



Considerations for Reopening Church Buildings

ABCNJ COVID-19 Resources

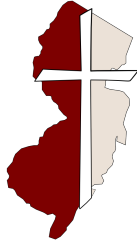
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About this Guide

While most American Baptist Churches of New Jersey (ABCNJ) congregations are uncertain of a date to reopen their buildings, many are also having conversations with congregational leadership about what it would take to open their buildings. This guide offers a few resources that surfaced through small group conversations and discussions with other ABCNJ leaders. This packet is to serve as an aid in having a dialogue with your congregation and church leaders.

ABCNJ is still working with congregations and are available. We want to ensure that congregations are taking their time to reopen buildings in ways that protect the safety of their members and neighbors. **We are in uncharted territory, but we are not in this alone!**



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Rev. Miriam Méndez

Executive Minister and Senior Regional Pastor

Dear ABCNJ Family,

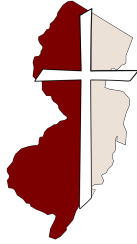
While we talk about re-opening church buildings, I want to remind everyone that “The Church” has never closed! I am so proud of what our ABCNJ churches are doing during this pandemic. Stories of how our congregations have found ways to remain connected with members and ministries within the community, while practicing physical distance, have shown the continued power the Body of Christ serves in all situations.

On Monday, Governor Phil Murphy outlined a multi-stage re-opening plan for businesses, offices, and activities within New Jersey. Murphy stated that we are entering “Stage 1” (<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562020/approved/20200518a.shtml>). The Governor did not include gatherings in church buildings, and dates for future stages are not yet identified. However, this does not preclude us from having conversations about the safety measures that need to be in place to re-open our church buildings.

We have several resources available throughout the region on re-opening. The amount of available information on re-opening is overwhelming. Next week we are holding several small group gatherings for our pastors and leaders to discuss the challenges of re-opening. We will provide a discussion guide for church leaders that will be shaped by the questions and topics brought up in those gatherings.

We understand that re-opening our buildings will be different for each congregation. Your geographical location, size of your building and building configuration, and congregational size need to be considered. Please know that our first and foremost priority is the health and safety of our congregations. Caring for the Body of Christ and our towns and cities require that our congregations continue to participate actively in slowing the spread of COVID-19 and together work to minimize potential future waves of infection and death.

My friends, we are Baptists, which means each church will need to make their own decision for returning to their building. **However**, my sisters and brothers, I want to encourage you not to be in a hurry to re-open. Do not neglect to follow safe and appropriate guidelines. I encourage you to be discerning in your conversations and think of timetables that will protect the most vulnerable in our congregations and communities. We must do everything within our power to protect and care for those who are most susceptible. Refraining from in-person gatherings at this time is a responsible pastoral and loving response.



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In these anxious times, we are asked to wait. Our waiting has little to do with “stages” but has everything to do with compassion and mercy for one another. In these anxious times, I want to remind you that Jesus calls us to “love our neighbor.” We are to love as Jesus loved. This means we need to be mindful of others, take care of, protect, and support one another in our congregations and our communities. In these anxious times, we are called to love one another, wait on the Lord, and continue to be The Church!

Please know that your ABCNJ staff is here to support you during these anxious times. Together we can discern the safest and most pastorally appropriate way forward for our ABCNJ congregations. We continue to pray for you and hold you in the Light of Christ.

Walking by Faith Together,



Rev. Miriam Méndez
Executive Minister and Senior Regional Pastor

Small-Group Discussions on Building Reopening

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Overview of Discussions

Five small groups of clergy and church leaders met on May 27 and May 28, 2020, to discuss what challenges and questions congregations faced around reopening church buildings.

Here are some common themes that surfaced within the conversations.

This is a personal issue for many of our communities and members.

- There are leaders within our ABCNJ congregations that have been diagnosed, some who attended the discussions, as well as ABCNJ congregational leaders and clergy that have died from COVID-19.
- Clergy and leaders spoke about the difficulty of having some congregation members that "want to open the building yesterday" and those who want to wait

Many congregations have begun to look at what it would take to reopen.

- Participants spoke about preparing space within the physical building, such as preparing signage about social distancing, taping sanctuary floors to show people proper spacing, and taking cushions out of pews for easier cleaning.
- Others shared that they used surveys to find out how ready congregation members were about returning.
- Some pastors shared that they have looked at local infection rates with their congregational leadership.

