

California-Nevada Conference

The United Methodist Church

Protocols for Relaunching In-Person Worship and Ministry Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Introduction

We, Christians, are asked to follow Jesus as our model to care for the people around us. As United Methodists, we also follow the principles established by John Wesley: Do no harm. Do good. Stay in connection with God.

In preparation to relaunch in-person worship and other ministry activities in our churches, following the authorization of California and Nevada health authorities, the California-Nevada Conference developed these protocols to assist local church leaders in the hard task to prepare, plan and protect our members and communities. Our goal is to provide an extensive list of topics to consider before and during the planning and implementation of these protocols. Your church is asked to organize a team that will lead the process, develop a relaunching plan, submit it for approval by the District Superintendent, implement monitoring and evaluation processes, and report on your experience.

We want to acknowledge and thank the leadership of the Great Northwest Area of the United Methodists Church for allowing us to learn from their experience and hard work to develop a handbook. We used their handbook as a template for our protocols and adapted it to our conference's context and geography. We also received feedback from many leaders in our conference but consider these protocols as a work in progress as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves in our area. We will continue to monitor the health indicators of the states and counties in our area and to follow the health authorities' guidance for community and faith-based organizations.

These protocols will be revised periodically. New and revised recommendations, suggestions or protocols will be **redlined** for clear identification. Any comments and suggestions are welcome.

Relaunching In-person Worship and Ministry Activities Plan

Establish a Team

Develop a team of 3 to 10 people, including the pastor, lay leader, chair of Trustees, chair of SPRC, and others, to prepare and move the church toward in-person worship. Involve those who can think critically and realistically about your church's capacity, culture and context. For ministry settings other than local churches, consider the director, board members, and constituents or participants.

As you begin, realize that people and communities will have varied reactions to the possibility of gathering in-person as a church or in other group settings. There will be a variety of emotional reactions and willingness to abide by restrictions on personal space and use of personal protective equipment such as masks and gloves. As leaders we must help people find a way that endeavors to "do no harm." That is the work of your team.

Prepare a Plan Together

As the team comes together, consider the first tasks to be:

- Pray** - Seek God's guidance for how you will best follow John Wesley's Three Simple Rules: Do No Harm. Do Good. Stay in Love with God.
- Plan** - Engage in mission and ministry planning about your church or organization. Be realistic, honest, and creative.
- Write** - Develop your plan as you prepare to relaunch ministry together. Be in conversation with and submit the plan to your District Superintendent for approval. Evaluate and update your plan as necessary.
- Share** - Identify appropriate ways to share the necessary components of the ministry plan with your congregation or constituents.

The following pages are designed to assist local churches and ministry settings in preparing a written plan for relaunching ministry together as a community of faith following the COVID-19 crisis. The information is intended to provoke questions and provide guidance as you contemplate returning to your facilities and relaunching ministry practices.

Each of the sections that follow below correspond to the categories of the "Safe Reopening at a Glance" chart. As you pray, plan, write, and share, make use of the tools and the "Additional Resources" links at the end of the document.

What Should the Plan Include?

Your Relaunching Plan must address all "Key Actions" in each of the categories outlined in the "A Safe Reopening at a Glance" chart. "Guiding Questions" are included to help frame your thinking. Your plan should demonstrate that you have reflected on the guidelines and what they mean for your ministry context. Each phase and any updates of the plan and its protocols must be communicated, and training completed and recorded with all staff and volunteers. More information below.

The Phases of Safe Relaunching

The relaunching of in-person worship and ministry activities will move through four phases. While our nation, states or counties continue to allow faith communities to reopen, leadership of the CA-NV Conference will continue to be guided by current scientific research and advice from public health and medical experts. We understand this may create some tension in local communities eager to return to their buildings. We are not making these decisions lightly and we review our stance regularly, guided ourselves by John Wesley's Three Simple Rules: Do No Harm. Do Good. Stay in Love with God.

Phase 1

Phase 1 began March 18th, 2020 when Bishop Carcaño suspended in-person worship and other gatherings for local churches and ministry settings. This suspension is currently in effect through June 30, 2020 and may be extended or returned to. For detailed Phase 1 guidelines, go to the [document on our CNUMC.org website](#).

