

Guidelines for the Reopening of Our Churches

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Introduction

The Covid-19 global pandemic imposed a number of disrupting elements in many aspects of society which also affected the church. Federal, State, County and City executive orders were enacted which prompted the CCC administration to respond quickly. We continue to monitor the development of this pandemic while ensuring compliance with all governmental jurisdictions.

The focus has now begun to shift on how to responsibly reopen the economy, and as a result, CCC is providing this set of guidelines on reopening the in-person worship services.

We have missed the opportunity to have corporate worship. We have missed what Psalms 95:6,7 expresses so well: *"Oh come let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."*

Psalms 122:1 certainly expresses how many of us are feeling. It says: *"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the LORD,'" NKJV.* We miss being able to be together!

Hebrews 10:24-25 shares reasons we worship together: *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."*

As we prepare to come back together for corporate worship with new regulations on public meetings, let us remember the real reason we get together and not just focus on the new rules that we need to follow in order to mitigate the spread of disease.

Let us focus on Jesus, stirring up love and good works and come together to encourage each other as we continue to look forward to Jesus coming again.

Ramiro Cano
Conference president





When to Reopen

The State of California has continued the Stay Home Stay Healthy order. In addition, four different phases have been outlined of how the state will reopen. Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has a similar four phase reopening process for churches and ministries. Those big-picture phases are outlined on this document.

Central California Conference leaders read and evaluated best practices and recommendations for safely gathering

congregations. The leadership team assembled the best recommendations into this document. Central California Conference encourages local church leadership teams to evaluate local needs, research additional ministry options, and determine the best logistics for safely gathering the church family and sharing the gospel of Jesus through the reopening phases.





How to Reopen

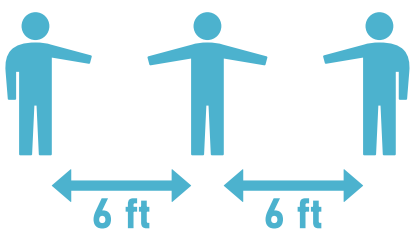
As we prepare to reopen our churches, we must consider facilitating a zoom meeting with church officers prior to reopening. Use this meeting to ascertain which church officers will be able to physically be able to help, develop procedures, cleaning check lists, schedules and programming. Also, the following guidelines are to be considered:

- Physical distancing still needs to be observed. Handshakes, hugs, and physical contact are discouraged.
- At risk populations should be encouraged to worship from home via streaming services.
- Those feeling ill should be encouraged to stay home.
- Worship service time should be limited to approximately two hours. Simplified worship services are strongly encouraged.
- Face mask are encouraged to be used.
- Hand sanitizer should be available.
- Extra masks should be available should people forget to bring one and wish to use one.
- Replace the traditional children story/offering with other creative ways to inspire children in the worship service.
- A deacon should take a picture of the congregation as a reference point for any necessary contact tracing if someone should become ill.
- Fellowship meals should be postponed.
- Online services are still strongly encouraged.

SIGNAGE

Changes to the church building will be the most visible differences when you reopen. Most people won't know what to do, where to sit, or where to get supplies, so signage is key in keeping people informed and ultimately, safer.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE



A few signs to consider ordering, depending on your building layout and the specific precautions your church is taking, are:

- 6-feet distance markers
- "Please maintain 6-feet of space"
- "Please sit one row apart"
- Maximum people allowed in a room or space
- "Please wait here"
- "Please wear a facemask before entering the lobby"
- "Do not enter" for restricted areas





Returning to Weekly Services

As we plan to bring our church body back under one roof, it is imperative we do so in a way that is safe for our member's health and wellbeing. Here are some guidelines as we return to our weekly services.

GREETERS

- This is the frontline of worship on Sabbath morning and is a great time to welcome people back to services and help them enjoy the experience in spite of the new normal.
- Greeters should open doors for the worshippers, so they do not need to touch the doors
- Consider discontinuing printed church bulletins. If they are printed, consider having them available for people to take instead of greeters handing them to worshippers.
- Consider disconnecting water fountains and pouring cups of water for visitors or providing water bottles.
- Provide worshippers with a mask if they wish to have one.
- While handshakes and hugs are discouraged, please show genuine love and care through words of welcome. "Welcome" sign placards could be one way to occupy hands and visually discourage handshakes.

