



Hillside Facility Reopening Protocol Manual

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HILLSIDE FACILITY REOPENING PROTOCOL MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

“For God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power and of love and of good discipline.” 2 Timothy 1:7 (Lamsa’s Aramaic Translation)

Hillside is a healing ministry of the whole person: Spirit, mind, and body. We are committed to living out our purpose, meeting the spiritual, emotional, and social needs of our congregants; and protecting the health of our members and those affiliated with Hillside. This has always been our focus, but the times in which we are currently living require us to develop different methods and operations to achieve our mission.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) disease has brought about unforeseen, exceptional circumstances. It is a global pandemic that has resulted in extreme health crises, staggering incidences of positive cases, and massive numbers of transitions. The pandemic has caused local and national government agencies to mandate that citizens shelter-at-home and also practice many other out-of-the-ordinary safety measures. Faith communities across the U.S. and around the world closed their doors to in-person worship and ministries. When the Atlanta Mayor issued a 14-days “stay at home” Executive Order, effective March 24, 2020, in an effort to be Spiritually and socially responsible, Hillside closed its facility on March 27. Because of the spread of the virus, it has continued to be closed.

Presently, restrictions are being relaxed across the nation, even as measures are continuing to keep the pandemic controlled, to “flatten the curve,” and to ultimately eliminate the disease. Guidelines for re-opening facilities and activities have been developed and are being updated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), federal and local governments, health departments, City of Atlanta, and various national religious organizations.

Because of the nature of faith communities and the interactions of those who attend worship services, meetings, and events, churches are high-risk settings for COVID-19 transmission. Regular church activities contain multiple factors that facilitate airborne spread (See Appendix). In addition, many congregants are of an age where they are considered to be at greater risk for serious complications from the disease.

The future we will find ourselves in depends not only on the behavior of the virus, but on the actions of people – as individuals, churches, communities, and governments. The way forward will not be a matter of following a timetable, but of faithfully discerning the signs of the times, and responding accordingly. We don’t know how long our lives and actions will be shaped by the timeline set by COVID-19.

Therefore, we face difficult choices between conflicting needs and imperatives. But Hillside is committed to doing its part to contain the virus so that a new wave of infections and transitions does not cause us to lose the progress made by measures already taken. We do not want to reopen our facility and resume gatherings prematurely, with congregants possibly needing to choose between the safety of themselves and others and participation in the congregational life that has been re-established. It is necessary that we are intentional about how and when to resume in-person worship and other activities. This protocol manual for Hillside reopening has been developed with that in mind. Using information and guidance from the CDC, public health experts, local government, churches, and judicatories around the United States, as well as Hillside leaders, we have outlined a phased approach.

PHASES OF REOPENING (leading to full return to the facility)

Our intent is to reopen the facility in phases based on COVID-19 circumstances rather than specific dates. We will be continually alert to the metrics of the county and state related to the trajectory of the disease. We will watch the metrics related to 14-day spans (using 7-day trailing average) of: COVID cases – COVID hospitalizations – percent of positive COVID tests (References - *Opening Up America Again* – White House; *City of Atlanta Reopening Phases*), looking for a continual decrease. We will also be attentive to any mandates of the state of Georgia and guidance of the City of Atlanta. It may be necessary to move back and forth between phases if there are changes in waves of infections, metrics change, and/or advice of public health officials.

During the early phases, the following persons are encouraged to stay at home and enjoy virtual services or drive-up services: those at increased risk of severe illness due to age and those with underlying medical conditions.

(Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html>)

1. Activities and Practices Since Closure on March 27.

In all instances below where persons were required to be in the building or on the grounds, wearing of masks, physical distancing and sanitation were practiced.

- a. Recording in the facility for virtual Sunday services – pastor, vocal ensemble, meditation.
- b. Virtual worship services broadcast three times on Sundays and once on Thursdays, plus every Sunday online meditation.
- c. Designated staff on site two days per week (or more as needed) for facility maintenance, mail, finances, recording, sanitizing after use.
- d. Facility closed for all meetings and in-person worship services.

