

**BEST PRACTICES
OPENING CONGREGATIONS FOR WORSHIP
(Edited September 23, 2020)**

PREPARING FOR OPENING

CLEANING	Deep clean and disinfect the sanctuary and other areas of use. Plan placement of and distribution of hand wash and disinfectant.
SOCIAL DISTANCING PLAN	Develop a social distancing plan for seating, i.e., six feet apart and every other pew. Family members who live together may sit together.
PARTICIPANT NUMBERS	Develop specific guidelines for numbers allowed in the sanctuary at any one time. No more than 50% of capacity.
ENTERING	Develop a plan for seating individuals safely. This includes a plan for keeping people six feet apart when entering the building and seating them individually to maintain social distance.
EXITING	Develop a plan for exiting. Perhaps row-by-row, initiated by the ushers. Emphasize maintaining social distancing in the parking lot.

THE WORSHIP SERVICE

LENGTH OF SERVICE	Limit length of service, e.g., 50 minutes, to limit exposure and use of vulnerable facilities, such as restrooms.
MULTIPLE SERVICES	Consider offering multiple services if the attendance warrants. Remember, the sanctuary will need to be cleaned and disinfected between services.
ONLINE SERVICES	Continue online services/worship in order to minister those who need to remain at home.
DISCONTINUE	Discontinue using common items that may be shared between people, e.g., books, hymnals and pew Bibles. Rather than using offering plates in gathering tithes, consider a container at the back of the sanctuary to collect parishioner's offerings.
WATER FOUNTAINS	Cover water fountains.
MUSIC	We discourage music selections led by choirs and engaging in congregational singing. Consider the use of pre-recorded music/videos instead. (See link on page 2 for options and creative alternatives.)
WORSHIP AIDES	Project call to worship, prayers, etc., onto a screen. If projection equipment is not available, use one-page paper handouts to be disposed of in trash cans or recycling bins immediately after the service. Discontinue the use of bulletins.
CHILDREN'S STORIES	Tell the children's story with children staying in place in the sanctuary
PASTOR'S DISTANCE	Ensure the pastor is an adequate distance from the congregation to ensure no passage of droplets (12-15 feet). There will be no pastoral greeting at dismissal.
MASKS	Wearing of masks is required for indoor spaces in Va. per the latest guidelines issued by Governor Northam on May 26 th . Pastors and church boards can make plans to accommodate members who cannot wear a mask due to extenuating circumstances (Per Governor's Guidelines).

RESTROOM MONITOR Appoint a restroom monitor to ensure one person is in the restroom at a time. Disinfect the restroom area between restroom uses.

SOCIAL DISTANCING MONITORS Appoint individuals (deacons) to gently remind folks to maintain social distancing.

OTHER ACTIVITIES Suspend activities other than the Sunday morning worship. This includes Christian education and nursery facilities. Also suspend the use of Children’s play areas, both indoor and outdoor. (Families should be informed ahead of time that these facilities will not be available for children.)

FOLLOW UP

CLEANING CREW Develop a cleaning crew responsible for cleaning between services.

MONITORING COVID-19 Develop a group (pastor and deacons) to be alert for COVID-19 cases in the congregation. Consider developing a process for reclosing should members of the congregation become ill with COVID-19.

DISCLAIMER

These are intended to serve as some suggestions or “best practices” for congregations to consider as they begin to transition back to in-person services. This list is not intended to be exclusive; there certainly may be other precautions that would appropriate depending on the congregation’s particular circumstances and style of worship. Continue to monitor and heed guidelines as circumstances evolve.

Singing and Hymns

<https://worshipmentor.dudaone.com/pause-before-singing>

Cleaning

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

General Guidelines

Brotherhood Mutual <https://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/safety-library/risk-management-articles/disasters-emergencies-and-health/general-health-and-injury-prevention/coronavirus/before-we-gather/>

BDM <https://covid19.brethren.org/information/>

Masks

State of Virginia <https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/eo63/faq/>

Dr. Byrd Advisory <https://shencob.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Masks-Dr.-Greg-Byrd.pdf>

State Guidance Churches

Virginia. <https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/forwardvirginia/#856622>

West Virginia [Guidelines and general information](#)