DEACONS

- Prepare to guide people to seating arrangements that allow social distancing and consider marking those seating arrangements that will make it clear to the worshippers. Families should sit together and be at least 6 feet away from other families.
- Offering collections should be either by deacons at the back of the church, offering receptacles placed in obvious places in the church, or other methods that do not include passing the offering plate.
- A photograph of the congregation should be taken as a reference point for any necessary contact tracing if someone should become ill.
- Assist in keeping the church sanitized and clean.
- Develop a row-by-row dismissal process and discourage indoor fellowship. Outdoor fellowship should maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet.
- If multiple services are planned, work with the deacons/deaconess to have a cleaning protocol to clean between the services.
- Please review the comprehensive check list provided to consider prior to reopening the church if the building hasn't been used for some time. Adapt the list to your local maintenance needs.
- Have main doors open so people can walk right in (for less handling of door knobs).



DEACONESSES

- Have in place a cleaning protocol for keeping bathrooms, foyer, door knobs, etc. sanitized.
- If multiple services are planned, have a sanitizing protocol in place to clean between services.
- Consider providing bottles of water or having cups of water prepared in the foyer to discourage use of water fountains.
- Consider having enough cloth masks for each person who doesn't have one or forgot to bring one.
- If the church has enough room to safely hold fellowship meals, please have a cleaning protocol in place. Limit how many are in line to receive food at a time and/or consider serving guests.

ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHERS

- Rooms where adult Sabbath schools are held are many times too small for proper physical distancing to be held.
- Consider holding joint Sabbath School classes in the sanctuary. You may even hold them with children in some settings.
- Find alternatives for taking up the offering instead of passing the plate or envelope around the room. Consider a plate set up in a public place and let people know where it is and also encourage online giving.

PASTORS, ELDERS, & WORSHIP LEADERS

- Please be models of the behavior that you wish for the rest of the church members.
- Survey the congregation on their comfort level with resuming specific ministry activities.
- Consider ways to hold children's story in ways that will allow social distancing. Consider holding the story from the front while the children remain seated with their parents. If you wish to still have the children's offering, think of new ways to collect it. Example would be to have an additional offering plate in the back designated for the children's offering.
- During the times when congregation size is limited, multiple services are a good idea for those with regular attendance over 50.
- Worship teams need to maintain at least 6 feet separation between members.
- Platform participants need to maintain 6 feet of separation.
- In person prayer meetings/small groups are allowed as long as physical distancing is able to be maintained.





Strategic Reopening Phases

Public worship will be phased in during this time with the following guidelines:

PHASE ONE

- Encourage people to continue to worship online.
- Encourage people who feel sick (cough, fever, headache, weakness, etc.) to stay at home
- Encourage families to sit together as a family upon arrival.
- Simplified worship services are strongly encouraged.
- Larger churches may consider multiple services (such as 9 am early service, 10 am online service and 11 am worship service) and/or a ticketing system at 80% capacity to allow families to sign up for their preferred worship time.
- Prepare a specific disinfection protocol for facilities including plans for cleaning between multiple services.
- Wear masks at all times while in church
- Wash hands on arrival to church with alcohol-based disinfectant.
- Temperature check upon arrival.
- Maintain social distancing guidelines when walking in the church.
- No handouts or bulletins are to be distributed.
- Assigned seating.
- If you have Balcony- it should be filled last.
 - Semi-permanent social distancing marking tape in place.
- Mother's Room closed.
- Encourage online giving.
- Offering collections should be either by deacons at the back of the church, offering receptacles placed in obvious places in the church, or other methods that do not include passing the offering plate.
- Downstairs and upstairs Sabbath School

Rooms, Fellowship Hall, and Seminar Room closed.

- No Children's Sabbath School classes.
- Replace the traditional children story/offering with other creative ways to inspire children in the worship service.
- Congregation will be dismissed by rows in a slow and orderly fashion, starting from the rear.
- No Fellowship Meals.

Equipment needed:

- Alcohol disinfectant
- Masks
- Temperature measuring devices
- Disinfectant wipes for thermometers
- Trash receptacle near entrance and exits
- Signs posted for closures, and admittance health criteria
- A deacon should take a picture of the congregation as a reference point for any necessary contact tracing if someone should become ill.

PHASE TWO

- Encourage people who feel sick (cough, fever, headache, weakness, etc.) to stay at home and worship online.
- Encourage families to sit together as a family upon arrival.
- Simplified worship services are strongly encouraged.
- Larger churches may consider multiple services (such as 9 am early service, 10 am online service and 11 am worship service) and/or a ticketing system at 80% capacity to allow families to sign up for their preferred worship time.