- e. The Bradley Academy open, confined to its rental space, following guidelines of CDC and Georgia's Early Start Department. Hillside Board provided written communication on what was required during building occupancy.
- f. Drive-in services in parking lots, monthly from May. This required use of building by volunteers to prepare.
- g. Bookstore open after drive-in services and for BKSM students to get books. Also, volunteers in bookstore (not patrons) to handle mailing of *Daily Thoughts*.
- h. Weekly USDA Free Food Giveaway in north parking lot from May 27 – July 29. This required access to the building on lower level.
- i. Use of Print Shop to print *Daily Thoughts for Children*, items needed for drive-in services, and Hillside information for free food distribution.
- j. Daily teleconference and/or video conference prayer calls morning, noon, and evening.
- k. Meetings and workshops via tele- or video conferencing.

2. Phase One

- a. Staff who work in the building return full time. Masks required.
- b. Persons allowed to come in to see staff for business purposes; masks required.
- c. Temperature taken of staff, volunteers, and any others upon entry each time. (Reference - Alabama Public Health)
- d. Virtual services continued.
- e. Virtual meetings/workshops continued.
- f. Bookstore open as needed

3. Phase Two (the beginning of which most of the protocol is related)

- a. One worship service in sanctuary with maximum of 100 people. (References: *COVID-19 Industry Guidance*, California; Supreme Court Decision No. 19A1044) Persons register their intent to attend and list checked upon entry (see Entry/Exit on page 8).
- b. Physical distancing and masks required.
- c. Virtual meetings/workshops continued.
- d. Bookstore open after service to maximum of 5 people at a time. Masks required of patrons and use of hand sanitizer upon entry. Masks and gloves required of volunteers. Log to be kept with name of patron and time entered and exited (for purpose of contact tracing if needed).
- e. Life rituals such as weddings and celebration of life services allowed with maximum of 100 people, physical distancing, and other relevant protocols.

4. **Phase Three**

- a. One worship service with up to 300 persons in sanctuary; physical distancing; masks optional
- b. Online streaming of the in-person service
- c. Virtual meetings/workshops continued for more than 20 persons.
- d. Possible small group meetings with <20 people, relaxed physical distancing

5. **Phase Four**

- a. Full return to the building and activities
- b. In-person worship services
- c. Youth ministry operational in-person
- d. Streaming of sanctuary service
- e. Masks and other COVID-19 precautions not required

PREPARATION OF THE PROPERTY AND FACILITY

1. Survey the building and grounds for obvious hazards or maintenance needs that may have emerged during the hiatus. Make the necessary repairs.
2. Inspect and clean or repair HVAC systems, as necessary. Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows/doors, using fans, etc.
3. Tape off the water fountain for non-use or ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water. (CDC)
4. Clean throughout the facility and in the manner needed. Use chemicals and disinfectants approved by EPA as effective for COVID-19. Post "Do Not Enter/Use – Sanitized" signs (or something similar) as cleaning is done to prepare for re-entry. Sources of information for what, when, how to clean:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>
5. Limit the sharing of frequently touched objects (CDC) by removing offering envelopes, information cards, envelopes, pens, brochures, etc., from backs of seats in sanctuary, counters, tables, information centers.
6. Promote physical distancing of six feet (except for those of same household) with signage and room set up.

7. In sanctuary, use tape to separate seating. Designate section 4 for families and those from same household unit. Tape off designated row(s) for those participating in service.
8. Acquire a sufficient supply of the necessary cleaning elements to support the increased level and frequency of cleaning necessary for the first phases of program resumption.
9. Acquire and maintain an adequate stock of toilet tissue, soap, hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol), facial tissue, disposable paper towels and other items needed for individual health hygiene. Also items for staff and volunteers such as masks and gloves.
10. Acquire any new equipment required for resuming programming, such as temporal scan thermometers and portable hand-sanitizing stations.
11. Install hand sanitizing stations or bottles throughout the building. They should be at a level that is accessible to those in wheelchairs.
 - Fountain entrance
 - Poole Road entrance (2)
 - Entrance to Bookstore
 - Door by the lift
 - Door by King Chapel
 - Bottles of hand sanitizer at each Ushers' station in sanctuary
 - Bottles of hand sanitizer on backs of toilets, where possible.
12. Where appropriate, supply wipes or disinfectant for individuals.