There are still many questions and concerns our congregations are facing.

- If you meet and someone gets sick, how would you quarantine everyone who came to your service?
- People voiced concern about financial giving.
- There was concern about the spread of germs through singing, communion, and even handing out bulletins and sharing hymnals.
- If congregations reach capacity with social distancing, how do you turn people away at the door?
- How do you handle people who come to church but will not comply with procedures set in place?
- There were questions about cleaning, including how congregations make sure they have enough of the right kind of cleaning supplies, how to clean between services or between groups utilizing the building, and how to use and clean the bathrooms.
- There was concern about space sharers and renters and what guidelines needed to be in place before groups could utilize the church.

Small-Group Discussions on Building Reopening

ABCNJ COVID-19 Resources

There was a concern that mismanagement of a timeline for reentry can cause longer-term issues.

- People spoke about the dangers of reopening too soon and risking infection among members.
- There were stories of congregations that gathered and caused outbreaks, endangering the health of congregants and negative media coverage.
- Some congregations are rolling out their church building, reopening in partnership with other churches in their community.

Churches within ABCNJ are finding creative approaches to worship and pastoral care.

- Some are holding groups and worship over teleconference, but most are using video platforms like Zoom or Facebook Live.
- Congregations are finding ways of reaching out to members who have no or limited internet ability, like sharing bulletins and sermon notes by mail.
- Others have found different ways of connecting members through worship, like drive through communion services, parking lot services, or driving in church services.

Most everyone is wondering what this new reality will look like.

- Several people stated that going back to "what was" won't work and expressed a need to prepare people for that reality
- There were several different models of what congregational life might look like for a while, such as micro-church gatherings outdoors or focusing more on small groups of 10-12 people at a time.
- There is a question of what soloist and choir singing might look like.
- People spoke about the possibilities of this current situation, with a desire to continue some virtual worship as congregations find new followers online.

There were some important reminders for leaders, as well.

- Talk to your church's insurance company before opening to ensure you are compliant or you could risk not being covered!
- Remember to take care of yourself. Get sleep, walk, stay hydrated.



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith

CDC offers the following general considerations to help communities of faith discern how best to practice their beliefs while keeping their staff and congregations safe. Millions of Americans embrace worship as an essential part of life. For many faith traditions, gathering together for worship is at the heart of what it means to be a community of faith. But as Americans are now aware, gatherings present a risk for increasing spread of COVID-19 during this Public Health Emergency. CDC offers these suggestions for faith communities to consider and accept, reject, or modify, consistent with their own faith traditions, in the course of preparing to reconvene for in-person gatherings while still working to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

This guidance is not intended to infringe on rights protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or any other federal law, including the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA). The federal government may not prescribe standards for interactions of faith communities in houses of worship, and in accordance with the First Amendment, no faith community should be asked to adopt any mitigation strategies that are more stringent than the mitigation strategies asked of similarly situated entities or activities.




In addition, we note that while many types of gatherings are important for civic and economic well-being, religious worship has particularly profound significance to communities and individuals, including as a right protected by the First Amendment. State and local authorities are reminded to take this vital right into account when establishing their own re-opening plans.

Scaling Up Operations

- Establish and maintain communication with local and State authorities to determine current mitigation levels in your community.
- Provide protections for staff and congregants at [higher risk for severe illness](#) from COVID-19. Offer options for staff at [higher risk for severe illness](#) (including older adults and people of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions) that limit their exposure risk. Offer options for congregants at [higher risk of severe illness](#) that limit their exposure risk (e.g., remote participation in services).
- Consistent with applicable federal and State laws and regulations, put in place policies that protect the privacy and confidentiality of people at [higher risk for severe illness](#) regarding underlying medical conditions.
- Encourage any organizations that share or use the facilities to also follow these considerations as applicable.
- If your community provides social services in the facility as part of its mission, consult CDC's information for [schools](#) and [businesses and workplaces](#), as relevant, for helpful information.

Safety Actions

Promote [healthy hygiene practices](#)

- Encourage staff and congregants to maintain good hand hygiene, [washing hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for those who can safely use hand sanitizer), tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
- Encourage staff and congregants to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed.
- Whenever soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used.
- Consider posting signs on how to [stop the spread](#)  of COVID-19 and how to [promote everyday protective measures](#) , such as [washing hands](#), covering coughs and sneezes, and [properly wearing a face covering](#) .

