

Church Reopening Guidelines During COVID-19 Pandemic: **Green Phase**

What Can My Church Do in the Green Phase?

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania established a three-phase process toward the reopening of businesses and nonprofits: red, yellow, and green.

The Green Phase does not mean “full speed ahead.” This phase has some specific restrictions, because the risks of transmitting COVID-19 remain.

In Preparation:

- Establish a task force to develop a plan.
- Research federal, state, and local guidance.
- Consider transitioning in phases. Church activities can be resumed more gradually than the state phases require. Gradual reopening can further slow the spread of the virus.
- Determine which ministry and missions are essential, and whether these can be offered safely and while using the best safety practices.
- Create a plan with clear steps.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched services and shared items. Find guidelines here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Be sure to communicate the plan *frequently* to worshipers, staff, and those who use the building.
- Find additional important considerations here: susum.org/covid-19

In Gathered Worship:

- Limit gatherings (worship, fellowship, and other) to 250 people.
- Maintain six-foot distances between each person. This includes bathrooms and hallways. Mark off space in the pews using ropes, ribbons, painter’s tape, or other methods, if that will help. If you have moveable chairs in the sanctuary, arrange those carefully.
- Thoroughly clean after each service. See above link to CDC guidelines.
- Require all worshipers (over age two) and leaders to wear face coverings.
- Make worship child-and-family friendly rather than offer nursery service.
- Worship leaders should wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Provide no-touch trash cans.
- Avoid using items that many people will touch, such as hymnals, bulletins, Bibles, and offering plates. Project the service content or guide the congregation while leading. Invite people to drop their tithes and offerings into a large basket that you provide.
- Forego singing at this time. The virus is spread through droplets that can be generated when speaking, singing, coughing, and sneezing.

- There is no safe means of offering communion at this time.
- Invite passing the peace and greetings in ways that do not entail touching. Bowing or waving are a couple of alternatives.
- Post signs to remind people of these measures to avoid transmission of the virus. Find printable “signs and messages” from the CDC here:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/faith-based.html>
- Continue to offer online services, if possible. This enables people in high-risk categories to participate more safely. Encourage older adults and people with chronic medical conditions to avoid entering the church building for gatherings.

In General:

- Require groups that use your building to follow these practices.
- Staff should continue to work from home whenever possible.
- Use the [CDC cleaning processes for offices and work rooms](#).
- Discourage walk-in visitors. Ask people to make appointments. Some of these may be held more safely out-of-doors. Socially distancing, masks, and handwashing should be practiced.

Find more resources for reopening your church at susum.org/covid-19