TRAINING

1. Provide training for Board, Greeters, Ushers, music staff, ministers, Leadership Council ministry leaders, staff, and Information Team to ensure that they understand the phased re-opening plan and the protocols.
2. Designate those who will take temperatures of staff and volunteers and of congregants and others. Provide training in temperature taking and what is to be done if temperatures are above the acceptable degrees.

3. Designate and train a COVID Response Team and provide the appropriate protective equipment and supplies.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE CONGREGATION

1. Inform the congregation of the steps that Hillside is taking to prepare for re-opening and the necessary conditions. Put letter on website and email; brief messages on calling post and social media. Communicate the role of the congregation in safely resuming services and activities in the building through their compliance with requested procedures. Enlist their prayer and support while affirming their patience.
2. Survey congregation on the extent to which they are comfortable and ready to return. Distributed at July drive-in service initially. (Survey instrument in Appendix.)
3. Establish a dedicated email address (reopening@hillsidechapel.org) that allows for feedback and questions.
4. Help the congregation envision the process for safely returning to Hillside by providing instructions for participation in each phase of resumption. Use website link to the entire protocol manual and/or specific information congregants need to attend services. For example:
 - areas of allowed parking
 - entrances to be used
 - method of entry (with face mask; temperature to be taken; using physical distancing while waiting to enter building and sanctuary)
 - location of hand-sanitizing stations and hand sanitizing protocol
 - physical distancing in all areas
 - sanctuary seating
 - rooms that will be in use
5. Determine and inform the congregation of which elements of virtual ministry will continue or be discontinued and at what point.
6. Ensure the members that care and connection will continue for those unable to attend services in person.

INFORMATION TEAM

There will be a team to answers questions and provide instructions as needed during in-person gatherings. Ensure that the congregation knows the team members and how to contact them.

1. Team members will include staff, Board representatives, ministers, a medical doctor, Hillside member who works with CDC or health department and who would be able to obtain timely, credible information.
2. Have walkie-talkies available for quick contact.

SIGNAGE

1. On all doors regarding entry requirements and physical distancing; also directing to entry doors
2. Use TV in Poole Road lobby for ongoing messages.
3. Post all in highly visible locations including restrooms.
4. Ways of non-contact greeting
5. Spaces open for use
6. On/in restrooms
7. Physical distancing
8. Health hygiene including hand washing
9. CDC standards for prevention of COVID-19
10. Non-entry spaces
11. Entrance and exit
12. “DO NOT ENTER” on Faith Chapel

BUILDING ENTRY/EXIT AND MOVEMENT FOR WORSHIP SERVICES

Persons are encouraged to STAY HOME who have a fever, cold-like symptoms, a compromised immune system, have COVID-19, have recently been exposed to person with COVID-19, or who don't want to wear a mask.

Based on COVID-19 guidelines from CDC, health departments and other sources, it is recommended that a distance of 6 feet be maintained between individuals. The corridors at Hillside do not allow this distancing with two-way traffic. Therefore, to accomplish this, only the doors into Poole Road lobby and Cascade Road at the fountain be utilized. All other doors will be locked and have signs directing people to Poole Road or the fountain doors.