Phase 2

Suspension of in-person worship continues throughout Phase 2 with the same restrictions as Phase 1 on building use; however, some variances are allowed in an effort to provide opportunity for specific programs to launch. Beginning in Phase 2 [Drive-In Church Gatherings as well as church preschools](#) and other such educational programs that meet in our churches are allowed to open. It is required to consult with your District Superintendent for approval prior to implementing this protocol.

- Protocols for Drive-In Church Gatherings: [click here](#).
- Protocols for Reopening of Preschools: [click here](#).

Phase 3

Phase 3 allows the opportunity to relaunch in-person worship **and other ministries** for a limited number of people. Please remember to follow the latest guidance of your county's health authorities. Be aware that asymptomatic individuals may be infected with COVID-19 and may be spreading the virus unknowingly. **"Even with the adherence to physical distancing, convening in a congregational setting of multiple different households to practice a personal faith carries a relatively higher risk for widespread transmission of the COVID-19 virus, and may result in increased rates of infection, hospitalization, and death, especially among more vulnerable populations. In particular, activities such as singing and chanting negate the risk-reduction achieved through six feet of physical distancing."**¹

- Churches may relaunch in-person worship but must limit attendance in CA to 25% of building capacity or a maximum of 100 attendees, whichever is lower, and in NV to no more than 50 people total.
- It is strongly recommended that churches** continue to provide services through alternative methods for those not attending in-person services.
- Congregants/visitors should either self-screen at home or be screened for temperature and/or symptoms upon arrival and asked to use hand sanitizer.

¹ See COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Places of Worship and Providers of Religious Services and Cultural Ceremonies. July 1, 2020. Covid19.ca.gov

- Consider holding in-person worship and other ministry activities outside whenever possible.
- Face masks must be used, and physical distancing must be practiced in accordance with state and CDC guidelines.
- Communion should be offered preferably with prepackaged communion sets, or individual cups and pre-packed bread/crackers prepared and kept under strict hygiene practices.
- Discontinue singing (in rehearsals, services, etc.) and other practices and performances where there is increased likelihood for transmission from contaminated exhaled droplets.
- Modified practices for communion must be included in the relaunching plan for approval by the District Superintendent.
- Fellowship/food service are not allowed. If food and beverages must be served, provide items in single-serve, disposable containers.
- Populations at higher risk of severe illness if exposed to COVID-19 are strongly encouraged to continue worshipping from home.
- Fellowship and education activities for adults, children and youth must remain virtual. In-person Vacation Bible School remain cancelled.
- Funerals may be conducted within your county guidance regarding limits on gatherings, travel, etc. Follow all cleaning and disinfection measures as required and remind visitors to practice physical distancing
- Other ministry activities with modified practices and plans for other congregations and organizations renting space must be included in the relaunching plan for approval by the District Superintendent
- Thorough cleaning of high traffic areas must be performed, as well as frequent disinfection of commonly used surfaces
- Meetings necessary for the planning and implementation of the relaunching of in-person worship and ministry activities are allowed and have to follow the guidance under Phase 3, including observation of capacity restrictions for each room used

Outside of the above-mentioned activities, the church facility is limited to designated staff, volunteers, meetings, and services.

Phase 4

Phase 4 is anticipated to return to what is currently considered a more “regular” worship along with other gatherings and is anticipated to have no size limit. Protocols for this phase will be developed as we assess the implementation of Phase 3, following the guidance from CDC and state health authorities, and will have to be adapted for county and local restrictions. It is important to remember that, depending on the level of transmission of COVID-19 and the states directions, we may have to return to Phase 2 before advancing to Phase 4.

Beyond Phase 4

This is a “new normal” yet to be determined that will include health indicators and guidance from government and health professionals. It will be important to establish routines that are more aware and protective of public health, and to take forward new practices that will make us more resilient should a similar challenge (re)emerge. During this time your relaunch team should be reviewing and updating your Plan for Continuity of Operations. Additional guidance will be provided in the future.