Cloth face coverings

- Encourage use of [cloth face coverings](#) among staff and congregants. Face coverings are most essential when [social distancing](#) is difficult. Note: [Cloth face coverings](#) should not be placed on children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, and anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance. [Cloth face coverings](#) are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.

Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation

- [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects in between uses.
- Develop a schedule of increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Avoid use of items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected.
- Ensure [safe and correct application](#) of disinfectants and keep them away from children.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.
- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, etc. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety risk to children using the facility.
- If your faith community offers multiple services, consider scheduling services far enough apart to allow time for cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces between services. [Take steps](#) to ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of [Legionnaires' disease](#) and other diseases associated with water.

Promote social distancing

- Take steps to limit the size of gatherings in accordance with the guidance and directives of state and local authorities

and subject to the protections of the First Amendment and any other applicable federal law.

- Promote [social distancing](#) at services and other gatherings, ensuring that clergy, staff, choir, volunteers and attendees at the services follow social distancing, as circumstances and faith traditions allow, to lessen their risk.
- Consider holding services and gatherings in a large, well-ventilated area or outdoors, as circumstances and faith traditions allow.
- Consider appropriate mitigation measures, including taking steps to limit the size of gatherings maintaining [social distancing](#), at other gatherings such as funerals, weddings, religious education classes, youth events, support groups and any other programming, where consistent with the faith tradition.
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or walkways and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways).

Take steps to minimize community sharing of worship materials and other items

- Consistent with the community’s faith tradition, consider temporarily limiting the sharing of frequently touched objects, such as worship aids, prayer rugs, prayer books, hymnals, religious texts and other bulletins, books, or other items passed or shared among congregants, and encouraging congregants to bring their own such items, if possible, or photocopying or projecting prayers, songs, and texts using electronic means.
- Modify the methods used to receive financial contributions. Consider a stationary collection box, the main, or electronic methods of collection regular financial contributions instead of shared collection trays or baskets.
- Consider whether physical contact (e.g., shaking hands, hugging, or kissing) can be limited among members of the faith community.
- If food is offered at any event, consider pre-packaged options, and avoid buffet or family-style meals if possible.

Nursery/Childcare

- If a nursery or childcare will be provided during services and events, refer to CDC’s information on [preventing the spread of COVID-19 in childcare settings](#) and adapt as needed for your setting.
- If holding summer day camps, refer to CDC’s information on [youth and summer camps](#) and adapt as needed.

Staffing and Training

- Train all clergy and staff in the above safety actions. Consider conducting the training virtually, or, if in-person, ensure that [social distancing](#) is maintained.


Monitoring and Preparing

Check for [signs and symptoms](#)


- Encourage staff or congregants who are sick or who have had close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay

home. Share CDC's criteria for staying home with staff and congregants so that they know how to care for themselves and others. Consider posting signs at entrances with this information.




Plan for when a staff member or congregant becomes sick

- Identify an area to separate anyone who exhibits [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 during hours of operation, and ensure that children are not left without adult supervision.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who becomes [sick](#) at the facility to their home or a healthcare facility.
- Notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)  or other applicable laws and in accordance with religious practices.
- Advise those with [exposure](#) to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to [stay home and self-monitor](#) for symptoms, and follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.
- Close off areas used by the [sick](#) person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfection. Ensure [safe and correct application](#) of disinfectants and keep disinfectant products away from children.
- Advise staff and congregants with [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to the facility until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).


Maintain healthy operations

- Implement flexible sick leave and related flexible policies and practices for staff (e.g., allow work from home, if feasible), and provide requested reasonable accommodation absent undue hardship to individuals with disabilities under the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)  or other applicable laws and in accordance with religious practices.
- Monitor absenteeism and create a roster of trained back-up staff.
- Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Staff, clergy, volunteers, and congregants should know who this person is and how to contact them if they become sick or are around others diagnosed with COVID-19. This person should also be aware of state or local regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings.
- As volunteers often perform important duties (e.g., greeters, ushers, childcare), consider similar monitoring, planning, and training for them. Consider that volunteer and staffing may need to increase to implement cleaning and safety protocols and to accommodate additional services with reduced attendance.
- Communicate clearly with staff and congregants about actions being taken to protect their health.