1. There are 6 **required** factors for everyone entering the building (Phases 2 & 3):
 - a. Two check-in lines: those who submitted intent to attend and those who did not. Those who are not on the list will be given an information form to complete. (The information will assist with contact tracing if needed.)
 - b. Temperature check with non-contact thermometer. Person is not allowed to enter facility if temperature exceeds 100.4 Fahrenheit. (References: frc.org; Alabama Public Health).
 - c. Face masks which cover the nose and mouth the entire time you are in the building. Cloth masks are recommended by CDC. Disposable masks will be provided for those who do not have one. EVERYONE will be required to wear a mask (**except** children under 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, and anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance). The staff and worship team will wear masks at all times except when on the platform.
 - d. Six feet distancing when entering and throughout the building.
 - e. Covering coughs or sneezes and disposing tissue in waste baskets. (Do NOT leave it on seats, floor, tables, etc.)
 - f. Use of hand sanitizer upon building entry and entry to bookstore.
2. Poole Road– to be utilized by those parking in Poole Road lot, east lot, and those needing handicapped access.
 - a. Entrance will be via the ramp for one-way traffic into church.
 - b. Exit will be door by the lift except for those needing to use the ramp.
3. Cascade stairs at the fountain - to be utilized by the occupants in the large Cascade lot (north) and the east lot.
 - a. Entrance - the east stairs and the doors into the sanctuary.
 - b. Exit - through the west doors and down the west stairs.
 - c. A barrier will separate the two sides on the porch and in the lobby.
4. Prop open doors (weather permitting) to eliminate need to touch handles. If doors cannot be kept open, volunteer should open and close with gloved hands and be distanced from the entrants.
5. Doors to the Executive Hall (where offices of Bishop Jack, Dr. Barbara, and Print Shop are located) will be closed and traffic limited to those needing access to an office or restroom. These closures are needed to minimize cross traffic. Traffic should flow one way as much as possible.

6. Entry to sanctuary will be Poole Road and Cascade doors for congregants; door across from Print Shop for Bishop Jack and Dr. Barbara; through choir stand for music team.
7. Sanctuary traffic should be one-way circular as much as possible and clearly designated.
 - One-way entrances at all times (arrows to indicate)
 - Exit needed during service for restroom or to leave early will still follow the pattern established.
8. Develop plan for guiding traffic to entrances/exits while maintaining physical distancing.
9. Create and communicate a plan for restricted visiting during office hours when weekly staffing resumes.
10. Restrict access to those areas of the building which are outside the zones of preparation and approved use.
11. Communicate to the congregation those groups for whom a return to Hillside is suggested as appropriate during each phase of reopening.

USE OF ROOMS AND AREAS

1. Rooms allowed for use
 - Dr. Barbara and Bishop Jack's offices
 - Sanctuary – main level; balcony (if needed)
 - Administrative offices
 - Bookstore (maximum of 5 patrons at one time; masks required)
 - Media booth and office
 - Choir room (for small group rehearsal with physical distancing)
 - Women's and Men's restrooms on main level
 - Women's restroom outside Youth Zone
 - Women's and Men's restrooms on 2nd floor if needed
 - Staff offices and work areas
 - Faith Chapel (off limits except for those who may become ill) – Post "Do Not Enter" sign on door

2. Locations to be **closed** that are generally open for gatherings; minimal access to staff and volunteers
 - Youth Zone
 - Nursery
 - King Chapel
 - Hospitality Suite and Kitchen
 - Other upstairs rooms except as noted previously

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

1. Have signage to remind of 6 ft. physical distancing guidelines.
2. Reconfigure gathering and lobby areas to support physical distancing and prevent gathering. May need to remove or tape the pews in hallways.
3. Prepare the sanctuary for physical distancing by visually indicating safe seating. Seats that are not to be used will be taped.
4. Designate and signpost the direction of foot traffic in sanctuary.

PROCEDURES DURING WORSHIP SERVICES (Phases 2 and 3)

1. Seating will be designated with taping system.
 - 3 seats across is approximately 6 feet. Those will be taped for no seating.
 - Every other row allowed for seating.
 - Section 4 (area where signers usually sit) designated for family and household units with physical distancing between families/households.
2. Use non-contact greeting/love treatment.
3. There will not be hand holding.
4. All persons speaking will have individual microphone. No sharing.