A Safe Reopening at a Glance

PHASE	1	2	3	4
HIGH-RISK POPULATIONS	Stay Home, Save Lives	Stay Home, Save Lives	Stay Home, Save Lives	Discretionary
PHYSICAL DISTANCING	6 feet between individuals	6 feet between individuals	6 feet between individuals or residents of the same household	To be determined
MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE	Essential	Essential	CA: 25% capacity or 100 people NV: No more than 50 people	To be determined
LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess church or ministry capacity Recruit Relaunching Team Create communication strategy Develop training plan Continue to seek state and county updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess church or ministry capacity Develop plan for relaunching in-person worship & ministry activities; get DS approval Create communication strategy Institute training plan for staff & volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess church or ministry capacity & spiritual health Evaluate & update relaunching plan Communicate progress or updates to key stakeholders Continue and expand trainings to include participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess church or ministry capacity and health Evaluate & update relaunching plan Communicate to all progress or updates Stay informed
SAFETY ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform risk assessment of all areas Deep clean facilities Promote healthy hygiene practices * Have sanitation products readily available Update staff posters regarding rights, leave, benefits, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue risk assessment and cleaning Continue healthy hygiene protocols Practice physical distancing Regularly sanitize high use areas Have sanitation products readily available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place posters & visual safety reminders Continue (and train) hygiene practices; provide supplies Identify & mark spacing for physical distancing Consider outdoor or well-ventilated venues for in-person worship Sanitize all areas used directly following gatherings; keep cleaning records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue phase 1, 2 & 3 guidelines Update and/or replace safety posters to reflect current guidelines Continue to have hygiene supplies available Evaluate safety plan and update as needed Plan for winter flu season and increased indoor activities
STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff & volunteers work from home Essential work and workers allowed Ensure safety protocols known to all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff & volunteers work from home Essential work and workers allowed Ensure safety protocols known to all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff & volunteers continue to work from home if possible, or stagger hours they are in building Increase awareness of need for safety & hygiene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and designated volunteers resume work in building with everyone trained on plan for sanitation, safety, and hygiene
WORSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual only Essential persons may gather in building for worship recording; no singing with 2 or more together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual only Essential group may gather in building for worship recording, no singing Drive-in gathering allowed with DS approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modified in-person worship allowed with restrictions; Continue virtual program Communion allowed with modifications Live singing should be discontinued Self-service food not allowed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In person worship allowed while continuing hygiene and cleaning protocols Live singing discouraged Limited 'coffee hour' and self-service food events
MINISTRY ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual only Essential persons may gather for recording as necessary; no singing when 2 or more in room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual only Essential group may gather for recording as necessary; no singing when 2 or more in room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue virtual activities Modified in-person activities & events allowed with restrictions Live singing should be discontinued Self-service food not allowed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-person activities & events allowed with safety protocols in place Singing may or may not be allowed Limit self-serve food
BUILDING USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to minimal essential staff and volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to essential staff & volunteers Counseling and Preschool programs allowed with plan approved by DS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to staff, volunteers & approved programs Limited in-person worship allowed with DS approved plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open to in-person worship and activities as approved by DS in the plan to relaunch
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND OUTREACH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual meetings Limited essential crisis services offered outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual meetings Limited essential crisis services outdoors; preschool & counseling with approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual meetings Limited services in building with approval of plan by DS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed in the building as approved through the plan to relaunch Continue meeting virtually
ESSENTIAL SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As allowed through state and local guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As allowed through state and local guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As allowed and as approved by DS and partnering agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As allowed and as approved by DS and partnering agency
OTHER MINISTRY SETTINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closed Consistent with guidelines above & contextualized for unique ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited Consistent with guidelines above & contextualized for unique ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited with DS approval Consistent with guidelines above & contextualized for unique ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open with DS approval Consistent with guidelines above & contextualized for unique ministry

Explanation of Terms

Overview

This section defines key terms important to the development of your plan for relaunching ministry together. These terms should be regularly incorporated into your plan.

PHASE	3
HIGH-RISK POPULATIONS	Stay Home, Save Lives
PHYSICAL DISTANCING	6 feet between individuals or residents of the same household
MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE	CA: 25% capacity or 100 people NV: No more than 50 people

High-Risk Populations

The CDC states everyone is at risk of getting COVID-19. **Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions** might be at [higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#).

Based on what we know now, those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are:

- [People 65 years and older](#)
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People with compromised immune systems
- People of all ages with [underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled](#), including chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, severe obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, and liver disease
- Smokers

Members of households with vulnerable residents should be aware that by returning to work or other environments where distancing is not practical, they could carry the virus back home. Precautions should be taken to isolate from vulnerable residents, or thoroughly clean and sanitize all exposed surfaces immediately upon returning home.