Signs and Messages

- Post [signs](#) in highly visible locations (e.g., entrances, restrooms, gathering halls/community rooms/gyms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#)  and describe how to [stop the spread](#)  of germs (such as by [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a cloth face covering](#) ).
- Include messages (for example, [videos](#)) about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff and congregants (such as in emails and on community websites and [social media accounts](#)).
- Find freely available CDC print and digital resources on CDC's [communications resources](#) main page.

Closing

- Check [state](#) and [local](#)  health department notices daily about transmission in the community and adjust operations.
- In the event a person diagnosed with COVID-19 is determined to have been in the building and poses a risk to the community, it is strongly suggested to dismiss attendees, then properly clean and disinfect the area and the building where the individual was present before resuming activities.

Page last reviewed: May 23, 2020

Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\), Division of Viral Diseases](#)

Additional Links

Some additional links for congregations:

To see a list of actions from New Jersey and Governor Phil Murphy...

National Governor's Association (NGA) State and Territory Resources Page:

<https://www.nga.org/coronavirus/#actions>

For churches that have childcare facilities...

CDC Guidance for Childcare Settings:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>

For state and city Health Department contacts...

CDC Directory of State and Local Health Departments:

<https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/index.html>

COVID-19: Recommended Preventative Practices and FAQs for Faith-based and Community Leaders

- **Should We Greet One Another as Usual? Shaking Hands, Kissing Cheeks, etc.?**
 - Identify how your community may greet one another in ways that reduce any potential spread of viruses, including COVID-19. For example, provide direction to those gathered to replace hugs with elbow touches. Consider recommending that members not hug or touch one another, but offer hand signals like a peace sign or the [American Sign Language sign for “I Love You.”](#)
 - Greeters at all gatherings should be especially aware and refrain from offering handshakes. As one community noted, “Greeters can model hospitality with their words and their smiles.”

- **What Should I Tell People Who Are Concerned?**
 - Reassure them that your faith- or community-based organization, as well as local, state, and national authorities, is taking all necessary precautions to ensure their health and safety. **Your response can soothe concerns** and create an atmosphere of calm. The best way to prevent illness is to practice routine and common sense hygiene practices. These everyday practices also help to prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including the flu:
 - **Stay home when you are sick**, except to get medical care.
 - **Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue** and then throw the used tissue in the trash.
 - **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds**, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.**
 - **Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands**, especially your eyes, nose, or mouth.
 - **Clean high-contact surfaces and objects thoroughly and repeatedly.**
 - Leaders may find it helpful to review the guidance provided by the CDC in its [“Interim Guidance: Get Your Community- and Faith-Based Organizations Ready for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\).”](#)
 - Check with your state and local health authorities to learn if your community has experienced a COVID-19 outbreak.

- **How Can We Advise the Elderly, Those with Special Health Considerations, Their Caregivers, and Other High-Risk Populations?**
 - Provide special consideration in communicating risk to vulnerable populations in your community, including [older adults](#) and others with access and/or functional needs. Assign, or encourage those whom you serve to seek out, a “buddy” who will check in on and help care for them, should they get sick.
 - Make plans to stay connected.

COVID-19: Recommended Preventative Practices and FAQs for Faith-based and Community Leaders

- Ensure community contact lists are up-to-date and that ‘calling trees’ — or other practices to account for individuals who may be living alone, elderly, and vulnerable — are in place.
 - Convey ways they can stay connected via virtual worship, gatherings, and staff and leadership meetings.
 - Ensure there are clear means to communicate any “connection plans” with them.
- **What Should I Do if Someone at a Community Gathering Says They Are Feeling Sick?**
 - Identify space in your facility or event to separate people who may become sick and may not be able to leave immediately.
 - Designate a separate bathroom for those who are feeling sick. Develop a safe plan for cleaning the room regularly.
 - Isolate the individual immediately from staff and participants.
 - Assist the person in **CALLING AHEAD** to their health care professional if they have a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing. Tell them to avoid taking public transportation, ride-shares, and taxis.
 - People with confirmed COVID-19, with a loved one in the home with a confirmed case, or those experiencing symptoms should remain under home isolation. The decision to discontinue home isolation precautions should be made on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with health care providers and state and local health departments.
 - For more information: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html.
 - **Is Information About COVID-19 Available In Spanish?**
 - The following website provides a wide range of information on COVID-19 in Spanish: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index-sp.html
 - Los Centros para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades (CDC) tienen información en español sobre COVID-19 en su sitio web en www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index-sp.html
 - **Does the Virus Live on Surfaces (e.g., Books or Shared Offering Plates)?**
 - It may be possible to be exposed to COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes; however, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Review the CDC’s [“How COVID-19 Spreads.”](#)
 - **Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects several times daily** (e.g., tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, cabinet handles, smart phones, and keyboards) using an appropriate cleaner to minimize the event of a COVID-19 outbreak in your community. For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list

