



COVID19 Conversation Guide for Reopening a Church Campus

As guidelines are expanded for churches to regather, it is important to recognize that ministry will not be conducted in the same manner as before. Additionally, it is likely that just as “safer-at-home” orders were implemented in stages, a return to public gatherings will also be implemented in similar stages. It would be expected that government guidelines may be different from one county to the next. It is critical that churches begin preparing now for the return of on-campus activities. This guide is designed to help you through various points of consideration as your church implements new methods, policies and procedures. It specifically focuses on two core areas, the practical and the personal.

Practical

The first step in considering your ministry opportunities is to prepare your facility for ministry in this new era. As with everything that we do for the Lord, we should strive for excellence. Now is the time to walk your campus with fresh eyes in regard to upkeep and cleanliness. The overall appearance of your campus will speak to guests louder than ever about your focus towards their health.

1. What medical professionals can you work with to help develop best practices related to the health of your guests?

Cleaning/Sanitizing before guest arrive

Protocols should be implemented to reduce virus spread on campus (remember, the virus is not eradicated.)

1. What areas of the church need to be deep cleaned before anyone returns to campus?
2. Who can be recruited to do this? (Volunteers, Church Staff)
3. What resources do they need? (cleaning materials – are they generally available or do they need to be ordered?)
4. What ongoing (daily, weekly, monthly) cleaning protocols need to be developed and implemented once you are meeting on campus again?

Contact Mitigation while guests 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.

1. What resources need to be purchased and stationed throughout the campus for use while people gather (ex. hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray/wipes)? (Availability of these supplies might be limited and prioritized to healthcare facilities. How will you gather them?)

2. What measures could you implement that will mitigate any germ spread while on campus (ex. greeters wiping down doorknobs, bathrooms cleaned at least once during morning, sanitizing between services)?

Deferred Maintenance

As you walk your campus with fresh eyes in preparation for a return to on-campus activities, make note of items that need attention. This will no doubt reveal items of varying economic impact. (A new roof is more expensive than some paint on some walls. Pulling weeds in a flower bed – just takes some time.)

1. What areas of the campus need an additional refresh or tidying to exhibit a better overall cleanliness to your guest?
2. What is the cost of these projects?
3. Who can be recruited to do this? (Volunteers, Church Staff)
4. What resources do they need?
5. What are priorities based on emergent need and availability of resources?

Personal

Leadership

Leading well through this time of uncertainty is essential; gather prayerfully with your leadership team to navigate this time of transition. Evaluate the mission God has called your church to and identify how you will continue to impact your community. There will naturally be new ministry opportunities to develop and very likely there are some prior ministry programs that may be obsolete.

1. How can you communicate to your church and community the steps you are taking to maintain clean and safe conditions on campus and a relevant ministry future?
2. What good habits has your church embraced these past months that you need to immediately integrate (ex. care through small groups, digital communication)?
3. What should you stop doing? What should you begin?
4. Do church staff changes need to be made? (ex. change in position responsibilities to address new ministry needs)

Worship Services

Adapting elements in your service and church programming for “loving distance” will be helpful for the near future.

1. What adjustments in seating could you instruct or create to foster wise distancing (ex. adding a service, spacing chairs, encouraging “spread”)?
2. What alternatives to passing offering and Lord’s Supper plates (where everyone handles the plate) could be implemented while still highlighting giving as worship and corporate participation in the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper?
3. What alternate pathways of connecting could you implement to limit physical interaction (ex. creating digital welcome cards or sermon response, putting worship guides on table, removing hymnals and using on-screen only)?

4. Do policies and procedures for celebrating in believer's baptism need to be changed?

Ministries

Addressing ministry needs will be more complex and unique when people leave their homes. The church must be prepared for the immediate logistical and personal realities. People will not be the same when they return. New opportunities to minister will exist with new hurts that have been created during this time of crisis.

1. How could you create a hybrid between on-campus and on-line platforms for those unable or hesitant to return to campus in the near future or for the broader community wanting to remain connected from afar (ex. Small Groups, Prayer Meeting, Ministry Teams/Committees, Needs request)?
2. Will your church continue to offer childcare during services in the same way it did before? If so, what additional precautions will you take in this area (ex. temperature checks, snack time modification/elimination)?
3. What preparations do you need to begin making now to be ready for adjustments to your Summer programming (ex. VBS – on campus, virtual or at Home)?
4. How will you address the personal and family struggles that may have surfaced in the last couple of months (ex. marriage or financial strain, emotional or physical abuse, job loss)?

Financial

Budget planning is a critical element for ministry consideration as you plan towards reopening your church campus.

1. What has the impact on tithes and offerings been? Can you project long-term trends on giving? What is the bottom-line impact of these giving trends?
2. 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? (donations of cleaning supplies, budget adjustment, etc.)
3. What new ministry opportunities have you identified and what are the associated costs?
4. Can you make immediate church budget adjustments or do changes require church body approval?

Your association and state convention teams are here to help. Please reach out with specific questions, concerns or ideas that you have.