- Prepare a specific disinfection protocol for facilities including plans for cleaning between multiple services.
- Wear masks at all times while in church.
- Wash hands on arrival to church with alcohol-based disinfectant.
- Temperature check upon arrival.
- Maintain social distancing guidelines when walking in the church.
- No handouts or bulletins are to be distributed.
- Assigned seating.
- If you have Balcony- it should be filled last.
 - semi-permanent social distancing marking tape in place
- Mother's room open for crisis situations.
- Encourage online giving.
- Offering collections should be either by deacons at the back of the church, at the end of the service or in offering receptacles placed in obvious places in the church, or other methods that do not include passing the offering plate.
- Children and Adult Sabbath School classes resume.
- Congregation will be dismissed by rows in a slow and orderly fashion, starting from the rear.
- No Fellowship Meals.

Equipment needed:

- Alcohol disinfectant
- Masks
- Temperature measuring devices
- Disinfectant wipes for thermometers
- Trash receptacle near entrance and exits
- A deacon should take a picture of the congregation as a reference point for any necessary contact tracing if someone should become ill.

PHASE THREE

- Encourage families to sit together as a family upon arrival.
- Simplified worship services are strongly encouraged.
- Larger churches may consider multiple services (such as 9 am early service, 10 am online service and 11 am worship service) and/or a ticketing system at 80% capacity to allow families to sign up for their preferred worship time.
- Prepare a specific disinfection protocol for facilities including plans for cleaning between multiple services.

- Encourage people who feel sick (cough, fever, headache, weakness, etc.) to stay at home and worship online.
- Wearing masks is optional and encouraged.
- Wash hands on arrival to church with alcohol-based disinfectant.
- Pre-mark seating options in the sanctuary that complies with required social distancing.
- Maintain social distancing guidelines when walking in the church.
- No handouts or bulletins are to be distributed.
- If church has a balcony, must be filled last.
- Mother's room open.
- Fellowship Hall, Seminar Room to be open with appropriate and applicable safeguards in place.
- Children and Adult Sabbath School classes remain open.
- Offering collections should be either by deacons at the back of the church, at the end of the service or in offering receptacles placed in obvious places in the church, or other methods that do not include passing the offering plate.
- Encourage online giving.
- No Fellowship Meals.

Equipment needed:

- Alcohol disinfectant
- Masks
- A deacon should take a picture of the congregation as a reference point for any necessary contact tracing if someone should become ill.

PHASE FOUR

- Encourage people who feel sick (cough, fever, headache, weakness, etc.) to stay at home and worship online.
- Wash hands on arrival to church with alcohol-based disinfectant.
- Church is open.
- Maintain cleanliness and safety guidelines from phases 2 and 3.
- Fellowship Meals will resume when appropriate and applicable safeguards in place.

Equipment needed:

- Alcohol disinfectant
- A deacon should take a picture of the congregation as a reference point for any necessary contact tracing if someone should become ill.

Each phase is anticipated to last for a minimum of three weeks.





Reopening Check List

PARKING LOTS EXTERIOR & LANDSCAPE

- Check and clean all entrances.
- Clean all debris from parking areas.
- Check striping and directional arrows, repaint as needed.
- Check all signage and repair as needed.
- Inspect dumpster storage area, clean as necessary.
- Inspect all fire or emergency exit pathways/routes.

GARDNER

- Check operation of all irrigation system.
- Cut grass trim all trees and plantings, especially around entrances, and walkways.
- Refresh all beds
- Inspect all exterior signage, add new signs at door entrances.
- Add welcome signs if necessary .

FACILITY INTERIOR

- Check ceiling tiles for stains and/or damage. Replace/repair as required.
- Ensure proper operation of all space lighting.
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all tables and chairs, paying attention to the underside of each.
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all restrooms, stalls, floors. Wash trash cans.
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all "high touch" areas.
- This can include keyboards, phones, door hardware, buttons, handrails, water fountains, bathroom partition hardware, backs of chairs/pews, offering plates, touchscreens, badge printers, etc.
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all trash receptacles, changing tables, cribs, and the

walls in children's areas, between 18"-32" off the floor. Disinfect all toys.

- Inspect all spaces to ensure they are clean and in good condition. Women's & Men's bathrooms- Clean trash cans in place, hot and cold running water, sufficient soap and drying sheets.
- Disconnect Drinking fountains.
- Run your HVAC system or open windows to allow for a fresh air exchange prior to occupation.