COVID-19: Recommended Preventative Practices and FAQs for Faith-based and Community Leaders

- of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available [here](#). Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
- If an object is frequently touched, for example as a part of religious observance, it should be cleaned, as appropriate within the religious tradition, after each use.
 - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent and water prior to disinfection.
 - Consider ways your community can reduce the number of objects the community collectively handles.
 - For example, consider no longer passing offering plates down the row; instead, place the offering plate on stands and ask people to leave their offering. Remind those who oversee and administer offerings, or similar items and elements, to wash their hands after administration or use.
 - Organizations may also consider removing shared books and encouraging people to bring their own.
- **What Type of Items Should We Have in Our Emergency Preparedness Kit?**
 - Consider having supplies on hand, such as hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, extra tissues, and trash baskets.
 - Refer to the CDC’s “[Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities](#)” for additional information about supplies and materials.

Find the full HHS Handout and the CDC Checklist for Community and Faith Leaders at: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/checklist.html

Post- COVID-19

Facility Utilization:

Social Distancing, Ministry Considerations, and More...

Smart Church Solutions has developed this guide to help you consider how you can effectively and intentionally resume a limited live meeting and worship experience while still adhering to the ever-changing recommendations. We have attempted to present many of the more difficult choices you will need to consider prior to the resumption of operations, albeit in a limited capacity.

Whether you personally agree with some of the suggestions and restrictions on large group gatherings (that vary from state to state and sometimes county to county), we encourage you to take the lead in adhering to public gathering safety guidelines. To intentionally disregard suggested measures is not prudent nor is it a good witness.

This list is NOT exhaustive and must be considered at the local church level. Be wise and prudent as you navigate these highly unique times.

POST-CORONAVIRUS FACILITY RE-OPENING CHECKLIST

PARKING LOTS

- Check and clean all entrances
- Clean all debris from parking areas
- Check striping and directional arrows, repaint as needed
- Check all signage and repair as needed
- Patch any cracks or holes, especially along walkways
- Check all parking lot lighting, replace/repair as needed

EXTERIOR LANDSCAPING

- Clean all debris as necessary
- Check operation of all irrigation, repair as necessary
- Schedule irrigation back-flow preventer inspection (if necessary)
- Trim all trees and plantings, especially around entrances, and walkways
- Refresh all beds
- Inspect all exterior signage, repair and replace as necessary
- Check operation of any landscape lighting, repair/replace as needed

FACILITY EXTERIOR

- Check all entrances, remove any collected debris
- Check operation of all exterior doors, lubricate all hardware as needed
- Clean, replace, or add entrance matting as needed
- Check all exterior facility lighting, repair/replace as needed
- Ensure any pest control stations are still operational
- Inspect and clean all awnings (if applicable)
- Inspect porte-cochere (drive-thru's), clean as necessary
- Clean and sanitize all playgrounds, exterior children's areas

FACILITY EXTERIOR (cont.)

