we step into another new phase.

## **8. Celebrate!**

After so many weeks and months of online worship gatherings, small groups and missional communities, it will feel good to be back in the presence of God's people. Celebrate the return. After all, we have an embodied faith that was meant to be lived out in person, with one another.

## Articles

Find wise counsel and practical tips for the process of returning to your church campus.

- [8 practical things to consider before you reopen your church](#) — Send Network
- [What your church must know before reopening your building](#) — LifeWay Facts & Trends
- [6 considerations for reopening your kids' ministry](#) — LifeWay
- [24 questions your church should answer before people return](#) —LifeWay
- [Guidelines for reopening and returning to church buildings](#) — Georgia Baptist Mission Board
- [COVID-19 conversation guide for reopening a church campus](#) — Florida Baptist Convention
- [Preparing your church to reopen: 4 Suggestions](#) —The Gospel Coalition
- [CDC guidance for reopening of churches](#) — The Gospel Coalition

## Official Websites

Use these resources to help you find local information as you navigate the decision to reopen your church building.

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Coronavirus.gov](#)
- [Southern Baptist State Convention Websites](#)

## Free Ways to Survey Your Congregation

It's important to find out how your congregation is responding to loosening restrictions on social interactions. Here are a few tools to help you get a sense of their mindset and reservations.

- [LifeWay Research](#) — free congregational survey
- [Church member check-in](#) — Register to learn more about your members' health, relationships, job, finances and faith.