Physical Distancing

Limiting face-to-face contact with others is the best way to [reduce the spread of coronavirus disease 2019](#) (COVID-19). Physical distancing, also called “social distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice physical distancing:

- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings

There is allowance in some counties for the formation of “**social bubbles**”, also known as ‘social circles’, ‘COVID groups’, etc. A “social bubble” is generally defined as:

A small group of people from different living units who agree to be exclusive in their interaction and who come together regularly for social support and recreation.

Maximum Group Size

This is the maximum number of people – including children and those leading the gathering – who may gather at one location at any given time. In addition to worship this is relevant to committee meetings, educational activities, or other events.

The size of space you are using will also impact your group size. Both California and Nevada have limited facility use - CA to 25% capacity or 100 people and NV to no more than 50 people in the building at one time. A small country church or small education room may not even hold 10 people with 6 feet of distancing. You will need to assess the maximum number of people each room can safely accommodate with 6 feet of distancing.

Recommendations and Requirements

We understand that some states and localities are “recommending” some things and “requiring” less restrictive measures. Churches are advised to follow the Conference’s recommended guidelines even if it is not required by state and local authorities. This is one way that we “do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God”.

Guiding Questions

Many individuals may be hesitant to return, even with all the safety protocols in place. Questions you may consider:

1. How will you minister to members who are concerned about returning?
2. What can you do to help the individual who has been isolated during stay at home orders and returns to church where he/she must sit alone while families sit together?
3. How will you work with existing “social bubbles” that want to sit together when others in the congregation do not understand the exception?
4. How might you handle someone who refuses to practice physical distancing and insists on hugging people, especially those who might be more vulnerable and unable to back away?
5. What will you do if the maximum group size is reached? How will you limit the number of people in a space if you reach the maximum? How will you turn someone away while communicating welcome and hospitality?

Leadership Responsibilities

Overview

This work cannot be accomplished solely through the leadership of your pastor or director. The relaunching ministry team will identify solutions to challenges that emerge, but also creatively respond to the opportunities that often accompany those challenges. Churches are not expected to reopen on a set schedule. No church or ministry activity is to reopen before a plan is completed in compliance with the guidelines in this document and approved by the District Superintendent.

The relaunching ministry team's task is to assess your church's or ministry's readiness to live within the guidelines of each phase in your respective area of responsibility. Key to this is assessing the vulnerability of your congregation or constituents and your broader community.

PHASE	3
LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess church or ministry capacity & spiritual health • Evaluate & update relaunching plan • Communicate progress or updates to key stakeholders • Continue and expand trainings to include participants

Key Actions

- Prayerfully consider your leadership and ministry through the lens of John Wesley's Three Simple Rules: Do No Harm. Do Good. Stay in Love with God.
- Realistically assess your church or ministry capacity and your own leadership capacity
- Ensure the development, review, and updating of your relaunching plan
- Continually monitor the implementation of your relaunching plan
- Develop and implement strategy to effectively communicate your relaunching plan, including progress and necessary updates.

Guiding Questions

1. Is your church prepared to follow this slow, phased re-entry process?
2. What and how will you communicate with your church in advance of reopening?
3. What is the composition of your staff/leadership/members/constituents/and community? Who are at higher risk to get very sick from COVID-19?
4. What are new ways of being church that you have learned during the suspension of in-person worship that you will carry forward?
5. Are there previous practices that you discontinued during closure that can be set aside to make room for new practices?
6. What in your church's history can empower and inform the reopening process?

Safety Actions

Overview

To “do no harm” we must take seriously safety actions – including symptom screening, face masks, hygiene, physical distancing, and cleaning and sanitizing – in order to protect the health of the entire congregation and broader community.

Your task is to make sure that your facilities and the people in your congregation are safe to reopen and gather. Don’t overlook the importance of new practices to both include those who need to participate in the life of the church virtually, and to help acclimate those worshipping in-person in unfamiliar ways.

