



Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®

Guidelines for Church Reopening Following COVID-19

Updated 5/19/20

There are a lot of things to consider prior to reopening your church. Safety for your most vulnerable members should take priority. We ask that you consider prayerfully how your church proceeds. Following are recommendations to consider. Additional information can be found at www.uccsda.org/covid.

1. **Collect information**

- Know the risk factors for the virus and take into consideration your community threat level. This can help you make decisions on whether your church should reopen sooner or later.
- A survey is available at www.uccsda.org/covid that can be sent to your members to determine their expectations.
- Communicate regularly with your members so they are informed.
- There is no rush to return to your church. Take your time and only move forward when it is the right time for your members.

2. **Develop a plan**

- The Idaho guidelines to reopen their economy requires that places of worship develop a plan and put it into action.
- We recommend that church leadership develop a plan together with input from church members.
- Train your church leaders and other volunteer staff on the plan, how to answer questions, and how to help put it into action.

3. **Local and state mandates**

- It is imperative that your church know and follow all local and state mandates.
- Links to these mandates are available at www.uccsda.org/covid.

4. **Preparing and cleaning your church**

- Deep clean your entire church. Consider where will germs be transferred? Consider shampooing carpets, sanitizing hard chairs and pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, and microphones. Cloth chairs, wherever possible, should be removed.

- We recommend removing Bibles, hymnals, pens, information cards, etc., from the backs of chairs/pews.
- Consider roping off every other row and other approaches to ensure social distancing.
- Communicate with your congregation through door posters, email, and social media about how your church team has prepared the church for reopening.
- Remind your members that if they are sick, then they should not be present and can join online instead.
- It is important to remember to clean the church after each service. Wherever possible, put at least three days of nonuse after each service, as this will help limit spread of the virus.
- Display hand sanitizer throughout the church.

5. **Worship services**

- Maintain a six-foot distance social distancing policy. Members from the same household can sit together.
- We recommend avoiding handing out bulletins, and instead project announcements on screens.
- Change the way you offer communion.
- Avoid passing microphones on the stage.
- Continue offering online giving options. If your church does not offer online giving, please direct your members to www.uccsda.org/giving.
- Have stations in the church where people can drop offerings instead of passing a plate.
- Come up with a fun way to greet others in a no-contact way.
- Clean the pulpit after every use.
- Consider dismissing in an orderly way to ensure there is social distancing.
- Remove as many toys, blankets, and other objects from your mother's rooms as possible. Remember to sanitize this area each week.

6. **Greeters and other volunteer staff**

- Train greeters on how to greet post-quarantine: NO hand shaking or hugs.
- Ensure doors are propped open or have the greeters hold them open. Where possible
- Greeters and volunteers should be able to answer questions on procedures and policies upon the return to the building.
- Determine how many volunteers you have available to assist. Limit volunteers to those who do not have preexisting conditions and those who are under 65 years old.

7. Food and snacks

- We do not recommend offering hot drink stations, snacks, potlucks or other group meals at this time.
- Please follow local and state guidelines to know when it is best to reintroduce these services.

8. Sabbath School and small groups for adults

- Consider as part of your planning whether you will offer Sabbath school or small groups. Make sure you are communicating with your members if and when these classes will resume.
- Consider dividing your groups to maintain social distancing standards.
- If your church opts to have class, clean the doorknobs, drinking fountains, and other high traffic areas following each use.
- We recommend not placing chairs into a discussion circle.

9. Children's classes

- We do not recommend offering beginners or kindergarten classes at this time.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics [recommends that children 2 years of age and under](#) do not wear masks or face coverings. Please keep this in mind as you make decisions.
- If your classroom teachers need to wear a mask, it may be too soon to have your preschool and children areas open, as masks may scare the children.
- Some churches are choosing not to reopen the children areas until area schools are also open.
- Limit leaders in the children's areas to those who do not have pre-existing conditions. Also limit leaders to those under 65 years old.
- Have a check list of what has been cleaned and when in each room.
- Develop a list of procedures for your volunteers. Train them on this list prior to reopening.
- Consider removing everything nonessential from the children's classrooms to limit surfaces for potential contamination.
- Clean each classroom thoroughly following each use.
- Consider holding children's classes outside instead or enjoying an activity together in nature.

10. Praise teams and other platform participants

- We recommend not using a full praise team. Consider rotations. Assign microphones and use the same one every time.
- At this time, we do not recommend using any instruments that require air to be blown into it.
- Wipe down music stands after each use.
- Encourage platform participants to remain on the platform with social distancing from the first row.

11. A/V Teams

- Clean microphones, headphones, computers, laptops, etc. after every use. Keep a record of when each item was cleaned. DO NOT use water. Rubbing alcohol or alcohol-based cleaners are best.
- Rotate your tech team if possible.
- Keep using the online services. Facebook may be more accessible as many people have accounts, but consider other options like YouTube for those who'd like to watch on their smart TVs.
- Add in text on screens through projectors if you haven't already. This may be a good opportunity to do so. Secure a CCLI license for copyright compliance if you do.
- If you don't have media support for announcements or singing, then print texts and place them in the pews/chairs. Encourage people to take the bulletins/music sheets home with them and not leave them in the pews.

Remember:

Even though your church has opted to reopen, many of your members may not be ready or able to rejoin you. We recommend continuing to offer online options.