Actions that increase the release of respiratory droplets and aerosols into the surrounding air facilitate transmission of COVID-19. (Reference: *Christianity Today*) “The vibrations of speaking and singing create aerosols: superfine droplets which hang in the air for much longer and can travel longer distances. Compared to just breathing (which does produce a certain level of aerosols), talking produces about 10x more aerosols, and singing about 60x more.” (Reference: Wisconsin

Council of Churches) Therefore, the risk of airborne COVID-19 transmission should be mitigated during church activities. (See Appendix)

5. Ministers and any others speaking or singing will remain in place where they are distanced from the congregation.
6. Music
 - There will not be congregational singing.
 - Music will be provided by an ensemble of singers spaced appropriately. Each will have individual microphone that is not used by anyone else. Singers will remain on platform or in choir stand rather than going into audience area.
7. Receiving Tithes and Offerings
 - Ushers (with gloves) will give offering envelopes to those who desire as they enter sanctuary.
 - Offering Prayer will be followed by *Prayer for Protection*.
 - Persons with envelopes will drop them into basket as they leave the sanctuary.
8. Bishop Jack and Dr. Barbara will be escorted out at end of service and will not meet/greet attendees up close and personal.
9. Dismiss one section at a time in an orderly way to ensure there is physical distancing. Encourage members/friends to go to their cars rather than lingering or congregating inside or outside.
10. Visitors will register online, rather than receive information cards.

TECHNOLOGY/MEDIA FOR WORSHIP SERVICES

1. Continue virtual services until Phase Two when service is held in sanctuary.
2. Clean microphones, headphones, computers, laptops, cameras, 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.
3. Place all texts, announcements on large screen. Secure a CCLI license for copyright compliance if necessary.
4. Rotate team members if possible.

5. Suspend duplication of DVDs and CDs except for archival or review purposes.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

1. Train all clergy, staff and volunteers on safety procedures and Hillside protocol for in-person operations.
2. Determine the number of Ushers, Greeters and other volunteers needed. Persons should not be 65 years or older or have preexisting conditions.
3. Take temperature of all staff and volunteers. (gabaptist.org)
4. Masks and gloves will be required.
5. Persons should greet in a non-contact manner.

AMENITIES – none until further notice

YOUTH MINISTRY

1. Youth Ministry meetings will continue virtually until Hillside is at full in-person operation.
2. In Phases 2 and 3, children and teens will sit with their parents in the sanctuary in the section for household units.
3. Nursery is suspended until Hillside is at full in-person operation.

COVID RESPONSE PROCEDURES (If persons become sick)

A COVID Response Team will be formed that consists of medical personnel and others. The Faith Chapel with private restroom will be used.

(List below is from CDC's *Considerations for Communities of Faith*)

1. Separate those who may become sick or who exhibit COVID-like symptoms during hours of operation.

2. Determine if sick person has relative/friend in the building who can transport the person to their home or medical facility or call 911 for transport.
3. Notify local health officials if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and congregants about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or other applicable laws.
4. Inform those with exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.
5. Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use the area until it has been cleaned and disinfected according to CDC guidelines. Wait 24 hours to clean and disinfect to reduce risk to individuals cleaning. If it is not possible to wait 24 hours, wait as long as possible before cleaning and disinfecting. Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants.
6. Advise sick staff and congregants not to return to the facility until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation (or whatever the current requirements.).

WEDDINGS AND CELEBRATION OF LIFE SERVICES

These can be held in the more traditional way, starting in Phase 2, as arranged in consultation with appropriate Hillside staff. However, there should be no more than the number of attendees allowed for worship services. Physical distancing and all other building and individual protocols will need to be followed.