- Check all fencing, repair as required. Lubricate all gates and locks
- Inspect dumpster storage area, clean as necessary
- Inspect all accessible parking and routes, ensure all contrasting color sections are correct
- Clean all exterior glass. Check all seals and caulking. Repair/repaint all trim as needed
- Inspect all fire or emergency exit pathways/routes
- Check all downspout discharge areas, ensure they are clear of debris

GAS

- Check all gas appliances for proper operation, re-light as necessary
- Inspect gas meter(s), visual inspection only. If anything appears incorrect, contact utility company
- Run all gas appliances for a typical cycle before you allow operations to resume

PLUMBING & WATER

- In restrooms, check all fixtures and run/flush/let them run for a bit.
- Ensure all fill valves and flappers function, replace as necessary
- Empty and clean ice makers. Let them fill one time, dump the ice, then refill
- Inspect any back-flow preventer valves in the facility (if applicable)
- Pour at least a half-gallon of water down every active floor drain

POST-CORONAVIRUS FACILITY RE-OPENING CHECKLIST

ELECTRICAL

- Inspect all panels for clearance and tripped breakers
- For tripped breakers: investigate for cause, resolve issue, reset breaker
- Take a section of the facility at a time to restore power/turn-on equipment/reset power strips
- Inspect all GFCI outlets/circuits for correct operation
- Inspect all automatic doors, low-voltage operators
- Inspect any extension cords in use for proper gauge, condition, and necessity. Replace as required

HVAC

- Inspect all exterior components. Clean coils, remove any debris, check for proper operation of electrical disconnect, and ensure suction line insulation is intact
- Inspect interior components. Replace filters as required, check the piping for the over-flow pan, ensure disconnects function, and inspect coil (if applicable)
- Operate all the HVAC equipment in both modes to ensure proper equipment operation and control operation
- Inspect back-flow preventer valves (if applicable)
- Clean all HVAC supply vents in the facility
- Check belts for proper tension/condition. Ensure spares are available for all equipment
- Set correct temperatures at all units.

LIFE SAFETY

- Inspect AED pads and equipment. Check dates and ensure spare pads and batteries are present
- Inspect all first-aid supplies, especially dates, replace as required
- Check all portable fire extinguishers (monthly inspections)
- If applicable, check firefighter operation of elevator(s)
- Check all emergency exit signs and lighting for proper operation. Replace fixtures/batteries as required

LIFE SAFETY (cont.)

- Inspect any foodstuffs in the facility for condition and date range
- Inspect all flashlights and any other emergency operations materials
- Check operation of all locking systems
- Inspect fire, intrusion alarms, sprinkler systems for proper operation. Will require a licensed company to perform

VEHICLES

- Ensure registration on all motor vehicles and trailers is current
- Ensure all insurance on motor vehicles and trailers is current
- Check all fluids (washer, oil, transmission, etc.)
- Check tires, replace/rotate as required
- Inspect wipers, window seals and gaskets. Replace as required
- Check all lights for proper operation, replace as required
- Drive all motor vehicles to ensure proper operation prior to taking on passengers
- Ensure all first-aid and safety supplies are in vehicles. This includes a first-aid kit, fire extinguisher, safety cones, spare fuses, jumper cables, flashlight, etc.

FACILITY INTERIOR

- Check ceiling tiles for stains and/or damage. Replace/repair as required
- Ensure proper operation of all space lighting
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all tables and chairs, paying attention to the underside of each
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all toys
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all "high touch" areas. This can include keyboards, phones, door hardware, elevator call buttons, handrails, water fountains, bathroom partition hardware, backs of chairs/pews, offering plates, touchscreens, badge printers, etc.

POST-CORONAVIRUS FACILITY RE-OPENING CHECKLIST

FACILITY INTERIOR (cont.)

- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all trash receptacles, changing tables, cribs, and the walls in children's areas, between 18"-32" off the floor
- Inspect all spaces to ensure they are clean and in good condition.
- Run your HVAC system or open windows to allow for a fresh air exchange prior to occupation

WORSHIP AREAS

- Condition the space and have pianos tuned as required
- Inspect/check lighting system, to include the dimmers and theatrical lighting (as applicable)
- Inspect/check sound system for proper operation
- Inspect/check all AV equipment for alignment, focus, and operation
- If possible, perform a tech run-through at least a week prior to the onset of services
- Perform additional dusting and cleaning on the seating areas.
- Fill and perform a function check on the baptistry (as required)
- Check pews/seating for all required envelopes, inserts, and hymnals. Ensure they are up to date

ROOFS

- Walk, inspect the roof and repair any area required
- Check operation of all drains, gutters, scuppers, and downspouts
- Check roof (if low slope) for any debris and remove as necessary

