



These considerations are suggestions as you prepare for a return to fellowship:

- The physical and spiritual health/ safety of your members and the communities you serve
- Our public witness
- The prayerful wisdom of Louisiana's respected faith leaders
- The needs and unique circumstances within each respective congregation
- Best practices based on our trusted sister churches and a congregation-wide awareness of recommendations from the CDC, state, and local governmental entities

Potential Service Options to Consider:

LFF recommends an incremental approach with plans to phase-in full capacity services to follow.

1. In-person services with social distancing and reduced capacity:

Church resumes services with members putting social distancing guidelines and extra hygiene practices in place. This approach should be determined by size of facilities and age of congregants.

- A. Adherence guidelines and best practices for in-person gatherings;
- B. Continuation of online services for members and the community and a request that vulnerable members to continue their stay at home.
- C. Consider adding multiple services to allow more people to attend reduced-capacity services.

3. Drive-In Services

Drive-in services have been an option for churches for several weeks and remain a viable solution. Continue to offer online services for members and the community and, again, request that vulnerable members remain at home.

2. Outside Services

Hosting church services outside is a viable option that allows extra space for social distancing. We should continue to offer online services for members and the community while respectfully requesting that vulnerable members remain home. Depending upon the size of the congregation, witness to outsiders is another component to factor to consider.

4. Offer Online Services Only

For many churches, continuing online services only will be the best option. Search for creative ways to resume small groups, following social distancing and hygiene practices.

Guidelines for in-person gatherings:

1. Post warning signs and urge people to stay home/seek medical attention if they have symptoms.
2. Review [CDC guidelines](#) for social distancing and quarantining.
3. Thoroughly, clean facilities using [sanitation and hygiene best practices](#).
4. It is best to put coffee service or refreshments on hold. Water fountains shouldn't be used.
5. Consider suggestions from the La. Department of Health and the State Fire Marshal.
6. Advise elderly, immune-compromised and symptomatic congregants or anyone from a household with a sick family member to avoid entering your church facility. High-risk individuals (people over 65 and those with underlying conditions) should continue to avoid in-person gatherings.
7. Use individually wrapped communion packets.
8. Prop open doors both inside and outside the building.
9. Clean the building regularly and between user groups, paying extra attention to high-touch surfaces.
10. Avoid using paper bulletins. Use a projector instead of hymnals.
11. Have a collection box, rather than passing an offering plate.
12. Encourage frequent hand washing. Maintain a good supply of soap, hand sanitizer, and disposable paper towels for drying hands. Provide sanitizer and masks for congregants and consider having staff and volunteers model best practices as an example.
13. Apply social distancing guidelines. Facilities should move chairs, block off pews, or designate seating areas to ensure congregants who are not members of the same household sit at least six feet apart on all sides. Discourage handshakes, hugging, or other physical contact.

Churches now have the freedom to decide which protocols they believe are most reasonable for in-person small group gatherings. With this freedom comes great responsibility. We recommend churches in parishes still experiencing greater intensity of outbreaks to seriously consider communication and cooperation with local officials while weighing their options and deciding on best practices. Finally, the question of our fundamental rights must also be balanced by serious deliberation as it relates to the safety of our congregants and the community as well as potential legal liability, potential occupancy denial by the Fire Marshal, and the potential for loss of insurability if deemed at fault when we choose our next steps.

In all these guidelines, note that neither I nor LFF are making a recommendation for what is the best course of action for you and your church. These suggestions are not meant to be legal advice. If you have questions, please consult your insurance carrier and/or legal advisor. We are simply attempting to start the conversation and place these considerations before you and your leadership board. I would suggest that you DOCUMENT IN WRITING all efforts to accommodate the public with these necessary safety measures. I also recommend that you post in public your guidelines. Should an issue arise, these documented safety steps will serve you well.

Additional Trusted Resources:

[What should churches do as they consider reopening after the coronavirus?](#)

[Guidelines for Reopening Your Church](#)

[What Pastors Should Know About The White House Plan to Open Up America Again](#)

[24 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return](#)