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HILLSIDE RE-OPENING SURVEY

We are developing a protocol for re-opening Hillside (the when – related to COVID-19 statistics and trajectories, and the how – entry, seating, sanitizing, physical distancing, etc.) but do not currently have a re-opening date. It will be in phases. We are using the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), governmental entities, and faith-based organizations to be intentional about protecting your health. We value and would like to have your feelings about re-opening and how you are affected by what we are currently doing to address your spiritual needs. Please complete the brief survey below and return it as you leave the service today.

Thank you for your input!

1. What best describes **your attitude** about returning to a worship service in the Hillside sanctuary in phases based on conditions? **Select one.**
 - I will return at the first opportunity we have, following the instructions, with no reservations.
 - I will return at the first opportunity but with some concerns and precautions.
 - I will wait several additional weeks after re-opening before I attend.
 - Not sure
2. Which of the following describes the **seating arrangements** with which you would be comfortable in attending a worship service? I would be comfortable attending if the sanctuary...
 - Has some **empty seats** throughout main and balcony levels but **few empty rows**
 - Has several empty seats between, in front of and behind me
 - Has seats blocked off for non-use, maintaining about 6 feet except that those in one family/same household unit can be seated next to one another.
3. With which of the **following activities have you been/are you presently engaged** since the Hillside facility closed on March 27? (**Check all that apply, even if you engaged only one time**)
 - Online Sunday meditation at 8 a.m.
 - Online Sunday worship services- 10 a.m., 1 and 7 p.m. on Sundays and 6 p.m. Thursdays
 - Conversations with Dr. Barbara 8 p.m. on Sundays and 10 a.m. on Tuesdays
 - Drive-in services in parking lot May, June, and/or July
 - Bookstore patronage after drive-in services
 - USDA Free Food Giveaway on Wednesdays in large parking lot, since May

- Noon day prayer teleconference Monday – Friday
- 7 a.m. and/or 8:30 p.m. video conference prayer calls
- “The Hour of Blessings” on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. online
- Aramaic Bible Study on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. since June 16 via Zoom
- Virtual workshop(s) and/or meetings

4. Since the facility closure, have you watched Hillside Sunday services via website or Facebook? _____ Yes _____ No

5. If answer to above was “yes,” how would you rate the services?
 Circle a rating from 1-5: (1- Don’t really like them; 5 – Think they are great!)
 _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5

6. How has **not** having in-person services and/or the pandemic affected your level of giving?

- My giving is more than it had been previously.
- My giving is about the same.
- My giving is less because I sometimes forget.
- My giving is less because I don’t know how to get my money to Hillside.
- My giving is less because my income is less with the pandemic.
- I have not given.

7. What is your affiliation with Hillside?

- Member, attend regularly
- Member, attend periodically
- Supporting friend
- Not a member but attend periodically

8. How long have you been attending Hillside?

- New in 2020
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11- 15 years
- 20-30 years
- Over 30 years

9. What is your age?

- 18-29
- 30-49
- 50-64
- 65-79
- 80+

10. Other Comments if you desire:

Approaches to Mitigate the Factors Facilitating Airborne COVID-19 Transmission

Factor facilitating transmission	Transmission risk in church activities	Suggestions to mitigate risk
Infectiousness of COVID-19 patient	An asymptomatic COVID-19 carrier participating could transmit the virus, but a symptomatic carrier is more infectious.	Screen those with symptoms; use face mask.
Actions producing more respiratory droplets	Singing, laughing, talking (sometimes loudly), coughing, and physical activities that increase deep and rapid breathing.	Use face mask when singing or talking; minimize unnecessary physical activities.
Close proximity (<6 feet)	Sitting closer than 6 feet; people facing each other.	Maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet; no face-to-face activity; sit in rows facing one direction; use face mask.
Enclosed space with limited outside ventilation	Meeting frequently in smaller rooms, with low ceilings and no outside ventilation	Use larger rooms with high ceilings; open windows and doors; allow time to vent rooms between use; meet outdoors; use face mask
Duration of contact	Meeting for longer than 30 minutes (definition of close contact); longer duration equals more risk.	Minimize time by cutting non-essential activities; uni-directional flow for foot traffic; prompt and orderly entry and exit.
Increased social mixing	Gathering asymptomatic younger people with older people.	Keep participants segregated by age groups; same people meeting regularly together reduces mixing.

