

Recommended prevention measures for congregations to consider before restarting worship gatherings

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

To view a full list of recommended resources to help congregations consider plans to resume gathering, visit ibit.ly/oUI9. To view and update a database of ACC congregations' regathering plans, visit ibit.ly/sGM4.

When considering when to resume gathering:

1. Respect one another as we may approach reopening from different perspectives and contexts.
2. Consider those most vulnerable to any decisions made.
3. Utilize the time of isolation to develop deeper relationships, especially with those most vulnerable. Reference the [Humanitarian Disaster Institute's \(HDI\) resource on providing spiritual first aid](#).
4. Follow all [CDC](#), state and local guidelines.
5. Continue offering virtual services and avoid gathering in person until your region is in a fully-open stance (for example, in Pennsylvania, consider remaining shut until or beyond the time when your region enters the green phase of reopening).
6. Be good neighbors: consider impact of decisions on the community witness and the ramifications for other local churches that are also discerning an appropriate response. Keep other local ACC congregations up-to-date with your reopening plans.
7. Avoid responding to polarizing expectations.
8. Process the questions proposed in the [May 5 note to pastors](#).
9. Consult the provider of your congregation's liability insurance.
10. Consider [CDC recommendations for child care programs](#).
11. Closely monitor the level of infection in your community.
12. Reference the HDI's [Biblically-based discernment approaches and scientifically-based mitigation approaches for reopening](#) to create an informed step-by-step approach to reopening.

13. All leaders should be involved with planning to increase buy-in, improve communication, and ensure a consistent roll-out of plans. Seek to make decisions collectively.

When you decide to gather:

14. Expect that gathering will not be the way it was before - share that expectation with congregants. Restrictions are likely until a vaccine is available.
15. Follow CDC, state, and local guidelines to limit the number of people gathered.
16. Avoid congregational singing, communion, fellowship meals, children's programming and coffee/social hours and other practices that don't allow for social distancing or proper sanitization.
17. Maintain adequate supplies of masks, wipes and hand sanitizer and make these available as appropriate.
18. Establish cleaning guidelines for before and after in-person gatherings.
19. Each congregation should establish policy for use of building guidelines that will be adhered to by any other groups sharing the building.
20. Limit bathroom use/access as much as is practical.
21. Prioritize online giving or provide a basket for in-person donations upon exit rather than passing a plate/bag.
22. Create a contingency plan for various possible circumstances (what if your region experiences a flare-up of COVID-19, what if expectations for gathering or building use are not followed, etc.).
23. Keep track of all attendees in case of anyone testing positive. Local health officials will expect that all persons gathered will be informed if there is an incident.
24. Maintain safe meeting practices such as requiring attendees to wear masks, sit in rows rather than in circles, practicing social distancing.