PHASE	3
SAFETY ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place posters & visual safety reminders • Continue (and train) hygiene practices; provide supplies • Identify & mark spacing for physical distancing • Consider outdoor or ventilated venues for in-person worship • Sanitize all areas used directly following gatherings; keep cleaning records

Key Actions

- Review your state’s document on guidance for places of worship
 - CA: COVID-19 Guidance: [Places of Worship and Providers of Religious Services](#)
 - NV: Guidance for [Phase 2 Reopening](#)
- Develop a plan for each safety action, including a plan for implementation and oversight
- Have a plan for each room being used, and clearly identify rooms not in use
- Clearly and regularly communicate plans to all individuals using the building
- Provide temperature and/or symptom screenings for all staff/visitors at the beginning of their shift. If requiring self-screening at home, which is an appropriate alternative to providing it at the establishment, ensure that screening was performed prior to the staff/visitors leaving their home and follows [CDC guidelines](#)
- Promote healthy hygiene practices (from CDC)
 - Encourage staff and congregants to maintain good hand hygiene, washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for use when soap and water is not available), tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
 - Encourage staff and congregants to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed.
 - Consider posting signs on how to [stop the spread](#) of COVID-19 and how to [promote everyday protective measures](#), such as washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, and properly wearing a face covering

- Have a supply of clean masks to hand out to those who show up without one
- Teach, model, and ensure proper physical distancing
 - Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people
 - Place markers or have room set up to maintain six-foot distancing
 - Restrict access to spaces and buildings to meet social distancing guidelines
 - Post signs on proper physical distancing guidelines for each room being used
- Limit maximum group size
 - The maximum number of people – including children and those leading the gathering – who may gather at one location at any given time
 - CA: 25% building capacity or 100 (whichever is smaller); NV: No more than 50 people
- Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation
 - Follow [CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects between use
 - Remove bibles, hymnals, other materials from the seats or pews.
 - Avoid use of items that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected
 - Ensure safe and correct application and storage of disinfectants and keep them away from children
 - Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, etc.
 - Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (sinks, drinking fountains, etc.) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water

Guiding Questions

1. Rethink gathering together in your space. How will you ensure that symptom screening is completed, that masks are worn by everyone in your space and that hand sanitizer, soap, tissues, and no-touch trash cans support healthy hygiene behaviors?
2. How will you teach, model, and always ensure physical distancing?
3. What signage will you need and where will you put it?
4. How will you disinfect your facility now, while it is still closed, and how will you sanitize all high touch surfaces after each use when you are back in your space? See CDC guidelines.
5. How will you ensure the maximum group size is not exceeded?
6. What will you do if a person refuses to adhere to the physical distancing and other safety requirements?

Staff and Volunteers

Overview

Staff and volunteers are critical to the life of any congregation or organization. Proactive steps should be taken so staff and volunteers are protecting themselves while in the building and the broader community. Individuals must be made aware of the safety guidelines at each phase of reopening to protect the health of everyone. This section includes both individual staff and volunteers, as well as volunteer groups, teams, or committees.

PHASE	3
STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff & volunteers continue to work from home if possible, or stagger hours they are in building • Increase awareness of need for safety & hygiene

Key Actions

- Consider having staff and volunteers continue to work from home or stagger their shifts
- Train all staff in safety actions and cleaning/sanitation protocols (see CDC guidelines). Consider conducting the training virtually, or, if in-person, ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- Require staff or volunteers who are sick to stay at home.
- Keep office functions as limited as possible. Those in the office should be wearing face masks unless working in isolation.
- If you have more than one person in the office, make sure that surfaces, including the phone and computer, are regularly sanitized.
 - Maintain safety actions, including face masks, hygiene, physical distancing, and cleaning

Guiding Questions

1. Have you identified high-risk employees and volunteers and considered how to both protect them and include them during your relaunching?
2. Do you have cleaning protocols in place and have staff and volunteers been trained on expectations? Are surfaces regularly being sanitized after use? ([see CDC guidelines](#))
3. Does the workspace for existing staff and volunteers allow for adequate physical distancing during the workday?
4. Do you have a policy in place to require staff and volunteers to stay home if sick, and expectations for hygiene and safety protocols while in the facility? Do you have a protocol for symptom screening?

Worship

Overview

This pandemic has helped many of us to understand that we need to reimagine our definition of what it means to ‘worship’ and even what it means to be ‘together.’

Protecting our congregational health is crucial when we worship together in-person. Churches should expect to continue offering virtual worship or provide other opportunities to ensure people can connect at a distance, through each of these phases and beyond.