GENERAL

- Ensure all custodial supplies and equipment are clean, stocked, and available (to include consumables). Check the SDS book and make sure to list all chemicals and have a copy of the current SDS
- Ensure all maintenance, custodial, and supply closets/rooms are cleaned and organized
- Remove all unnecessary items from the property
- Walk entire property prior to allowing operations to fully commence. Check all areas (including the exterior) and perform a final visual check for any items out of place or requiring adjustment



American Baptist Churches USA

Discussion Guide for Reopening Your Church Building

As local, state and governmental leaders begin to announce plans for reopening the country, it seems wise for pastors and church leaders to begin holding conversations and making preparations for reopening our places of worship. It is important to recognize that safety concerns will require our worship and ministry to be conducted differently as we return to a new reality. Gathering guidelines from officials may be implemented in stages and may be different from one county to the next. Do not feel pressured to reopen because of other neighboring church decisions. Advance preparation may be the key to keeping persons safe when we return to our activities. This guide is designed to help you ponder various points of consideration as your church implements new methods, policies and procedures. It specifically focuses on two core areas, the physical and the personal.

Physical

The first step in considering how to safely practice ministry is to prepare your facility for ministry in this new era. Walk through your entire campus with fresh eyes toward upkeep, cleanliness, and safety. A return to work checklist is available on the ABCUSA website at www.abc-usa.org/coronavirus. The overall appearance of your building and grounds will speak to your congregants and guests louder than ever about your emphasis upon health and safety.

Overall Considerations

1. What medical or public health professionals can you work with to help develop best practices related to the health of your congregants and guests?
2. What can you do to help your congregants and guests easily discern that your facility is a safe, clean location for their family and friends to be present?

Cleaning and Sanitizing Before Persons Arrive

Protocols should be implemented to reduce the spread of viruses in your building.

1. What areas of the church building need to be deep cleaned before anyone returns?
2. Who can be recruited to help prepare the church for the reopening?
3. What resources are needed for cleaning? Are cleaning materials generally available or do they need to be ordered?
4. If contracting with vendor cleaning services, determine if they supply their own cleaning products and personal protective equipment (PPE) and have a written agreement in

place with their certificate of insurance. If members are doing the cleaning, determine an approved list of cleaning products.

5. What ongoing (daily, weekly, monthly) cleaning protocols need to be developed and implemented once you are meeting again?

Contact Mitigation While People Are On Campus

Procedures and Processes should be developed to minimize personal contact and to frequently sanitize high touch surfaces when guests are on campus. Reports suggest that COVID-19 contaminants can remain on metal surfaces for up to 72 hours and other surfaces for up to 48 hours.

1. What resources need to be purchased and stationed throughout the building for use while people gather, i.e. hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray/wipes, masks? Because availability of these supplies might be limited and prioritized to healthcare facilities, how will you gather them?
2. Consider the use of trigger-handle devices to minimize the need to pick up masks, gloves, and waste for volunteers and staff.
3. What practices could you put in place that will mitigate any virus spread? For example, greeters wiping down doorknobs, bathrooms cleaned and sanitizing between services, etc.
4. Designate a person responsible for inventory to ensure that they are secure from theft and replenished as needed.
5. How can you ensure that community groups who use your building follow your health and safety guidelines?
6. How will you sanitize church vehicles?

Deferred Maintenance

As you walk the grounds and building with fresh eyes in preparation for a return to on-campus activities, make note of items that need attention. The tour will no doubt reveal items of varying expense, but pass along the items to the appropriate group for attention, and address any items that can be tackled immediately.

1. What areas of the campus need an additional refresh or tidying up to exhibit a better overall cleanliness to your congregants and guests?
2. What concerns, such as trip, slip, and fall hazards, did you note on your walkthrough and what is your plan of action to correct them?
3. What is the cost of these projects?
4. Who can be recruited to help?
5. What resources do they need?
6. What are the priorities based on urgency and availability of resources?

Personal

Both persons and places will have been affected by COVID-19. The lingering effects of grief, economic distress, isolation, and other negative impacts from the pandemic will create new needs among congregants. People have been hurt and scar tissue may be present. It may take a while to discern the range and depth of these needs. Some needs may be met with technical and strategic fixes, while others will require experimentation and adaptation. After you decide how many people can be in one worship service and where to put the hand sanitizers, create space for the more difficult strategic and adaptive questions.