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/may-web-only/when-churches-reopen-phase-coronavirus-covid-19-guidelines.html>

Four-Step Plan with Modified Church Activities

Activity	Transmission risk	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
SMALL GROUP GATHERING					
Step 1 - <10 people, with face mask; fixed group; similar age group (no elderly)	Medium		Same as Step 1 except <15 people and elderly allowed with no intergenerational mixing.	Same as Step 2 except >15 people and face mask optional.	Same as Step 3
WORSHIP SERVICE					
Size	Depends		<50 people; physical distancing; face mask required	<100 people; physical distancing; face mask required	>100 people; physical distancing; face mask optional
Singing	High		With face mask	With face mask	Face mask optional
Greeting	Medium/High				No handshake
Offering/Communion	Medium		Online giving; offering box; no passing of elements	Same as Step 2	Same as Step 3
Choir	High				
SUNDAY SCHOOL/ FELLOWSHIP					
Seniors	High				<20 people; face mask required; lecture style seating
Adults	High			<20 people; face mask required; lecture style	>20 people; face mask optional;

Activity	Transmission risk	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
				seating	lecture style seating
Young adults/ college	High			Same as adult	Same as adult; face-to-face seating permitted with physical distancing
Middle/high school	High			Smaller groups; face mask required; no senior help	Smaller groups; no senior help
Elementary school and younger	High				Smaller groups; no senior help
HOSPITALITY: FOOD, BEVERAGES					
OVERNIGHT RETREAT	Very high				

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DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

A values-based framework for making decisions about resuming church gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. — Philipians 4:6-7

THEOLOGY

- Consider what guidance your church's theology can give for making decisions.
- Examine the spiritual promptings you and your congregation may sense.
- Have intentional prayer experiences for seeking guidance from God.
- Reflect on the impact your congregation's liturgical needs may have on spiritual engagement (such as communion, proclaiming the Word, church music).
- Study the applications that the greatest commandments to love God and to love neighbors and self might have.

QUALITY

- Consider the quality of the experience for people who choose in-person worship and for those who choose online engagement.
- Reflect on the level of fulfillment of your church mission and calling in the options you are investigating.
- Examine the ways your congregation is connecting in fellowship and care for one another.
- Contemplate how the choices you make might impact the level of stress and workload on church staff, volunteers, leadership and attendees.

COLLABORATION

- Involve church leadership teams and staff in your considerations and follow your local church polity procedures.
- Consider how to foster congregational decision making.
- Collect and summarize data relevant to your local church context.
- Seek solidarity with other local churches, when possible.
- Reflect on the impact actions might have on the work and well-being of staff and volunteers including the resources you have available.

WELL-BEING

- Consider the entirety of a person's well-being, including emotional, spiritual, physical, intellectual and social aspects for your congregation and guests.
- Build confidence in the level of well-being you feel you can provide for your church members and guests.
- Determine how comfortable you are with the level of safety the church can provide.
- Reflect on the overall sense of connectivity and fellowship that would impact the well-being of the body of believers.
- Examine local trends from resources such as state and local Health Departments and the CDC to set benchmarks that might guide you.
- Set expectations for what in-person gatherings will be like.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Ask these questions about your possible choices for church life:

- Is there a compelling reason to return to gathering instead of what we are doing now?
- What will be missed and what will be gained by resuming at this time?
- What must stay the same when we resume? What must change for us to resume?
- How do we set expectations?
- How do we evaluate our choices?
- What is our plan for contact tracing and church-wide communication if an attendee tests positive for COVID-19?
- What do our state officials and local authorities recommend right now?
- How do the people in our church feel about gathering publicly? How do the people in our community feel about gathering publicly?
- Do we have a real sense of how volunteers will participate?
- What is the wise thing to do?