The task when thinking about worship is to understand the deeper functions of worship and examine how it can be adapted to meet the requirements of each phase of reopening. *Continue to attend to the ordinances of God online and think about the physical space needs and experience for the worshipper before coming back.*

PHASE	3
WORSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified in-person worship allowed with restrictions; weddings & funerals with DS approval • Continue virtual program • Communion allowed with modifications • Live singing should be discontinued • Self-service food not allowed programs

Key Actions

- Follow strict attendance, distancing and safety guidelines
 - Remember the church relaunching plan must be approved by the District Superintendent before in-person worship and other ministry activities, even modified, can begin.
- Continue to provide opportunities for virtual worship
- Remove Bibles, Hymnals, and other shared worship resources
- Modify common “high touch” practices of passing the peace, handshakes and other activities to allow “touch free” alternatives
- Consider placing offering plates at fixed locations to allow for touchless giving
- Communion should be offered preferably with prepackaged communion sets, or individual cups and pre-packed bread/crackers prepared and kept under strict hygiene practices
- Consider providing communion items on pews or chairs prior to service
- Persons distributing communion should use face masks and gloves
- Discontinue singing (in rehearsals, services, etc.) and other practices and performances where there is increased likelihood for transmission from contaminated exhaled droplets, following your state guidance for places of worship**
- Coffee hour or other food service are not offered

- Childcare, Sunday School, and children's church are not offered
- Maintain safety actions, including face masks, hygiene, physical distancing, and cleaning
- Consider keeping a log of all attendees' names and contact information

Guiding Questions

1. Consider what your team values when thinking about relaunching in-person worship and ministries.
2. Consider using a survey to determine the readiness of church members returning to in-person worship.
3. Should you open your church because its allowed, or wait until the quality of the in-person experience is better than the virtual experience?
4. How will not being able to sing affect the worship experience for individuals and the congregation as a whole?
5. Examining current worship practices, what alternatives do you need to put in place to keep physical distancing and limit contact with surfaces (e.g. passing the peace, handshakes, passing offering plate, communion, greeters, hymnals)?
6. How will you prepare your congregation for a worship experience that will feel very different (masks, spacing, no singing, different greetings, modified communion, no receiving line, no fellowshiping afterwards) to both inform them and solicit their participation in doing no harm?
7. How will you welcome children into the worship space when childcare and Sunday School is not available? How will you encourage them to keep physical distance?
8. Picture how your church is going to manage physical distancing in your worship space. What areas need to be opened or rearranged? What areas should be closed? Will you mark off or move pews or chairs to separate family groups? How will you manage foot traffic into and out of the church or rooms?
9. How will you limit the number of people if more than are allowed show up? If your church has average attendance over 25% of the building capacity (CA) or of more than 50 people (NV), is your space large enough to accommodate adequate physical distancing? Can you determine a way to manage attendance?
10. Are there purchases/improvements you need to make to your space to accommodate worship at a time when we're trying to limit touching physical objects (e.g. offering boxes, improved sound system)?
11. Reimagine what "hybrid" worship looks like as, even as you relaunch, you may need to continue your on-line, recorded, etc. worship and gathering efforts?

Ministry Activities and Events

Overview

Our ministry is more than just worship. It is also about engaging with one another in small and large group activities and events. In your context this setting might include education, discipleship, children and youth ministry, vacation bible school, and more.

Your task is to develop plans for how groups might continue meeting in virtual spaces and prepare for the time when they can meet again in-person. As you reimagine this work, consider how the adoption of virtual and hybrid (in-person and virtual) practices can help your congregation to be inclusive of people after the pandemic subsides. **Remember that outdoor activities are preferred to indoor activities. Consider your county health authorities guidance when developing and presenting your plan to the District Superintendent for approval.**

PHASE	3
MINISTRY ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue virtual activities • Modified in-person activities & events allowed with restrictions • Live singing strongly discouraged • Self-service food not allowed

Key Actions

- Virtual ministry activities and events shall continue to be offered
- Childcare, Sunday School, and children's church are not offered. How will you reach out and continue to engage those who attend or need these programs?
- Consider new activities and new format of activities to meet individuals' needs for community, education, and faith sharing. This might require setting aside regular activities for a season or ending some activities. **Plan outdoor activities whenever possible.**
- Communicate with group members or constituents about new, changed, or cancelled ministry activities or events.
- Consider how you will maintain safety actions, including face masks, hygiene, physical distancing, and cleaning. And how you will take temperatures at the door or ask participants to take their temperature at home before coming.
- What are the procedures should someone show up to the church with a fever, dry cough, or shortness of breath? What is your plan and place set aside for isolation? Do you have materials on hand such as masks, gloves, and sanitizer?

Guiding Questions

1. Think of the upcoming, regular ministries and events hosted by your church and ask how each one will need adapting to meet the distancing and sanitizing requirements?

