

Re-Opening Places of Worship

16 Helps for churches to consider
as they prepare to regather after
COVID-19 restrictions



COSCO & ASSOCIATES, INC.
DESIGN • CONSTRUCTION • FINANCING

**Designing for His Kingdom
Building for the Master**

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Here are 16 worship-related helps for churches to consider as they prepare to regather.

01

Maintain social distancing in worship.

Arrange the congregation so families are at least six feet apart from other families. Block off certain pews or remove chairs, and utilize staff, ushers and deacons to direct traffic, but make sure these individuals also maintain social distancing.

Model social distancing on the platform. If you can't have your full worship team on the platform while maintaining social distancing, then reduce the size of your team for this season or alternate smaller teams each week.

Ministers are exceptionally good at “working the room,” and they ought to be! You want to greet your attendees, shake their hands, and give them hugs. Now, however, the most loving thing you can do is not touch your members. Greet, smile, and wave, but keep your distance. Practice what you preach.

02

Eliminate the “meet and greet” fellowship time.

We're all glad to be “a part of the family of God,” but we must dispense – for a time – with opportunities for physical greetings. A typical fellowship time in a worship service could rapidly spread COVID-19 among your members.

03

Don't pass the offering plate.

Passing any physical object (including an offering plate) around a room spreads the germs of anyone who touches the plate. Instead, provide boxes or offering plates at the entrances to your sanctuary. Embrace online giving or encourage members to mail in their tithes and offerings.

04

Have a plan for baptisms.

This physical, biblical act must continue. And though it is not possible to baptize while social distancing, we can still enact practices to increase safety. Consider baptizing only one person each service or use chlorine to help lessen the spread of germs. This also may be a perfect time for a baptismal service at the river.

05

Have an alternate plan for Lord's Supper.

Many churches have long-since abandoned a common cup and common loaf during their Lord's Supper observances. Passing trays of bread and grape juice around the worship center is a problematic (see "Don't pass the offering plate" above). Consider individually wrapped Lord's Supper servings, or even have families bring their own bread and juice from home.

06

Consider other physical objects.

Microphones, hymnals, pew Bibles, worship guides, bulletins and visitor cards are commonplace in churches. While wonderful tools for worship, they're also exceptional ways to spread germs. Consider alternatives (or regular cleaning and sterilization) for these physical objects, especially if you plan to have multiple services in the same space.

07

Add services and venues.

Many states are suggesting you keep your worship space less than 50 percent full. Each additional service time and venue you offer provides more room for your members to spread out – further preventing the transmission of COVID-19.

08

Streamline your services.

Make your services meaningful and concise. What is essential, and what is not? Many churches will add services and venues. You need more time to clean your facilities in between these services. Some will discourage the use of restrooms. Abbreviating your services will assist with the other adjustments you have been forced to make during this pandemic.

09

Continue streaming.

Churches across the country have gained valuable technological expertise by being forced to present their services online. Now is not the time to abandon these practices. Some folks will not return to your services immediately. Others – some of whom you don't even know – will continue to view your services online. Streaming should be a facet of most churches new normal.

10

Devise a phase-in plan.

Our president, governors, and other leaders have all encouraged a phase-in plan, where you gradually progress towards a new normal. Start with the essentials: preach, pray and sing. Add choirs, worship teams and children's times, for example, later. You may also choose to phase-in Sunday evening gatherings and Wednesday night prayer meetings at a later date. Keep it simple for now.

11

Delay your choir's return.

Choirs are an invaluable asset for worship. For this season, however, consider postponing their return, unless social distancing can be assured in your choir loft and rehearsal space. Singing spreads respiratory droplets farther and more rapidly than ordinary speech.

12

Clean. Clean. Clean.

Our worship centers ought to be the cleanest, most sterilized places in our communities. Clean them during the week, then clean them again. If you have multiple services, have a clear and organized plan (and ample time) to clean well in between every service.

13

Take attendance.

Since many of your members will continue to worship online, do you count their attendance? If so, how? Do you need to update your church attendance policy and methodology during this season?

14

Overcommunicate.

Church members are routine oriented. They enter specific doors, sit in the exact same pew and hug the same necks, week after week after week. Upsetting these routines will be challenging. Write, verbalize, share on social media, send letters and call. Do whatever it takes to help your members understand the new normal for worship gatherings.

15

Dismiss in an orderly fashion.

Prevent a rush for the exits, during which social distancing won't be feasible. Your members will naturally enter the sanctuary in a more staggered manner as they arrive. Help them exit in an orderly fashion. Exit by sections; back to front is likely best.

16

Encourage mask wearing.

Many people will feel more comfortable returning to worship, if most people wear a mask. Have masks available for visitors. Do all you can to prevent spreading the virus and protect the vulnerable.

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COSCO & Associates, Inc. | 215 E. James Lee Blvd. | Crestview, FL 32539-2841
(850) 682-6226