Leadership

Crises often present unique opportunities for leadership. Gather your leadership team to navigate the transitioning back into the use of your facilities. Review your identity, mission, and vision in light of the changing times. There will naturally be new ministry challenges and opportunities. Consider releasing some previous ministry activities for which the pandemic revealed less of a need in order to respond to the new challenges and opportunities.

1. How can you communicate to your church and community the steps that you are taking to maintain clean and safe conditions on campus and a relevant ministry future?
2. What has your deep dive into technology taught you? What good habits has your church embraced these past months that you can immediately integrate, for example, online care through small groups, digital communication, and streaming worship services?
3. What should you stop doing? What should you begin? What meetings have not been held and not been missed! What needs pruning?
4. Should church staff job descriptions be altered in light of released responsibilities and new needs and opportunities? Several back to work resources are available on the ABCUSA website at www.abc-usa.org/coronavirus.
5. What is your plan if the decision to open up the country is reversed and new stay-at-home mandates are delivered?

Worship Services

Adapting elements in your worship service and other building activities to incorporate needed distancing may be the new reality.

1. What special celebration will you plan after you been back in your building for a few weeks? Special worship services lend themselves to creativity and exploration.
2. What adjustments in seating can you create to foster six-foot distancing throughout the building, for example, adding a worship service for older or at-risk persons, increasing spacing among chairs, taping off certain pews or sections, or worshipping outside?

3. Should some persons be encouraged to stay at home for safety reasons? How will you make that determination?
4. How will you involve members who need to continue to worship at home for safety reasons during the initial stages of reopening?
5. Should you continue with livestream or online broadcast of services for at-risk or ill congregants or those initially hesitant to attend on-site worship and activities?
6. How will you welcome new persons who have been worshipping with you online and are now present with you?
7. What alternatives to traditional practices of receiving the offering, passing the peace, passing the communion plates, and coffee hour can be put in place in order to limit physical contact?
8. How will congregational singing take place in light of the fact that some health experts have said that singing is similar to coughing in terms of the potential spread of the virus? Can the choir and praise band operate with social distancing?
9. Do policies and procedures for baptism need to be changed during the social distancing phase?
10. What alternate pathways of connecting could you implement to limit physical interaction, for example creating digital welcome cards for sermon response, putting worship guides on tables, removing hymnals and only using overhead screens, etc.?

Ministries

Addressing ministry needs will probably be more complex and unique when people leave their homes. Expect persons not to be the same as in pre-pandemic days when they return.

1. What about scheduling and holding the memorial services, home goings, and remembrances of people who died during the time of “stay at home” orders?
2. How will you address the personal and family struggles that may have surfaced in the last couple of months among those experiencing marital problems, financial strains, emotional and physical abuse, job loss, etc.? With many schools closed, churches may be the first place where physical signs of abuse become evident.
3. Can you provide a list of professional resources available near entry points and washrooms for families: to include domestic abuse hotlines, organizations to assist with utility assistance, local shelters and food banks, etc.?
4. Can small groups and Sunday school classes reconvene or continue meeting online? Consider new check-in ministries for those who remain isolated at home and for those newly diagnosed with COVID-19.
5. Will your church continue to offer childcare during church activities in the same way that it did before? If so, what additional precautions will you take in this area, such as temperature screenings, snack time modifications, etc.? How will you sanitize playground equipment, toys, changing tables, etc.?
6. What preparations do you need to begin making now to be ready for adjustments to your summer and fall church activities such as Vacation Bible School, mission trips, etc.?
7. What new means of support can be put in place to support new ministry opportunities?

Financial

There will be few church budgets that remain unaffected by the global pandemic. Consider conducting a financial assessment of restricted and unrestricted funds.

1. Can you schedule a conversation with your treasurer or finance committee to review your assets and liabilities as well as your current income statement?
2. How does giving compare to beginning of the year projections? Can you project short-term and long-term trends on giving? What is the bottom-line impact of these giving trends?
3. Have you explored electronic giving and online bill pay options for members and regular attenders?
4. Cleaning and contact mitigation efforts will be an ongoing expense that is most likely beyond current budget planning. How will you fund these required resources? Can the funding include donations of cleaning supplies, volunteer assistance, and specialized giving?
5. What new ministry opportunities have you identified and what are the costs associated with them?
6. What resources are available to you from the government and the denomination?