2. What ministry activities (perhaps a new one) will you offer to meet the spiritual and pastoral care needs of the congregation going forward?
3. How will your congregation handle the fact that in-person vacation bible school, other summer children and youth activities, and mission trips must be cancelled, moved to a virtual method, **or modified to follow state and local guidelines**?
4. How will you ensure proper hygiene, physical distancing, and group size are adhered to when groups meet in-person outside of your worship time?
5. How will you communicate with and work with each ministry or group to ensure that contact tracing can occur if someone has been exposed?

Building Use

Overview

All people – staff, volunteers, congregants, community members and renters – who utilize your building need to understand how the building can be used during this COVID-19 time and their part in maintaining the health and safety of anyone who uses the building.

Your task is to develop plans for the use and care of your space, as well as communicate these to your congregation and constituents of the space.

PHASE	3
BUILDING USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to staff, volunteers & approved programs Limited in-person worship allowed with DS approved plan

Key Actions

- Maintain safety actions, including face masks, hygiene, physical distancing, symptom screening, and cleaning (see Safety Actions section)
- Communicate, through email, posted signs, etc., new requirements, protocols, or actions to congregation, partner groups, and renters
- Post on entrances to the building notification of the current phase and a summary of restrictions. Use care to note that building is monitored regularly to make it a less attractive target for thieves and vandals
- Revise building use agreements/contracts/leases to reflect new requirements of safety actions, including face masks, hygiene, physical distancing, cleaning, screening for symptoms, and other realities of dealing with a pandemic
- Monitor closed property for unforeseen needs (leaks, damage, etc.) and vandalism
- Implement deep cleaning and follow CDC guidelines for re-opening the facility to mitigate illness or possible damage to plumbing or heating and ventilation systems

Guiding Questions

1. How many groups use your facility? What building use agreements or contracts do you have in place for them?
 - If you haven't had building use agreements, consider arranging one now. Be sure it includes the safety precautions and restrictions related to COVID-19 and/or a similar situation/pandemic.
 - **Other groups using your facility must receive these guidelines, develop their plans and submit them to the relaunching team. The church relaunching plan, including the plans of other users, has to be submitted to the District Superintendent for approval.**
2. As a response to this season of physical separation, how do you see your building being used in new ways to meet the needs of the community?
3. Where are the problem areas in your building (with the most use, most high-touch surfaces, the most challenging places to clean)?
4. How are you going to rearrange your spaces? What signage on the walls or directional arrows on the floor do you need and how will your congregation respond?
5. Can a separate section be established for the dedicated seating of higher-risk individuals if needed/ required?
6. Are there repairs or deep clean needs that can be taken care of before everyone returns to church?

Community Connections and Outreach

Overview

An important component in the life of the church is our outreach with those outside our church. Our spaces are often community gathering places for scouting troops and support groups such as Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous. Our buildings sometimes house food pantries and daycares that serve the community. In addition, we often go out into the community or travel great distances for mission trips. Sometimes we welcome others into our spaces for mission.

Your task here is to review your community connections and outreach ministries and determine how to best care for these important while abiding by the phase guidelines.

PHASE	3
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND OUTREACH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual meetings • Limited services in building with approval of plan by DS

Key Actions

- Clearly communicate your needs, limitations, guidelines, and restrictions with your community partners. **Share the conference guidelines with the appropriate community partners.**
- Review and incorporate the community partners' plans into the church relaunching plan and submit it to the District Superintendent for approval.**
- Follow all safety recommendations and guidelines from CDC, state, local, church and partner organizations.
- The hosting of scouting troops, support and other community groups, when authorized by the county health authorities, must have a written plan approved by your District Superintendent before the programs can relaunch.
- Church schools, health clinics and shelters are limited to essential crisis services and must be approved by your District Superintendent.
- Community services, such as food pantries, are limited to no-touch services provided outdoors and may only come inside if permitted by the state and local authorities, and with a written plan approved by the District Superintendent.
- Mission trips (going FROM or TO your congregation) requiring overnight travel are suspended
- Identify local mission opportunities that do not require travel and that fall within safety guidelines. **Consider preferably outdoor activities, following the state and county guidance.**
- Consider having a leadership representative attend local (and virtual) VOAD meetings (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters) to connect with resources for congregants, opportunities for service, and updates on federal, state, county and local efforts. Contact Conference Office of Disaster Response for more information (disaster@calnevumc.org)

Guiding Questions

1. What might proper safety protocols look like in your current community connections and outreach?
2. Are there creative ways you can partner with community members to address local needs while still meeting safety requirements and other guidelines?
3. How might you assist support groups that normally meet in your building to continue to meet, but virtually?
4. How will your congregation and partners in ministry “do no harm” and abide by the phase guidelines if there are seemingly competing values of caring for others?
5. How will you welcome designated groups back into your building and communicate and train new safety actions required by all people entering the building?