WORSHIP AREAS

- Condition the space and have pianos tuned as required.
- Inspect/check sound system for proper operation.
- Perform additional dusting and cleaning on the seating areas.
- Check pews/seating for all required envelopes, inserts, and hymnals. Ensure they are up to date.
- Assign seating with removable tape markings, 6 feet apart as required.

GENERAL

- Ensure all custodial supplies and equipment are clean, stocked, and available (to include consumables).
- Ensure all maintenance, custodial, and supply closets/rooms are cleaned and organized.
- Remove all unnecessary items from the property.
- Walk entire property prior to allowing operations to fully commence. Check all areas (including the exterior) and perform a final visual check for any items out of place or requiring adjustment.





Survey

Survey Introduction:

Please share your current thoughts and feelings about returning to in-person worship services at [\[Church Name\]](#). We value your opinion. All responses will be kept private by our staff and leadership teams. Thank you!

Name:

Email:

Phone Number:

1. Which of the following best describes your opinion towards returning to in-person worship services?
 - a. I will return the first opportunity the church is open.
 - b. I will return at first opportunity but with some concerns and precautions.
 - c. I will wait several additional weeks before I attend.
 - d. It may be quite a while before I return.
 - e. Not sure

2. What would you want to see in the community before you return to church? [Select all that apply.]
 - a. Local businesses are open again.
 - b. Local restaurant seating areas are open again.
 - c. Schools are open again.
 - d. The number of coronavirus cases near me is very small.
 - e. Most social distancing recommendations have been lifted.
 - f. None of these
 - g. Not sure

3. What precautions, if any, do you plan to take when you return to church? [Select all that apply.]
 - a. I will wear a face mask
 - b. I will stand and sit in places where I will be at least 6 feet from others (beyond my own family).
 - c. I will avoid shaking hands.
 - d. I will avoid all physical contact.
 - e. I will avoid crowded hallways.
 - f. I will frequently wash my hands and use hand sanitizer.
 - g. I will bring hand sanitizer.
 - h. None of these



4. What precautions, if any, do you expect our church to take for church services? [Select all that apply.]
 - a. Limit handouts of any kind (bulletins, sermon notes, prayer/communication cards, etc.).
 - b. Not passing offering baskets/plates and accepting offerings in a different way.
 - c. Encourage social distancing in auditorium seating.
 - d. Prop doors open so people do not have to touch handles.
 - e. Set up one-way foot traffic entering and exiting the building and auditorium.
 - f. Provide more hand sanitizer/handwashing stations.
 - g. Discourage shaking hands and hugging.
 - h. Closing off water fountains
 - i. Allow a longer period of time between worship service hours.
 - j. None of these

5. Would you be willing to attend church at a different time than you typically attend to allow people to be more spread out in the auditorium?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure

6. What best describes your attitude to bring your children to church with you?
 - a. I will return at the first opportunity we have with my children
 - b. I will return at the first opportunity we have and have my children sit with me
 - c. I will wait several weeks before I return to church with my children
 - d. I will wait several weeks before I return to church and have my children sit with me
 - e. It may be quite a while before I bring my children to church
 - f. I am not sure

7. How often have you engaged in a Sabbath morning online worship service in March or April?
 - a. I have not participated in an online service
 - b. 1 time
 - c. 2 times
 - d. 3 times
 - e. 4 times

8. Have you enjoyed the online virtual church experience?
 - a. Very satisfied
 - b. Satisfied
 - c. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - d. Dissatisfied
 - e. Very dissatisfied

9. Including yourself, how many people are typically watching a Sabbath morning service with you?
 - a. 1-2
 - b. 3-5
 - c. 6-10
 - d. If more, how many? _____

10. What do you miss most about church? Write your answer.



Conclusion

We hope that the ideas in this document will assist you and your church to be ready once CCC administration gives the green light to reopen. We love hearing from you, so please let us know what is working for you, what's not, share your stories with us.

We're praying for you as you continue to reach people, whether inside or outside of your church building. Even with the new regulations for large gatherings, we can still praise God and worship our great Creator.

Praise the Lord!
Praise God in His sanctuary;
Praise Him in His mighty firmament!
Praise Him for His mighty acts;
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;
Praise Him with the lute and harp!
Praise Him with the timbral and dance;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!
Praise Him with loud cymbals;
Praise Him with clashing cymbals!
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord!

Psalm 150