Essential Services

Overview

Some churches or other ministry settings are serving as centers for “essential services” as identified by state or local authorities. These might include a daycare for children of essential workers, shelters, food distribution locations, or other essential services

Each of these essential services utilizing a United Methodist facility must be made aware of your plan and work with church leaders to make sure health and safety protocols can be met.

PHASE	3
ESSENTIAL SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As allowed and as approved by DS and partnering agency

Key Actions

- Only “essential services” identified by authorities are permitted
- Follow guidelines from local and state authorities, in addition to those of any partner organization
- Ensure agreements and contracts are up-to-date and reflect necessary safety actions of a pandemic, including but not limited to hygiene, distancing and sanitation protocols
- Check with your insurance company or conference office to confirm coverage is adequate and extends to issues related to pandemic
- Have representative attend local virtual VOAD meetings (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters) to connect with resources for congregants, opportunities for service, and updates on federal, state, county and local efforts. Contact Conference Office of Disaster Response for more information (disaster@calnevumc.org)

Guiding Questions

1. Have you researched and do you understand the state and local guidelines for the specific “essential service” so you are prepared to adhere to them?
2. How will you communicate to your congregation or constituents any necessary information about this “essential service”?
3. How will you prepare for the necessary transition of this “essential service” following this crisis time?
4. Have you communicated your plan to your District Superintendent?
5. Your church may not have provided an “essential service” during this time. As you think about your community’s response to COVID-19, were there essential services that were needed that your church could have provided?

Other Ministry Settings

Overview

Our United Methodist ministry often extends beyond local churches to partner with affiliated organizations. Camp and Retreat Ministries and campus ministries are two examples. These groups are a vital part of our ministry and who we are as Christians in the world.

Like local churches these ministry settings must also adhere to the phased reopening plans related to ministry and safety standards. Additionally, it is understood that these ministry settings are unique, and guidelines need to be adapted to their specific contexts.

PHASE	3
OTHER MINISTRY SETTINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited with approval • Consistent with guidelines above & contextualized for unique ministry

Key Actions

- Contextualize guidelines for unique ministry settings
- Adhere to state, local, or other partner or accrediting bodies' guidelines
- Coordinate with partnering program's leadership to ensure your plans are consistent and safe, and to benefit from collaboration
- Work in partnership with the District Superintendent to share how your ministry will "do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God" during this time of COVID-19.

Guiding Questions

1. How is your ministry creatively solving problems and overcoming challenges at this time?
2. How is your ministry adapting to local, state, church, and accrediting bodies' guidelines during this crisis time?
3. As you think about ministry going forward, are there physical changes that need to be made to your setting? Can they be permanent, or only temporary?
4. What partners do you need to be in dialogue with to ensure the safety of those using your setting?

Additional Information

Who do you contact with questions or for assistance with the plan?

You District Superintendent will be reviewing and approving your relaunching plan, so reach out to him or her with any questions or to seek guidance. If you are responsible for a program not directly attached to a local church contact the Executive Director for Connectional Ministries to assist with any interpretations of guidelines or to help answer any questions.

If you have a unique ministry or activity

Ministry settings can be unique and are contextual. If you have something that doesn't clearly fit into one of the identified categories, contact your District Superintendent for additional interpretation and to agree on an appropriate plan.

Additional Resources to Consider

- California-Nevada Annual Conference COVID-19 website: <https://www.cnumc.org/covid19>
- State COVID-19 websites:
 - California: covid.ca.gov
 - Nevada: <https://nvhealthresponse.nv.gov/>
- Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Centers for Disease Control Guidance for Cleaning & Disinfection: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Reopening_America_Guidance.pdf
- CDC Decision Making Tool for Cleaning: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/ReOpening_America_Cleaning_Disinfection_Decision_Tool.pdf
- CDC Guidelines for Cleaning Your Facilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>